

The Principle of Affirmation

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The Principle of Affirmation

An ontological and epistemological ground of interculturality

Het Principle van Affirmatie

Ontologische en epistemologische basis van interculturaliteit

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“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulder of giants”
(Sir Isaac Newton, 1643 - 1727)

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Acknowledgement

To explore a philosophical way of life requires not only an appreciation of the various expressions of the way of life, but also a close analysis and a critical approach. A possible way to carry out the exploration is to submerge in a pious lesson of life which explains the sagacity of the cycle of life. This submersion in the profound expression of local wisdom realized in a ritual and religious conviction turns this doctoral program into a pilgrimage of life. This program was initially meant to improve my career in a university. In the meantime it becomes a pilgrimage of life and a realization of the principle of affirmation in my conception and perception towards life.

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0. Introduction

0.1. The contextual discourse of philosophic sagacity

I would like to begin my thesis with a general overview of a book on African sage philosophy (1990) written by the prominent African philosopher Henry Odera Oruka (1944-1995). My reading of this book on philosophic sagacity needs to be equipped by two underlying backgrounds of philosophic sagacity. The first background is a perspective of the intercultural philosophy. The second one explains of philosophic sagacity in the African setting.

The first contextual background has to do with significant theme in a discourse of intercultural philosophy. One significant theme in a discourse of intercultural philosophy which will be elaborated in this thesis is an in search of a system of knowledge outside the North Atlantic. One of an enquiry of a non-North Atlantic system of knowledge has been made by Henry Odera Oruka in his *Sage Philosophy*. His exploration of philosophic sagacity touch on the indispensable issues: the validity and justifiability of knowledge claims. In order to address these indispensable issues, Odera Oruka, begins with a few brief ethnographies of knowledge production in various indigenous cultural orientations.¹ These ethnographies include ethnophilosophy as an indigenous philosophical worldview or *Weltanschauung*. The Belgian missionary Placide Tempels has written one of the first, and highly influential, ethnophilosophies entitled *La Philosophie Bantou (Bantu Philosophy)* (1945).² Even though Tempels' work has been critically evaluated by some African and non-African thinkers (such as Didier N. Kaphagawani, Peter Bodunrin, and Gail M. Presbey), his book conclusively demonstrates an existence of rational and systematic knowledge outside the North Atlantic. This is all the more pressing, since these non-Western knowledge systems tend to be classified as "primitive", a product of "the mind of the Savage," evoking "the primitive worldview" of "the Other *par excellence*."³

The message conveyed by ethnophilosophy is that indigenous systems of knowledge have the right to be recognized as "rational." This recognition is not dependent on a justification of rational knowledge such as commonly employed by specialist in North Atlantic scientific knowledge production, or the externally imposed

¹ The concept of 'cultural orientation' was introduced by van Binsbergen as an alternative for a monolithic, integrated concept of culture; for the underlying argument see van Binsbergen 2003: ch. 15.

² See Mudimbe 1988; Oruka 1990; Botz-Bornstein 2006.

³ Cf. Mudimbe 1988: x; Oruka 1990: 2; van Niekerk 1998: 68ff; van Binsbergen 2003a, 2003b.

analyses or *etic* approach⁴ towards an indigenous model of knowledge. When we consider in detail, and against the background of adequate cultural and linguistic knowledge, the local forms in which indigenous knowledge is being expressed (*in emic terms*, i.e. in people's own words), then we will see that there, too, the coherence and meaning of the constituent parts of that knowledge is made, by the actors, in rational terms – even if appealing to a rationality of symbols and associations that may not be endorsed, analytically and externally (in '*etic*' terms), by Western science. The Dutch intercultural philosopher Wim van Binsbergen asserts that the elaboration of an indigenous system of knowledge:

“...leads us to suspect that, when an independent epistemology outside the North Atlantic (like the *sangomas*' epistemology) acknowledges sources of knowledge not recognised in North Atlantic scientifically underpinned convictions, recognition in itself may bring these sources to flow and to yield valid knowledge.”⁵

This citation suggests that if we take the thought processes and representations of the local actors seriously in the own specific emic context – where they are taken to constitute valid knowledge – that then the local knowledge will shift, from the level of *gnosis* or esoteric knowledge, to the level of *epistēmē*, i.e. publicly contested and verified knowledge – all within the local context, in the same way as also North Atlantic scientific knowledge is contested and verified within its own local context.⁶ Thus, indigenous knowledge is no longer exclusively in the hands of the shaman, as for instanced a kind of divination. Oruka (1990) presents in-depth interviews with some sagacious figures which help to make this argument. While the interviews explore the non-written philosophical worldview of these figures; despite the fact that Odera Oruka's exploration has been criticized because a philosophy presupposes writing and literacy, the enquiry into philosophic sagacity is nevertheless a significant attempt to unearth the rationality of local systems of knowledge.

Odera Oruka's exploration of an indigenous system of knowledge that makes up a philosophical worldview does not lead up to the claim that they are rational and valid *epistēmē*. Such a claim would lead us to an abyss of relativism which asserts the self-evidence of an indigenous philosophical worldview within a particular culture. This

⁴ The word “*etic*” in this thesis is not associated with ‘ethics’ which is the substantial branch in philosophy. ‘*Etic*’ in this respect is borrowed from a linguistic method of analysis of cultural orientations in Anthropology. ‘*Etic*’ is derived from ‘*phonetic*’ which signifies a method of analysis produced by an outsider or an observer or a researcher towards a local production of cultural elements. This word is paired with ‘*emic*’ which is derived from “*phonemic*”. ‘*Emic*’ signifies a method of analysis of cultural orientation produced by members of a cultural orientation. This emic model explains the ideology or behavior of the members of culture. The *etic* model addresses to be universal, while the *emic* is considered as culture specific. Both terms were coined by Kennet L. Pike in *Language in Relation to a unified Theory of the Structure of Human behavior* (1954/1967) . See Barnard & Spencer 1998

⁵ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 26.

⁶ Cf. Mudimbe 1988: ix ff; van Binsbergen 2003a, especially chapter 7 on *sangomahood*.

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assertion indeed reveals the uniqueness of a local culture. Given this uniqueness a particular culture cannot be judged in accordance with an external standard of justification. This appreciative evaluation however entails a perspective that regards a culture with its elements as a monolithic entity. Indeed, a plurality of knowledge systems is recognized by this relativist perspective. If there are many forms of knowledge production, each form of knowledge should be evaluated within its respective standard of rationality.⁷ The tendency of any doctrine of relativism does not only deny a universal standard. The assertion of uniqueness of a cultural orientation leads to the totalization of a life-world, as if a culture with its elements were a closed system, exclusively existing or justified for itself. When rejecting the view of culture as a total life-world, van Binsbergen argues that relativism transforms culture into

“... a license to reduce contemporary society to an immovable stalemate of positions between which, on theoretical grounds, no open communication, identification, community or reconciliation is possible any longer; and violence remains as the only way out.”⁸

Such a totalization of a life-world makes it impossible to initiate or to carry out an encounter, let alone an exchange, among cultural orientations, for it causes any other form of life-world to be classified as “the others’ ”.

By contrast, my preferred discourse of intercultural philosophy would acknowledge the plurality of cultural orientations, central aspects of which are the production of knowledge systems including philosophical worldviews. The recognition of such plurality then is followed by a critical analysis of the North Atlantic hegemony exerted over global knowledge production and rationality. Oruka’s *The Sage Philosophy* has been an influential work showing the rationality of indigenous knowledge sources. My preferred discourse of interculturality, moreover, considers relativism from two complementary perspectives. On the one hand, relativism is the justified consequence of the plurality of cultural orientations. Learning the lessons of relativism, my argument points out that what are considered self-evident cultural representations and claimed as “culture”, are actually the products of cultural exchanges thence followed by a process of adjustments, or adaptations of each cultural orientation. In short, each cultural orientation inevitably experiences external adaptations to internal conditions or internal adjustments to external influences. The process of external adjustment and internal adaptation of cultural exchanges is complex and contradictory. Moreover, if one considers it in the context of interculturality,⁹ then it is neither simply an appropriation in accordance to the standard dominant cultural orientation, nor an accommodation to the superior representation of cultural identity in order to survive. However, granted all

⁷ See van Binsbergen 2003a: 461. Therefore, cultural anthropology defines this unitary entity as cultural relativism. Cf. van Niekerk 1998: 59; Tianji 1991: 161-165.

⁸ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 464.

⁹ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 27.

that, we soon reach the limitations of relativism in that it allows for a plurality of positions of difference but does not tell us how to overcome that plurality towards intercultural interaction.

In the contextual discourse of interculturality, proof of the rationality of indigenous knowledge systems faces a paradox. On the one hand, the discourse acknowledges a plurality of rationality and commensurability among various forms of rationality. This leads the discourse to reject a “standardization” of universal rationality and unconditional rationality. On the other hand, this acceptance of the plurality of rationality does not deny the partial translatability of these various forms of rational knowledge¹⁰. These rational knowledge systems are considered to be, to a considerable extent, capable of communicating to each other their respective necessary conditions of rationality. The interaction among these indigenous knowledge systems, even if only partial, shows how indigenous reason can provide commensurable approaches to resolve major theoretical and pragmatic human problems. This is, in other words, what Habermas¹¹ has referred to as “communicative reason.”

Thus, the concepts of commensurability and interactivity of various forms of reasoning or rationality are not meant to determine which knowledge system is superior, and which is inferior. The communicability of knowledge systems is neither a contest to establish which the justified and rational knowledge system is. Nor is it an effort to formulate a “superparadigmatic standard” which can offer a scheme of judgment to evaluate the rationality of a knowledge system.¹² The idea of the communicability of knowledge systems implies the transcultural exchange of human reasoning. What is therefore required is the elaboration of a knowledge system, applying both *etic* and *emic* approaches. In order for such an elaboration to be possible, transcultural exchange must make the knowledge system communicable.

With this background, we are sufficiently equipped to return to Odera Oruka. For one example of the elaboration of knowledge systems is the investigation into the philosophical worldview of sages. This is where Odera Oruka’s work (1990) obtains its significance. The aim of my thesis’ argument is to show that the concept of sagacity as introduced by Oruka implies a key concept for intercultural philosophy, that is , that sagacious knowledge hints the idea of the interconnectivity between theoretical and practical model of knowledge, and interactivity between a sage and its contextual setting.

According to Oruka, *Sage philosophy* shows the critical and reflective thought of select individuals in Africa and demonstrates the argumentative reasoning actualized by these indigenous thinkers. Yet from the perspective of some North Atlantic thinkers (Kant, Hegel, Lévy-Bruhl), the thought of the non-western sages constitutes only an

¹⁰ Cf. van Binsbergen 2007.

¹¹ Cited in Outlaw 1991: 41.

¹² Tianji 1991: 167.

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inferior form of rationality.¹³ Oruka defines “philosophic sagacity” as the critical assessment and reflective thought expressed by a wise man or woman as a response to his or her social context surrounds. Such assessment and thought embody the didactic wisdom, or an expounded wisdom and a rational thought, which goes beyond popular or celebrated folk-type or communal maxims, aphorisms, and general common sense truths¹⁴. A sage is a “person who is versed in the didactic wisdom and who passes over a boundary of ideology of his/her people, and very often is recognized by the people themselves as having this gift.”¹⁵ From Odera Oruka’s review of the reflections of these philosophic sages as revealed in specific accounts which he discusses, it is clear that they are engaged in critical thought. They do not merely present the respective cultural orientations of their people, but they also offer a critical account. Their way of thinking presupposes principles of thought that organizes an argument or a thought in general. These principles of thought indicate that indigenous knowledge represents an *epistēmē* (ἔπιστήμη) or a publicly contested form of knowledge which according to Foucault empowers mind to distinguish true from false scientifically, which also affects a separation of scientific from not-scientific knowledge¹⁶. Consequently, this proves indigenous knowledge’s communicative reasoning, in other words the communicability of the knowledge system to the wider academic public.

However, before discussing these principles of thinking further, I would first like to discuss sagacity itself. Sagacity or wisdom is embedded in particular cultural orientations. It may address to *sōphia*, (σοφία), and *phronesis* (φρόνησις)—both terms are associated with Aristotelian distinctions of intellectual virtue. The former term according to Aristotle’s category of intellectual virtue signifies a capability to theorize the nature of the world; this capability also discerns the world in order to find out a causal explanation of its existence. Given these characters, *sophia* includes a deliberation concerning a universal truth. *Sophia* in Aristotelian ethics is within the competence of a philosopher. Meanwhile, the latter represent a capability to deliberate a mode of action in order to initiate a change in life and to improve the quality of life. This capability also refers to an intensive reflection and a practical judgement on life experience in order to achieve an end for one’s life. *Phronesis* in this sense also covers a determination to realize one’s destiny in life through one’s experience. *Phronesis* belongs to experienced persons who have the sensitivity to deal with the daily matters of life through negotiation, employing human virtues when confronted, with vices which are often the cause of human imminences¹⁷. Despite recognizing the distinction of *sophia* from *phronesis*, Odera Oruka has his categorization of wisdom. He mentions

¹³ Odera Oruka 1990: 5ff.

¹⁴ Odera Oruka 1990:6, 28.

¹⁵Odera Oruka 1990: 44.

¹⁶ Foucault 1980:197.

¹⁷ Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics* 1140a – b, 1141a – b, a; Van Binsbergen 2008b: 2.

two kinds of “wisdom”: the first is the popular wisdom, which comprises of popular maxims, popular ideologies, general common sense truths, and aphorisms. This popular wisdom can be expressed almost by any prominent figures in a community. The second is the didactic wisdom which is a form of rational and expounded thought of some critical figures in a community. These models of sagacious knowledge according to Odera Oruka applied in various domains of life while one deals with the flux of the social nature of human life. Such an application is not strictly ruled by scientific principles. Consequently, it might result in uncertain or ambivalent answers, and perhaps somewhat contradictory thought. While this form of knowledge may be unscientific, still wisdom reveals an individual’s recognition of and response to ongoing events in the world around us. It is a capability which equips individuals with cognitive skills and analytical and critical reasoning, in addition to the production of knowledge.¹⁸

In other words, wisdom provides an affirmative way of thinking about dealing with various events in our life-world. Wisdom is affirmative in the sense in which it is concerned with the negotiation or the dialogue regarding the contradictions in human life-worlds. In this way, wisdom appreciates different ways of thinking and methods to provide better resolutions in dealing with problematic human issues. From this it follows that wisdom takes a pragmatic approach as it is related to an action, a deed or a habit.

In the context of intercultural encounters, wisdom can bring out the communicability and commensurability of cultural orientations. This is a step forward as compared to the mere passive acknowledgement of a plurality of life-worlds (and resigning oneself to the unnegotiability of that plurality). The kind of awareness identified as intercultural wisdom is possible not by relying on a “superparadigmatic standard” of rationality – the standard of justification and evaluation applied to all forms of knowledge. Instead, wisdom is an empowering tool for the valuation of intercultural encounters because this form of knowledge tends to rely on other forms of logic than the scientific logic of the North Atlantic knowledge system. Van Binsbergen points out that this logic as an “elaboration of ternary and multi-value logics have created a context where we can think beyond binary logic.”¹⁹ For instance a contemporary Chinese philosopher Vincent Shen, whom we will discuss at greater length below, offers, the logic of structural contrast in his work which is inspired by the Chinese system of knowledge.²⁰ His account of structural contrast might appear as an alternative to Aristotelian binary logic.

In my thesis I will examine principles of thinking “beyond the binary logic and the logic of the excluded third.” I propose that the specific principle of argument of philosophic sages be identified as *the principle of affirmation*. This principle

¹⁸ Odera Oruka 1990:28 cf. Van Binsbergen 2008b: 2, quoting Taranto 1989.

¹⁹ Van Binsbergen 2008b : 14.

²⁰ See Shen 2003.

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presupposes the inclusion of opposition. This is contrary to the Aristotelian principle of thinking, which holds that opposite or contradictory terms must be excluded.

The principle of affirmation can be added to what van Binsbergen proposes as a list of logical modalities for intercultural philosophy, -- modalities which, while deviating from the standard North Atlantic scientific binary logic, yet have the great advantage that they can accommodate transcultural exchanges of knowledge.²¹ The first part of this thesis will elaborate affirmation as a principle of thought, based on Oruka's account of philosophic sages in the African context, as well as on Asian counterparts of philosophic sagacity and sages. Among various Asian counterparts of philosophic sagacity, I shall elaborate on the type of indigenous philosophical sagacity which is alive in West Java in the Indonesian Archipelago. This version of the traditional philosophic way of life is encountered among the Sundanese, an ethnico-linguistic group of over 20 million people inhabiting West Java. The traditional Sundanese's life-worlds (their cultural orientations) have assimilated aspects of Indian and Chinese cultural heritage, especially with regard to religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (more specifically, the Sufic mystical way of life). These three religious heritages and their regional cultural orientations represent the contextual background for the elaboration of Sundanese philosophic sagacity, in addition to the primordial elements of the Sundanese cultural orientation.²²

An analytical and critical exploration of elected Asian forms of philosophic sagacity reveals two primary conditions. First, the exploration of Asian sagacity is closely linked with ancient Asian thought and literature. In case of the ancient Chinese, it can be attached to some influential figures such as Confucius and Mencius (within Confucianism), and Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu (within Daoism). In other Asian contexts, like with the Javanese and Sundanese cultural orientations, some of the ancient literature is acknowledged under a ruler's name, a king or a sultan. This first condition is quite distinct from Odera Oruka's exploration of philosophic sagacity in the African context, where the absence of writing is highly conspicuous and constitutive. However, the second condition which is notably the great emphasis on oral expression and oral tradition, and which is found in the exploration of Asian philosophic sagacity does also apply to the African context. For despite the prominence, in the literature, of the named Chinese authors listed above, philosophic sagacity in Asia is not in the first place expressed in writing. Asian philosophic sagacity has spread for centuries by indigenous storytellers through oral transmission. It is expressed in indigenous puppet opera

²¹ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 38-39.

²² For studies in historical anthropology concerning the assimilation and influence of these heritages in Java, see Denys Lombard 1990 vol. 1-3. Assimilation can also be found in studies of Sundanese cosmology, symbols, and myths, for instance, see Wessing 1979, 1997, 2005, 2006; Sumardjo, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006.

performances (*wayang*), or revealed in local music, dance, works of art, or in the landscape or the architecture.²³

As 20th prominent Chinese philosopher Fung Yu-Lan argues, the relative paucity of written sources, especially classical Chinese philosophical literature, does not indicate the absence of systematic and rational thought. In order to avoid establishing a set doctrine, the classical Chinese thinkers (especially Confucius, as the most influential among them) preferred to express their thoughts by speaking, rather than to write their ideas down. For these thinkers a doctrine would have meant the preservation of knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself. The Chinese thinkers, however, meant to employ their knowledge for the sake of the good, not for the sake of the truth.²⁴ This is a reason why when ancient Chinese thinkers wrote, either a handbook of practical knowledge (similar to an encyclopaedia), a guidebook of mores, or an admonition for daily ethical life. Moreover, classical Chinese thinkers such as Confucius, Mencius, Lao Tzu, and Chuang Tzu typically composed their works in specific literary forms such as a dialogue between the Sage and his faithful followers, a poetic composition, or a prosaic essay.²⁵

When classical Chinese thinkers argue their respective ontological worldview in philosophical propositions, they employ these as an ontological background to support their admonition on practical mores or ethical life, so that they can convince their readers to follow and to realize inner sagacity in their daily activities.²⁶ Although Fung Yu-Lan argues that epistemology is not an important part of classical Chinese philosophic sagacity, the works of the classical thinkers still indicate a specific epistemology. A contemporary Chinese philosopher Vincent Shen whom I have mentioned above examines “the philosophy of contrast” in the *I Ching* and the *Daodejing* in order to establish epistemological foundations, which are “structural contrast” and “dynamic contrast.” He defines these foundations as follows:

By “structural contrast” I mean that in any moment of analysis, the multiple objects appearing in our experience is constituted of interacting elements,

²³ For instance see Wessing 1978, 1997, 2005. These articles represented anthropological analyses of the various forms of knowledge in the Sundanese region.

²⁴ Fung Yu-Lan 1952 (the 2nd English edition): 2.

²⁵ For instance, the main Confucianist text is *The Analects*, a series of discussions. To Lao Tzu the poetic composition of *Daodejing* is attributed. In the Indonesian context, we have such poetic and narrative composition as *Serat Centhini*, *Siksa Kandang Karesian*, *Amanah Galunggung*, *Cariosan Prabu Silihwangi*, *Ciung Wanara*, *Bujangga Manik* are the titles of an indigenous “encyclopedia” of practical knowledge and wisdom for daily life. See Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds 2000; Denys Lombard 1990, vol. 3.

²⁶ Fung Yu-Lan 1952: 2-5. One can see the preference of employing ontological propositions employed by Chinese thinkers to support the admonition of the good life, for examples, in Confucius’s *Analects*, Lao Tzu, *Daodejing*, Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, though Fung Yu-Lan reminds that these texts were a product of the transcription of oral transmissions. This sort of transcription may lead to, what Fung Yu-Lan chooses to term ‘forgery’. Yet he admits that even the forgery of such pseudo-epigraphical texts may have value.

different yet related, opposing yet complementary to each other. It is synchronic in the sense that these elements appear simultaneously so as to form a structured whole. Being different, each element enjoys a certain degree of autonomy; being related, they are mutually interdependent.

On the other hand, by “dynamic contrast” I mean that on the axis of time, all individual life-stories, collective histories, and cosmic process are in a process of becoming through the continuous and discontinuous interplay of the precedent and the consequent moments. It is diachronic in the sense that one moment follows the other on the axis of time to form a history, not in a discontinuous or atomic succession but in a contrasting way of development. As discontinuous, the novel moment has its proper originality never to be reduced to any precedent moment. As continuous, it always keeps something from the precedent moment as residue or sedimentation of experience in time. This concept of dynamic contrast could explain all process of becoming such as the relationship between tradition and modernity.²⁷ .

This philosophy of contrast structure implies the principle of affirmation so that one is capable of perceiving “*interacting elements, different yet related, opposing yet complementary to each other*” and to regard these complementary elements as being “*synchronic in the sense that these elements appear simultaneously so as to form a structured whole.*” This is what I meant by the production of knowledge according to specific perceptions and conceptions of space and time in life-worlds. The principle of affirmation is conducive to intercultural interaction. This is the case because the principle creates a foundation for the acknowledgement of differences and plurality.

0.2. The discovery of an affirmative worldview and the principle of affirmation

As I intend to elaborate below in regard of Oruka’s works and of the classical Asian forms of philosophic sagacity, the principle of affirmation is a guideline in the search for an intercultural epistemology; that principle of affirmation is revealed through wisdom as a common model of pragmatic knowledge. My strategy is to derive such a principle from an affirmative worldview, somewhat implicitly along the lines of Shen’s philosophy of contrast discussed above. For that purpose I need to explore an indigenous worldview, notably the worldview represented in the Sundanese cultural orientations of West Java in the Indonesian Archipelago. The exploration of a non-western worldview is necessary insofar as it exemplifies an instance of indigenous philosophic sagacity.

My exploration will begin by analyzing indigenous cosmology in three different contexts. First, I examine Oruka’s interviews with some African philosophic sages; secondly, I explore the *Daodejing* in the Asian context of philosophic sagacity; and thirdly I look at Sundanese philosophic sagacity, which is transmitted by the sage / shrinekeeper in a Sufic shrine at Rawabogo Village, West Bandung Regency, in West

²⁷ Shen 2003: 359; Cf. Fung Yu-Lan 1952: 3.

Java, Indonesia. The exploration will bring out the affirmative worldview that is implied in these cosmologies. The next step is to formulate a principle of affirmation out of these affirmative worldviews.

It is necessary to note that the exploration and the formulation of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview are made possible by using North Atlantic methodologies of exploration. Botz-Bornstein tries to point out the irony of employing a North Atlantic methodology to explore non-Eurocentric cultural orientations to then arrive at an anti-Eurocentric model of knowledge; by contrast, I argue that using this methodology is a means of providing an intelligible analysis and formulation for the principle of affirmation.²⁸ This effort implies an epistemological discourse of translatability and commensurability among cultural orientations. It is not trying to justify local wisdom as rational knowledge, nor does it seek the verification of a valid principle of thinking. The use of North Atlantic methodology merely allows a way of formulating local wisdom in comprehensible and communicable language for cross-cultural encounters.

In other words, the use of the North Atlantic methodology of exploration results in avoiding a dead end of interaction among cultural orientations. The purpose is to surpass relativist claim of incommensurability and incompatibility of cultures. It is necessary to promote the communicability and the mutual interaction among cultural orientations. Otherwise one could be confined in what we have seen above to be the principal limitation of the relativist argument: the claim that there is a total incommensurability and untranslatability between cultures. If this relativist polarization of cultures occurs, then it may lead one to believe (along with many prominent actors in contemporary world politics) that violence instead of interaction is the only means of resolving any form of conflict nowadays.²⁹

Indeed, one should be critical of the North Atlantic methodology when one explores the nature of epistemological foundations for interculturality. Van Binsbergen warns that:

*We are thus reminded of the dangers attached to any attempt to think interculturality along lines of conceptualisation and epistemology exclusively set by North Atlantic intellectual traditions.*³⁰

An employment of North Atlantic methodology without this critical consciousness means to submit to the hidden and hegemonic agenda of the North Atlantic knowledge system. Yet, one necessarily needs rigorous methods to unearth hidden indigenous wisdom. Close examination helps establish the systematization of local wisdom insofar as a local wisdom becomes intelligible to other cultural orientations. The intelligibility of indigenous wisdom is a necessary condition for a shareable form of knowledge.

²⁸ Botz-Bornstein 2006: 155; cf. van Binsbergen 2003a: 464; 2008.

²⁹ Cf. van Binsbergen 2008 a: 14.

³⁰ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 26.

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Indigenous wisdom can help inspire new ideas and lead to better understanding of different life-worlds from a wider and more comprehensive perspective. Moreover, some Asian versions of sagacity, as well as the African ones, share a typical epistemological foundation on which the systematization of a form of knowledge is maintained. This epistemological foundation can also be employed as a principle of thought that enriches our understanding of life-worlds. This thesis will elaborate the principle of affirmation as the epistemological foundation revealed within the Asian and African contextual discourse of philosophic sagacity.

For those who hold that culture is self-evident, completed and containing only a singular and homogenous structure of representation, the use of North Atlantic methods in the exploration of an indigenous knowledge of philosophic sagacity might be judged as “ambiguous.” This addresses an issue of integrity such as is to be expected from members of an academic discipline – for is not the unconditional adoption of Aristotelian logic a prerequisite for credibility as a modern academic; but is not, equally certainly, doing justice to a local knowledge system the prerequisite for integrity in the production of transcultural representations such as in intercultural philosophy and ethnography? Yet such a critical view would be one-sided, and implies a judgement that does not do justice to the complex contextual discourse of interculturality. It is the task of intercultural philosophy to critically expose “some illusory assumptions”³¹ in the common North Atlantic approach to other cultures, such as the perspective of the self evident representation of culture, and the belief that culture is represented by a single identity. The exploration of the system of indigenous knowledge production within the context of interculturality requires a comprehensive perspective and approach. This approach is not merely a comparative analysis that describes and elaborates the specifications of each form of knowledge system. An intercultural approach to the study of indigenous knowledge systems needs to extend beyond the comparative method of analysis. Such an extension entails an intensive exploration of the commensurability and communicability of the various cultural orientations especially in the form of indigenous knowledge systems. This kind of exploration does not intend to establish any perennial themes which can be considered as unconditional and universal human knowledge. Instead, the exploration seeks to show that with each unique form of knowledge, each cultural orientation assumes an inter-communicable and inter-intelligible rationality and a continuous interconnectivity, reflecting the fact that each language is significant in both its denotation and connotation. In short, if one approaches the interculturality of knowledge systems, to some extent one acknowledges the unique manifestation of an indigenous knowledge and the recognition of this uniqueness to a certain extent presupposes the existence of other recognized knowledge systems.

³¹ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 37-38.

In this sense, then, the issue of integrity in the context of intercultural philosophy (and the production of transcultural knowledge in general) should have a “new definition.” Integrity should be read as a consistent academic approach to the intelligibility of knowledge systems, as a commitment to place one’s perspective of life-worlds in-between any boundaries between cultural orientations.³²

0.3. The purpose of this thesis

My exploration of philosophic sagacity is carried out in two steps, each relating to a different context. First, I will explore philosophic sagacity in the African context, as it is revealed in Oruka’s indispensable book. Secondly, I will explore the Asian contextual discourse of philosophic sagacity by examining Chinese philosophic sagacity especially the *Daodejing*, and Sundanese philosophic sagacity. I will also pay attention to issues of interculturality, including the awareness of the hegemonic tendencies inherent in the North Atlantic knowledge system; the struggle against relativism by arguing for the universality of such knowledge systems; and the issue of academic integrity as discussed above. Given these contextualities and other issues, the aims of my thesis consist in the following points:

- To explicate the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview as they are implied in the enquiries of philosophic sagacity discussed above. This attending worldview and the principle of thought on which it is based imply an epistemological foundation. However, this epistemological foundation is suggested neither as an unconditional prerequisite for all forms of knowledge systems, nor as a supra-paradigmatic structure of human knowledge. Instead, the epistemological foundation constitutes rather a “plane of immanence” or an “image of thought” in Deleuzian terms. To use Wittgenstein’s term this epistemological foundation refers to “*Lebensform*” or “the life-forms of human beings,”³³ which reveal specific ways of thinking. The foundation offers a way of perception and conception of difference and proposes the communicability and inter-intelligibility of reason.
- Therefore, the second aim of this thesis is to suggest that the logic of affirmation can inspire and guide our thinking in addition to the Aristotelian principles of thought. The Aristotelian principles of thought to some extent are sufficient guidelines when one is dealing with the modern natural sciences, mathematics and technical disciplines, which although deriving from numerous and heterogeneous sources all over the world, did reach their modern culmination in the North Atlantic region (to whose global political ascendance they greatly contributed) and are often considered as ‘Western’ and nothing more. The development of modern technology would not have advanced so far had not these principles been employed as the

³² Van Binsbergen 2003a: 232.

³³ Tianji 1991: 171.

unconditional prerequisite of technical engineering. Nevertheless, the Aristotelian principles of thought are not sufficient to establish a ground for social and cultural reconstruction.³⁴ This proposition does not indicate a setback to scientific thought. It implies a complement to Aristotelian principles of thought if one engages in socio-cultural investigation. Especially, the Aristotelian logic of contradiction and of the excluded third, such as underlies modern science, should not be seen as negative operations of thought, but as complementary to the comprehensive principle implied in the logic of affirmation. The dilemma seems to be that we can be consistent within one domain informed by one logic (be it that of natural science, of an African system of knowledge, etc.), but that it is exceedingly difficult to apply such consistence between domains; here we need a multi-approach in the issue of comprehensive understanding of the various forms of knowledge system.

- After pursuing my first and the second aims, I should have made a further step in my thesis, which however because of limitations of space and time cannot be realized within the present project. My third aim should have been to argue the preferential option to choose practices of violence as the immediate consequence of relativistic paradigm, and as the result of the application of negative operations in thought. One of the implications of the relativistic paradigm is that, if one is confronted with an unbridgeable conflict of interests, then the most obvious solution is to turn to violence since such differences have become so extreme that there seems to be “no way out.” Here the polarization of opposing forces is resolved by conquering and occupying either side. This negative way of thinking is able to justify the exercise of violence as the preferential option and the only way to wipe out an undesired faction. In order to understand why violence is seen as the preferential option, one needs to analyze how the negative paradigm of thinking influences a collectivity. For this purpose, in a follow-up to the present thesis I hope to address the history of violence in modern Indonesian society. Indonesia is a multicultural and developing country. Diversity is at the heart of Indonesian communities. It is not only a matter of particular ethnicities and their respective performances. The diversity of the community can also be seen as an event of intercultural encounters and trans-cultural exchanges. The result is that there always occurs a process of internal adjustment and external adaptation. As a result, it is hard to establish an original or a pure ethnic identity. The phenomenon of a pluralistic society like modern Indonesia is a good example of cultural orientations. There is no longer “a representation of cultures” in the Indonesian Archipelago. Instead, there are many overlapping expressions of cultural orientations one can identify with in the Archipelago. Thus, it is difficult to claim a pure representation of Javanese identity, since Java represents a typical “*carrefour*” of Southeast Asian civilizations,

³⁴ Cf. van Binsbergen 2008b.

informed by the Indian cultural heritage (including Hinduism and Buddhism), the Chinese heritage, the Middle Eastern Islamic heritage, and also by influence from Western Europe. What Javanese people express in their cultural orientations is a realization of the process of internal adaptation and external adjustment affected by such trans-cultural exchanges and intercultural encounters.

The modernization of the Archipelago has brought essential changes to the knowledge of a multi-ethnic society. Niels Mulder, a prominent Dutch anthropologist notes that the developmentalism programme has affected a construction of the image of modern Indonesian society to be the unified management of the household of Indonesia (This construction of the image of Indonesia is carried out through textbooks of primary and secondary school). The household of Indonesia comprises of diverse ethnicities and religions. Moreover this household of Indonesia will guarantee peaceful and harmonious co-existence of differences in ethnicities and religions³⁵. The image of the household of Indonesia represents the unification of the archipelago as the single representation of the state. Meanwhile the political reality in the New Order era told another story. The regime of New Order declared Pancasila as the sole ideology of the state. Consequently this political declaration made Pancasila the sacred doctrine of the state in 1984-1985. Other ideologies like religious or political ones are banned so that a social organization should appropriate its ideological vision to Pancasila. Otherwise the social organization would be labeled as 'subversive' movement against the state³⁶. The imposition of the monolithic image of the household of Indonesia reveals the establishment of the single national-identity on the people has forced the recognition of ethnic identities into the periphery of the national socio-political process. Inadvertently, the recognition of a unified national identity hints a hegemonic practice because the national identity in itself is an "empty shell." This empty representation can be easily occupied by either an ethnic group or an interest-group identity (such as a radical religious group), which in turn may result in their claim of constituting the formal and sole representation of Indonesian national identity. A common feature of Indonesian national politics has become: the struggle over imposing a certain group identity or an ethnic identity as "the real" representation of the national identity. This struggle occurs in all domains of the nation: political, economic and cultural.

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that violence is seen as the preferential practice, and as inevitable. One can regard this practice of violence as a shortcut for pursuing a particular interest. The existence of violence implies the cultural relativist paradigm and the employment of negative functions of thinking in the social arena. One could analyze the establishment of monolithic national identity from the viewpoint of the negative function of thinking. The negative operation guides indirectly

³⁵ Mulder 2000 chapt.2

³⁶ See Mulder 2000 chapt.3 see also Schwarz 1999:36,

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the political reconstruction of the national identity through the policy of national education especially on the content of the textbook of social science. As Mulder points out the textbook declares that the national identity must be the ultimate interest rather than the ethnic identity which is appeared *as a natural or given* character of human body by nativity. The textbook does not tell the primary and secondary students that the ethnic identity should be wiped out. Rather, the student should subsume their *natural* characters which are given by nativity under the national identity by saying “I am an Indonesian” although he or she was Javanese or Chinese by nativity³⁷. The subsumption of born identity signifies how the negative function of thinking implicitly guides the knowledge production of self-identity in social arena. In order to reveal what are the necessary preconditions for violence and its influence on society, a broad, critical analysis is needed of the history of violence in modern Indonesia; regrettably, however, such a self-evident application of my argument cannot be accommodated within the present thesis but may be the subject of a follow-up project.

This thesis meanwhile offers as a response to this preferential option for violence, notably in the form of an affirmative worldview where the principle of affirmation appears as central part of a knowledge system grounded in indigenous sagacity. For the solution of recurrent and major socio-political conflicts in the Archipelago, there is a possible way out other than violence. That way is determined by life-form or *Lebensform*, in which the image of thought is found. On that basis the perception and conception of diversity in Indonesian society can be rethought in a positive way. The present thesis assumes that the human mind is a determining factor in producing a comprehensive understanding of society. It follows that these capabilities of the mind are not a privilege shared exclusively among North Atlantic people. An inveterate stereotype – also circulating in modern South East Asia – claims that, in determining their daily activities, Western people are driven by the mind, while Asian people, or non-western people in general, are driven by the heart³⁸. Such a stereotype is wrong – it not only replays obsolete colonial and racist conceptions but also grossly underestimates the rationality that is central to any human life-form wherever and whenever in history. The mind itself is beyond categorization and classification. The mind is a common capability inherently shared by all humanity. Thus, the mind is proposed in the present argument as the capability necessary to produce the conception of an affirmative collectivity, in a bid to underline the conditions of commensurability and communicability that all knowledge systems have in common, but that are especially conspicuous in regard of the capacities of the mind as mediated by sagacity.

³⁷ Mulder 2000 chapt.2

³⁸ See To Thi Anh, 1974.

0.4. The methodology

I have mentioned that the present argument will employ a North Atlantic methodology as the most effective way of elaborating philosophic sagacity. I will therefore make selective use of the following explorative methods of study.

First, I undertake an empirical exploration of Sundanese philosophic sagacity, through in-depth interviews with local elders. In this connection, I have carried out a kind of field observation in order to present qualitative philosophical data. This thesis does not intend to provide a scientific elaboration of a valid ethnography. I selected the Sufic shrine of *Nagara Padang* to be the context of my exploration of a worldview revolving on the principle of affirmation as it is conceived in indigenous philosophic sagacity. This contemplative shrine became the subject of my exploration for several reasons. First, Sundanese philosophic sagacity has rarely been explored. While there are many ethnographic studies regarding Sundanese culture, few deal with Sundanese philosophic sagacity. Yet the latter's exploration will lead to a better understanding of the Sundanese system of knowledge. Another reason for this choice of empirical setting is that I am able to speak the Sundanese language and am able to communicate with the Sundanese elders about their wisdom.

I deal with a problem of untranslatability between the Sundanese language and Bahasa (the Indonesian national language), or between these languages and English, and that is only one obvious reason why I do not claim to understand all intricate aspects of Sundanese philosophic sagacity. Nevertheless, I refer to what Wim van Binsbergen discusses concerning the intersubjective encounter between the researcher and his informant in the attempt to produce intercultural knowledge, especially in the field of philosophic sagacity. This intersubjective experience preconditions an involvement of the researcher into the contextual life of the informant. This intensive intersubjective encounter amounts to:

“an existential interpersonal encounter in which streaks of understanding and identification light up, in the recognition of the fact that the local actors have a body and a mind very similar to that of the researcher, and in the recognition of their struggle with common dilemmas of the human condition (illness, death, competition and conflict, love and loyalty, meaning and consolation).”³⁹

My extensive interviews with the elders and with the guardian at the Sufic shrine *Nagara Padang* represent such an “existential interpersonal encounter.” Not only did I gather information about indigenous philosophic sagacity, but I also came to realize that my informants intimated inspirations of indigenous wisdom and of their struggle against the marginalization of Sundanese cultural orientations by the so-called modern lifestyle. These interpersonal interactions provided me with a foundation to better understand what is implied in some unique expressions of the Sundanese language. Every language

³⁹ Van Binsbergen 2008 a: 15.

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has its own concepts and terms that express life-worlds as it is understood by the speakers of that language,⁴⁰ and it is impossible to provide an adequate word-to-word translation of every Sundanese term into Bahasa or English; yet I submit that my *etic* approach in this philosophical research is still able to convey, as analytical textual representations, the *emic* expressions of Sundanese philosophic sagacity. Our convergent conversation, extending over more than three years, shows the inter-activity of a knowledge system as it is represented in each language.

It is neither a matter of the researcher and his informants, nor a matter of the closed system of language; but rather of the interpersonal exploration of the elaborated topic. Thus, as van Binsbergen asserts, the problem of intercultural exploration of philosophic sagacity does not differ fundamentally from the level of the intercultural individual interaction.⁴¹

The next method applied in my thesis is to analyze sage philosophy from the point of view of the sage's poetic narration, using the intensive interviews that I conducted with the sagacious figures. This analysis inquires into the contextual and textual background of the philosophic sage on Asian soil (especially from the region of Southeast Asia), against the comparative background of African counterparts elaborated by Oruka and his followers. In this thesis, the contextual and textual backgrounds refer to religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (with an emphasis on Sufism) or sagacious knowledge of life such as Daoism.

After my analysis of the contextual and textual references, my thesis continues with an examination of the implications of the interpretation of an affirmative worldview based on the principle of affirmation, in the narrative forms of the sages and their wisdom. That section of the thesis will focus on the (poetic) lessons of the sage and the wisdom presented in the Sundanese Sufic shrine *Nagara Padang* and other Sundanese cosmological symbols. In addition to this fieldwork-based approach, the Asian model of philosophic sagacity will be further explored on the basis of well-known texts, especially the *Daodejing*.

This thesis, then, intends to exercise an intercultural exploration of the affirmative worldview based on the principle of affirmation. After the formulation of topics emerging from an analysis of philosophic sagacity outside the North Atlantic region, I will then present a comparative exploration of the epistemological foundations of those forms of sagacity, bringing to bear upon them themes from contemporary Western philosophy. This comparative encounter provides a philosophical dialogue with the French post-structuralist philosophers, notably Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur and

⁴⁰ Winch 1970: 13-15.

⁴¹ van Binsbergen 2003a:284 he mentions that “*Just as the problems of intercultural knowledge and understanding are not fundamentally different from the problems of interpersonal knowledge and understanding (because what could have made them different, the existence of a distinct plane of humanity at which ‘cultures do exist’, turns out to be a false assumption)*”

Gilles Deleuze. The latter's works will be read, or rather re-read, as their respective accounts concerning the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview. This exercise closes the circle of our argument in several ways: if our initial emphasis on rationality, (partial) translatability and (partial) commensurability can be sustained, then an analysis of sagacity and affirmation which started out in Africa and Asia may well produce new and illuminating insights in forms of philosophy that were elaborated in the West and that have captivated some of the best minds of the West over the past few decades.

0.5. The structure of this thesis

The background of this thesis, the purpose and the method of its exploration of the topics, and the structure of the thesis may be summarized as follows.

Part I will start with a discussion of the philosophical discourse of sage philosophy by examining the work of Henry Odera Oruka. The discourse focuses on the central question of whether critical reasoning is available outside the Western knowledge system or not. Odera Oruka argues that this mode of thinking is part of the human capability to know and to reason, or to think.⁴² Interviews with some ordinarily wise people, and some particularly wise figures, whether they are literate or illiterate, contribute to the awareness of critical thinking or even philosophical thought outside the Western region and beyond the Western model. A critical discussion of Oruka's argument suggests that – despite the common marginalization of Africa and Africans in the modern world, and its philosophical elaboration by e.g. Hegel and Lévy-Bruhl – yet also in African contexts critical and philosophical reasoning is a natural ability of all persons regardless of their respective cultural orientations. Furthermore, the discourse argues that sagacious thought, whether popular or critical, is the mode of thought which reveals an interconnection between thinkers, nature, and society. It reveals the difference between an ordinary and a critical wise-man. The capability of acknowledging an interconnection in thought in the form of sagacious knowledge constitutes an affirmative worldview based on the principle of affirmation employed in sagacious disposition and reasoning. The argument of sagacious thinking and knowledge is presented in chapter 1.

The second topic of the part 1 or chapter 2 is an exploration of sagacious thought in the South, East and Southeast Asian cultural orientations. This exploration especially focuses on the history of cultural exchange that has occurred in the context of the Southeast Asian mainland and archipelago. The history of Java as the crossroads of ancient civilizations in Asia suggests in what way cultural exchanges have contributed to the development of sagacious knowledge, which is included in religious beliefs, from the South to the East and vice versa. Due to its central location at the crossroads

⁴² See Odera Oruka 1990: 15.

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between Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, from the West and North West, as well as Confucianism and Daoism, from the North East, on an older seedbed of local cultural orientations, sagacious thinking was able to develop and flourish in Java. Assimilation and adaptation occurred between the foreign and indigenous mode of sagacity. The result is the creative expression of how sagacious dispositions and knowledge converge in comprehensive forms of cultural orientation, and how they operate both in practice and as a paradigm.⁴³ These comprehensive forms constitute an intermediary and serve as ontological, or existential, conceptions of what it means to be a human being, beyond their function as ethical guidelines for the individual in society.⁴⁴

The living examples of the creative and comprehensive form of convergent sagacity can be found in the Chinese text of philosophical wisdom, *Daodejing*, and the Sundanese pious lessons as it is explored at the Sufic shrine *Nagara Padang* in West Java. Further explanation of the affirmative worldview as a component of philosophical wisdom will be offered in the chapter 2 while the specific description of Sundanese sagacious disposition will be taken up in chapter 3.

Part I ends with chapter 4 that analyses foundational reason in sagacious thought and knowledge, in a bid to formulate a theory of an attending affirmative worldview based on the principle of affirmation. These foundational reasons emphasize that, in the affirmative worldview, existence is perceived and conceived as ‘interconnectivity’ rather than ‘individuality.’ This ontological concept can be brought out analytically/etically through the employ of such terms as ‘intermediary,’ ‘contrast structure,’ ‘binary opposition,’ ‘complementary opposition’ or ‘correlative thinking.’⁴⁵ These terms all convey the idea that interconnectivity is indispensable for understanding ontological concepts. This understanding is implied within popular forms of knowledge, both mystical and magical ones, including myths, as well as *gnosis* and a philosophical vision of the world. Here the human mind is never bounded.

Part II presents the philosophical explication of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview as they are implied in the various contextualized worldviews, in the East as well as in the West. First, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of these worldviews before moving into the subsequent discussion of the different accounts of an affirmative worldview and the principle of affirmation. Part II starts with chapter 5 which examines what are the constitutive properties of a worldview in more detail. After this examination, chapter 6 offers an account of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview implied in the sagacious knowledge

⁴³ This creative and comprehensive form of convergence between the foreign and indigenous elements of religions and sagacious thoughts is often regarded as syncretism of religions in Java and other Southeast Asian cultural orientations. For example in Geertz 1969; Beatty 1996.

⁴⁴ See Beatty 1996: 282.

⁴⁵ For ‘intermediary’ see Beatty 1996; Geertz 1969. For ‘contrast structure’ see Shen 2003. For binary opposition see Sumardjo 2003, 2006a, 2006b. For ‘complementary opposition’ cf. van Binsbergen 2008b; For ‘correlative thinking’ see Lai 2002.

found in the text of the *Daodejing* and the Sundanese sagacious phrases and worldview. Chapter 7 turns to the exploration of ontological affirmation and the principle of affirmation in Western philosophy. It looks in particular at the discourse of ontology which dialectically discussed by modern philosophers Paul Ricoeur and Gilles Deleuze. Both French post-structuralist philosophers, Ricoeur and Deleuze each proposes their own account of ontological affirmation and from their respective accounts of ontological affirmation principles of affirmation can be drawn.

The concluding part summarizes the exploration into principles of affirmation especially as an ontological and epistemological ground for interculturality. The summary will present some key statements in this connection. Inspired by these key statements, this work continues with an analysis of the epistemological grounds of interculturality. The analysis includes a discussion of Wim van Binsbergen's account of interculturality. In his *Intercultural Encounters*, the problem of the epistemology of interculturality invokes further elaboration on the subject matter. The epistemology of interculturality should take into account two tendencies in specialist attempts towards understanding modes of thought. Taken to their extremes, these two tendencies may be *contrasted* as follows:

- The first tendency argues that a given local knowledge system can never be replaced by another system regarded as universal. From this perspective, each knowledge system is irreducible and it must be treated independently from any other knowledge system. Moreover, each knowledge system should be evaluated and judged, in the first place, by its own standard, and only secondarily by an outside standard, even if the latter is considered valid and universal. The argument of an irreducible and irreplaceable knowledge system is defended by relativism, especially by anthropological relativism.
- The second tendency holds that any form of knowledge system should pass the prerequisite verification or falsification for valid and justified knowledge. In other words, it appeals to a universal standard knowledge which examines any form of knowledge with a view of its potential for appropriation into the scheme of universal knowledge; in other words, *its potential to be* recognized as the '*epistēmē*.' Otherwise, the universal knowledge system recognizes such a local knowledge system as *gnosis*, mystical and magical forms of thought. It does not deserve to be recognized as 'pure' knowledge, hence it does not belong to the realm of truth. This argument is defended by the modern scientists and philosophers who belong to (neo)-positivism (such as C.G. Hempel, G. Bergmann, and A.J. Ayer). The critics of this position argue against the hegemonic implications of claims to the superiority or universality of a particular knowledge system.⁴⁶ These critics maintain that the real face of the so-called universal knowledge system is the

⁴⁶ This topic is thoroughly discussed in van Binsbergen 2003a, 2003b, 2008b, with specific reference to the philosopher of science Sandra Harding.

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Western system. Based on hegemonic claims of the truth of this specific, regional knowledge system, material (political and economic) interests have contributed to the degradation and dismantling of local knowledge systems outside the North Atlantic region. The impact of the implementation of this modern knowledge system can have destructible consequences on the quality of life. This hegemonic representation or the claim of superiority of the modern knowledge system is “*tacitly unwise*” (to quote van Binsbergen’s term) in the sense that the modern knowledge system turns human body, other creatures or life in general into merely re-engineered things. Moreover, the modern knowledge system provided the narrowed perspective towards the nature of life as if only the rationality would guide the development of the quality of life, while the irrational aspects of life should be kept as a decoration to private matters.⁴⁷

The delineation of these two tendencies brings out that an epistemology of interculturality need to negotiate between these two extreme poles. On the one hand, such an epistemology can assert the unique representation of any local form of knowledge system. On the other hand, such an epistemology recognizes ‘common features’ of the human capability of thinking. This recognition then does not reject Truth as a common feature of the human exploration of knowledge. An epistemology of interculturality, in other words, is “a non-relativist unitary epistemology,”⁴⁸ which *interconnects* the uniqueness of any local knowledge system with the overarching possibility of a converging, transcultural Truth present in every such system. Every knowledge system can be said to imply the notion of the possibility of truth, and of the desire to work towards such a truth. This allows us to recognize the implied interconnectivity between the many different local knowledge systems. Such an insight is required to follow the main argument for the principle of affirmation. The principle of affirmation conceives of interconnectivity as the ontological foundation of being (in the sense that it expresses itself in a knowledge system) upon which the existence of local knowledge systems (all implying, and striving towards, Truth) has its epistemological foundations.

The last insight in this concluding part has to do with the proper philosophical approach to a multi-ethnic society such as Indonesia. This approach is based on the principle of affirmation, which allows us to understand the diversity in such a society. In this connection, it is necessary to analyze, in addition to the affirmation-based knowledge as the foundation of an affirmative worldview, the *rival* foundation, which consists in the privileged and dominant, modern knowledge within a contemporary multicultural society. This rival foundation relies on negativity as a logical operation: the logic of contradiction, and the logic of the excluded third. These logical principles

⁴⁷ Cf. van Binsbergen 2008b: 70-71.

⁴⁸ See van Binsbergen 2003a: 20, 28.

invite a perception that a collectivity necessarily embodies ‘the universal representation of the state’ or ‘the modern democratic state.’

It is important to note that the logic of contradiction and of the excluded third is related to the relativist paradigm. The latter argues for a plurality of systems of knowledge that are each considered to be close onto itself, and for the impossibility of justifying, by an outside standard of verification, the truth of each of these separate systems of knowledge. To this extent it is as if the relativist paradigm seems to deny others the possibility of having a valuable representation of complete existence. A relativist perception merely tolerates the sheer existence of other views, but does not consider these views valid, in other words, does not extend to others the respect which the relativist accords to his own views – notably, the certainty that their existence is something valuable and commensurable. Such insistence on the relativist paradigm of incommunicability and incommensurability, easily leads to violence as the preferential option for the resolution of conflicts.

An inspiration derived from the principle of affirmation for a plural society intends to contest both

- the authoritarian nationalist conception of the modern and democratic state and
- the relativist paradigm,

in the sense that both rely on violence as the means to achieve the desired condition of the state. One cannot ignore the implication of these logical principles in the implementation of the North Atlantic scientific and technological disciplines into the grand project of developmentalism for a so-called “Third World” nation-state. One needs to be critical not only of the hidden agenda, but also the political correctness disguised under of the propaganda of developmentalism. The studies of developmentalism itself contain a bias in normative thinking, a discipline of thought which refers to the modern epistemological foundations. The employment of such principles of thought has direct implications for the struggle of recognition vis-à-vis the imposition of a single national identity. The consequence of this struggle is the legitimatization of violence as the only way out in order to preserve either one’s identity or the national identity.

Because of these dynamics, an examination needs to be conducted into how the negative principle of thinking affects the perception of individuals and the collectivity through a history of violence in Indonesian society. Here, I address to the mass violence experienced by Chinese Indonesians during the period of the revolution for independence around 1946-1947. I specifically look as the reflection on the event made by Jesuit Father, Gabriel P. Sindunata, who was Chinese Indonesian. Inspired by his analysis of René Girard,⁴⁹ I continue his reflection by suggesting an idea of affirmative collectivity, in the middle of the contextual struggle of unification and recognition

⁴⁹ Sindhunata 2006.

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experienced by both the national identity and the particular representation of cultural orientations. The idea of an affirmative collectivity conceives of interconnectivity between self-identities or interests. Yet understanding interconnectivity as the ontological reason of existence reveals the need of individuation, that is, to clarify one's self-identity. Unless this understanding is maintained, one will find a possible way out of the need of recognition. Here violence is not the preferential option, but it is among other possible ways from which one can opt out.

Part I: The implications of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview in the discourse of philosophic sagacity

An exploration concerning the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview addresses the contextual discourse of wisdom, and for good reason, for the exploration of these epistemological foundations is related to a particular cultural state of mind. This includes the production of philosophical thought which is informed by cultural orientations. Issues related to the production of knowledge including boundary conditions as rationality, justification, intelligibility, commensurability, and the translatability of knowledge systems,⁵⁰ constitute major themes in this thesis, where I am seeking to consider them within a wider framework.

This Part I explicates how the African discourse of philosophic sagacity recognizes an African philosophical thought system. In the North Atlantic, the production of knowledge outside that region was previously classified as “primitive,” as expressions of “the savage mind,”⁵¹ or at best as an “indigenous mode of thought.” However, the African model of sagacious thought still addresses comprehensive domains of human life. This indigenous knowledge model of thought covers the interests and needs of human life from the practical, technical domains to the philosophical ones. The former domains of knowledge deal with the attempts to satisfy human needs in practical daily affairs; the latter have to do with a worldview, which includes moral and ethical concerns, as well as the ontological theory of life and spiritual realms.

⁵⁰ See Deutsch (ed.) 1991; Coetzee & Roux (eds.) 1998; Budick & Iser (eds.) 1996; Horton & Finnegan 1973 (eds.); Geertz (ed.) 1971; Douglas 1975; and Forde (ed.) 1976.

⁵¹ See Horton & Finnegan 1973; Gellner 1973; Levi-Strauss 1973.

Chapter 1: The discourse of philosophic sagacity in the African context

1.1 The recognition of knowledge systems outside the North Atlantic mode of thought

This chapter intends to elaborate on the background of the epistemological foundations in the African model of philosophical sagacity. Such a context has been critically analyzed and discussed in Henry Odera Oruka's work entitled *Sage Philosophy* (1990). Odera Oruka argues that philosophic sagacity is the "intellectual approach to a knowledge and life"⁵². Regardless of the illiteracy of the wise figures and of the non-written transmission of philosophic sagacity, Odera Oruka still argues that this approach represents a model of thought. According to the North Atlantic model of philosophical thought, a philosophical account presupposes literate discourse. However, Odera Oruka is able to show in his interviews with illiterate sages, that, irrespective of the medium of writing, the sagacious mind is capable of expressing a critical and analytical approach to human thought. Even so Odera Oruka does not refer to a "practical philosophy," as if philosophy were an implementation of ethical and critical thought and principle into daily life⁵³. Odera Oruka's interviews with several African sages indicate that these sagacious figures are capable of expressing critical thought regarding ontological and epistemological issues. The critical and analytical mind does not belong exclusively to the North Atlantic. In this sense, critical and analytical rationality is represented by any human mind in their respective unique systems of knowledge.

1.1.1 Against hegemonic relationships in knowledge production?

The contest of justification for recognizing a model of thought outside the North Atlantic one seems outdated because comprehensive level of criticism concerning the modern and scientific knowledge system has already occurred in the natural, social, philosophical, and even in the interdisciplinary domains⁵⁴. Such criticisms have already formulated well the necessity to put the modern knowledge system side by side with multiple faces of the non-North Atlantic model of knowledge systems.⁵⁵ Nevertheless,

⁵² Odera Oruka 1990:xx.

⁵³ Odera Oruka 1990:3.

⁵⁴ Cf. Horton & Finegan 1973 : 18; van Niekerk 1998 : 55.

⁵⁵ See van Binsbergen 2003b, Harding 1994, cf. Gellner 1973, van Niekerk 1998 : 54.

the critique itself implicitly uncovers a new approach to rebuild the superior representation of the modern model of thought as a powerful knowledge system. This new approach of the superior model of knowledge is due to self-criticism that has emerged not only from Western thinkers, but it is also recognized by non-western thinkers who are professionally well trained in the North Atlantic knowledge system. Furthermore these non-North Atlantic thinkers scrutinize any academic postulation of a model of an indigenous knowledge system⁵⁶. Ironically, such scrutiny refers to the North Atlantic method of self-critique of the modern and scientific knowledge systems. Subsequently, this method is applied for contesting a justification of the non-North Atlantic model of thought.⁵⁷ This tendency leaves a further critical quest, concerning whether one can avoid this tendency toward a hegemonic relationship or not.

One response to the concerns over this tendency is to point out that the discourse of multiple models of knowledge systems have emerged as the result of anthropological and ethnographical discoveries which were conducted a long with the colonization of Asian and African soil. Such discoveries indicate the interest of colonialism and after, the economic and political hegemony by the powerful capitalist groups or countries over the regions. Such interests do not confirm that the non-North Atlantic modes of thought have their rights to produce their respective unique modes of thought. If there is a production of local model of thought, such production should gain an academic acknowledgement as 'knowledge' from the viewpoint of the modern model of thought. In this respect, the local models of thought can impossibly be independent from the influence of the North Atlantic model of thought, The existence of a local model of knowledge always becomes inescapably dependent on the anthropological discoveries of the non-North Atlantic regions even though a development of a local model of thought had occurred due to intercultural exchanges among the countries within the Asian and African continents long before the Western colonization over the continents and before the hegemonic establishment of the modern universal mode of thinking over the other models of knowledge systems.

A historical exploration over the Asian and African continents may note that the development of a non-western knowledge system occurred long before any contact was made with European colonizers⁵⁸. During this pre-colonial era, there were intercultural exchanges among ancient non-European cultural representations, such as between the Asian and African ones, as well among the Asian ones. Such exchanges brought an interdependent production of knowledge so that there was the mutual assimilation of

⁵⁶ This criticism can be found out in Mudimbe 1988, Odera Oruka 1990,

⁵⁷ Cf Mudimbe 1988: chap. 5; van Binsbergen 2005.

⁵⁸ See the 3 volumes monograph of Denys Lombard about the existence of Java Island as the crossroad of cultural orientations and religions in the Southeast Asia. The cultural orientations in the island even influence the region of South and East Asia. See. Lombard 1990/2005.

these cultural representations.⁵⁹ Such assimilation was facilitated by parallelism among these cultural representations. This parallelism in turn suggests the commensurability and interactivity of these cultural representations. Under such circumstances there was probably little of a hegemonic struggle to establish one dominant epistemological paradigm.⁶⁰

The assimilation of different belief systems, which in large part occurred through trade and the dissemination of some major religious convictions in the region, takes place on the basis of epistemological foundations, however implicit these may have remained. These foundations have managed to interact in such a way that some of the indigenous elements of cultural orientation did not dissolve but were relatively able to accommodate the incoming external influences. This acceptance of external influence did not exclude conflicts of interest between local and strange representations. Business competitions between the incoming and local traders, or between the incoming traders, or between a king and foreign traders inescapably occurred. Quiet often this competition provoked wars. Indeed, the result of this assimilation was not a melting pot of cultural identities. Instead the interaction of cultural, even religious, elements has produced a relatively harmonic constellation in a local cultural representation. One can perceive such a model of assimilation from various displays, such as in practical and technical knowledge, in narrative forms (cosmological and cosmogony myths, legends, poetic narratives), in symbols, in village or city landscapes, in architectural structures, as well as in rituals.

In other words, the intercultural exchange in the Asian and African region did not end the assimilation of local and strange elements of cultural orientations with a completely “new” representation which was determined by the dominant influence of the incoming cultural representation and this new representation wiped out the existing elements of the local culture. In this respect, the appearance of the new representation can apply the incoming cultural orientation. Meanwhile, if one analyses this new representation, one will find out that the new representation still includes the existing or previous elements of local culture. This new representation of local culture was piled with the existing cultural elements which had previously constructed the cultural orientations. One can find out this model of piling up the cultural orientations in the new representations of Indian, Chinese heritages or Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam in the Archipelago⁶¹.

In the meantime, since intercultural contact during the colonial era, Asian and African cultural representations have become more dependent on the North-Atlantic model of cultural representation. The adaptation of indigenous cultural representations

⁵⁹ Denys Lombard 1990: vol 2 and 3. For example, the assimilation of Buddhist heritage between the Indian and the Srivijayan version see Bentley 1986; Barnes 1995; Lockard 1995.

⁶⁰ See Lombard 1990: vol 2-3; Subagya 1979; cf. Geertz 1960; Stuart-Fox 2003: chap. 1 – 3.

⁶¹ See Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2 and 3.

shows the struggle and pressure to adopt the identity of the modern and progressive cultural representation. This shows how the knowledge systems of local cultural representations give way and completely follow the rules of the modern scientific models of systematic and organized knowledge. Even though colonial occupation has ended and independence has been declared, this declaration is more or less a symbolic performance. At first the political declaration of independence appeared convincing, as if the decolonized country was totally liberated from colonialism. However, what really occurred once countries declared independence was to submit their respective model of thought, as it is included to the local interest to achieve better quality of life in economic and social domains, to a hegemonic hierarchy by adopting the North Atlantic model of modern and progressive knowledge system or commonly speak, to the economic and social progress in accordance with the modern model of prosperous society.

Van Binsbergen characterizes the hegemonic relationship between the indigenous model of knowledge and the North Atlantic one in the following citation:

*Knowledge production is never neutral but either hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, i.e. reinforcing a particular hegemonic structure, or seeking to explode that structure.*⁶²

From this citation one can understand that a knowledge production includes an interest to establish a power over subjects who becomes the target persons of the application of knowledge. The knowledge will direct and control an attitude or behavior of subjects. This Foucauldian analysis shows that the knowledge production is hegemonic. Meaning that the knowledge production subsumes other forms of knowing is irrational or invalid (like mythical, mystical, magical, and spiritual knowing, or the esoteric forms of knowing or *gnosis*) Alternatively a knowledge production can exclude the form of knowing which does not correspond with an interest of a ruling authority (such as an institution of scientific or academic circle, or a government in general). The production of knowledge also signifies a counter-hegemonic power in the sense that an alternative form of knowing establishes an interest which is against the dominant knowledge of the ruling authority. This resistance of the alternative knowledge against the dominant one, according to Foucault indicates that knowledge does not represent a neutral position. Knowledge production does not serve the interest of knowing things even the slogan that knowing for the sake of knowledge embodies an interested application of knowledge. In this sense an interested knowledge production can occurs in all models of thought. The models of thought in Asia, Africa and Europe cannot escape from this tendency of being hegemonic or counter hegemonic representation of power.

This is then how one understands the transaction of knowledge production between Asian and African models of thought; also between the models of thought from these regions and the North Atlantic model of thought. These transactions of knowledge production describe this ambivalent attitude, that is, to be the hegemonic representation

⁶² Van Binsbergen 2003a: 18-19.

of power or the counter-hegemonic one. In other words, the tendency to be hegemonic or the counter hegemonic embodies inherently in any models of knowledge. In this respect the struggle of recognition concerning the appropriation of the non-North Atlantic models of thought into the scheme of a modern scientific identity and system of knowledge, partially is true since there is a desire to be acknowledged as the civilized knowledge. Moreover, it is also shown that indigenous knowledge systems demonstrate an intention to constitute the originality and authenticity of their knowledge system. Nevertheless, these intentions also reinforce the realization of counter hegemonic power in the indigenous models of thought to be against the hegemonic praxis of the North Atlantic mode of thought over the rest. Consequently, if one allows this ambivalent attitude to proceed, an establishment of the authentic and original can lead an indigenous knowledge system to employ “the praxis of making of the other,” which has been utilized by the North Atlantic hegemonic system of knowledge production. In this respect, the counter-hegemonic power of the non-North Atlantic models of thought can resemble the operation of hegemonic power of the North Atlantic models of thought by making the North Atlantic models of thought or any other models of thought to be “the others” which are insignificant and which can be subsumed under the representation of the alternative model of thought. One cannot retain the realization of ambivalent power within a model of thought. It means that another way should be taken in order to recognize the negative realization of the interest to be acknowledged as the civilized and progressive model of knowledge.

1.1.2 The Path toward the commensurability and the interactivity of knowledge models

In order to be always critical of “the praxis of making the others,” one should necessarily be aware of the drawbacks of the recognition of an authentic and original knowledge system. Such a struggle of recognition only leads the non-North Atlantic mode of thought to an employment of the same type of hegemonic power and relationship. In turn, the application of hegemonic power strengthens cultural relativists’ argument regarding the impossibility of the communicability among knowledge systems and the incommensurability of different modes of thought. In this sense, relativism is:

“...a license to reduce contemporary society to an immovable stalemate of positions between which, on theoretical grounds, no open communication, identification, community or reconciliation is possible any longer.”⁶³

Thus, one has to demonstrate an effort to go beyond the polarization of the relativist position and the mere appropriation of the hegemonic representation of the modern and scientific knowledge system. Both of these positions insist on the superiority of a closed knowledge system.

⁶³ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 464.

It is the task of intercultural philosophy to promote an exploration of interactivity among cultural orientations especially in the epistemological domain. The purpose is to discover some common conditions of intercultural encounters for various modes of thought. These conditions include the partial translatability of various cultural orientations so that they provide a bridge between the North Atlantic model of thought and the non-North Atlantic one and between the various models of the non-North Atlantic knowledge systems themselves. In this context, the exploration also shows the interconnectivity of the various cultural modes of thought. It is against the relativist account of the incommunicability and the incompatibility of knowledge systems. Furthermore, the exploration does not seek to establish which knowledge system deserves to be universal, nor does it recognize only the particularity of the indigenous one. Thus, the path towards an intercultural epistemology for the sake of commensurability and interactivity of knowledge systems is more relevant to such an exploration than insisting on the recognition of standardized rational knowledge.⁶⁴

The necessity of an intercultural epistemology is not only for the sake of the interactivity among knowledge systems. The aim is to cross over the boundary of comparative studies concerning different modes of thought. Other additional purposes are intended for an intercultural epistemology. First, it is to open a way, so that a multiplicity of cultural modes of thought can meet at a crossroad. Second, such interaction promotes an appreciation for different ways of thinking. This appreciation helps to create a situation in which interaction can lead to constructive dialogue. This dialogue is intended to find the best resolution of our contemporary problems in all domains of our life-world. Yet, the dialogue is not supposed to be only about resolution. Instead, the dialogue in the first place is to “create an intercultural framework” of various appreciated efforts to deal with problematic human affairs. Van Binsbergen implies the need of commensurability for various forms of knowledge systems as the task of intercultural epistemology. He underlines that:

“...the task of intercultural epistemology is not to solve the riddles of the world, but to call attention to the world-wide diversity of approaches vis-à-vis those riddles, other people’s promising attempts at such resolution, and to help create an intercultural framework within which these can be appreciated.”⁶⁵

1.1.3 In search of an intercultural epistemology: wisdom or sagacious knowledge

So far, it is necessary to formulate an intercultural epistemology for the sake of the commensurability and the communicability among knowledge systems. The next argument emphasizes the formulation of intercultural epistemology as it is implied in some models of various knowledge systems. In this context, the thesis considers

⁶⁴ Van Binsbergen 2003a.

⁶⁵ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 278.

wisdom as the mode of thought which could articulate an intercultural epistemology. Wisdom in this thesis refers to a form of knowledge which deals with the realm of human praxis. It is comprised of both theoretical and practical thought concerning many possible ways of human praxis which we have to take into account in order to understand the complexity of the life-world and to maintain a purpose in life.⁶⁶

The exploration of wisdom or sagacious knowledge should be confined to the distinction between the scientific or theoretical knowledge and the practical one. Such a distinction adopts the Aristotelian categorization of knowledge *sophia* and *phronesis*.⁶⁷ The former is the theoretical and contemplative mind which becomes the foundation of philosophy, while the latter is the practical deliberation which has to do with intensive contemplation about one's destiny, self-determination to achieve one's destiny, practical judgement about daily matters in human life-worlds. Yet, such categorization, as van Binsbergen argues, is a matter of applying procedures or methodology of justification⁶⁸ so that the mode of thought passes the test of "justified true belief" and deserves the entitlement of a "rational knowledge system." In the context of formulating intercultural epistemology one should regard such categorization as a possible better way to understand models of human thought. The categorization is not absolute, as if it were the universal standard of the model of the human mind. There are other models of thinking systems besides this one; although they lack an organized method of justification to contest the rationality of their respective mode of thought.

Therefore, wisdom in this exploration refers to neither *sophia* nor *phronesis*. This exploration includes both concepts. That means wisdom has some inevitable characteristics, including the following:

- a. Wisdom or sagacious knowledge represents theoretical thought which has to do with a contextual worldview. This becomes the ontological framework for thinking production, or the way of thinking. In this sense, wisdom turns out to be a philosophical mode of thought.
- b. Based on the previous point, if one considers wisdom as a metaphysical model of thought, one cannot detach it from a contextual paradigm of life. This contextual paradigm of life refers to a communal vision which is believed to be true insofar as this vision is comprehensive understanding of life as it is in itself. To this extent wisdom has to do with particular expression of communal worldview, which is an expression of intersubjective thought⁶⁹ in a particular contextuality. The character of intersubjectivity here is significant because it also means a capability of sharing

⁶⁶ Van Binsbergen 2008: 19.

⁶⁷ Ibid: 2 cf Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a – b, 1141a – b.

⁶⁸ van Binsbergen 2008: 19 his argument as follows: "I submit that what distinguishes scientific knowledge from the knowledge of wisdom text, is primarily a matter of procedure. The truth of a scientific statement resides in the explicit, intersubjective procedure (method, in other words) through which that knowledge has been produced."

⁶⁹ van Binsbergen 2008 : 19; cf. Janz 1998 : 63 – 64.

these philosophical thought across a boundary of particular communal representation. One can find out the expression of intersubjectivity in the form of worldview, values, and principles of life. This worldview or values, virtues, or fundamental principle of life can be expressed in the form of narrative or pious lessons such as in cosmology, cosmogony, myths, etc.; a worldview, values and principles of life comprise of a practical thought realized in wisdom. This practicality represents a normative direction that one should pursue the destiny of life in the awareness that one is interconnecting (or interconnected) with other manifestations of life.

- c. This practicality (point b) has no meaning unless the sagacious directives interconnect to the theoretical character of the sagacious knowledge (point a). It is inevitable that the philosophical way of thought cannot detach from the practical one. This interconnectivity of both kinds of sagacious thought postulate life as the power to conduct someone's way of life. From the idea of interconnectivity between the theoretical and practical thought one can infer that wisdom requires an application in a contextual background.⁷⁰.

The characteristics of wisdom above indicate that wisdom passes over the limitation of theoretical and practical thoughts. Moreover, wisdom enhances *an interconnectivity and shareability* of any kind expressions of human mind. An understanding of interconnectivity or shareability of sagacious knowledge leads us to posit a commonality of models of thought rather than the universality of human thought. Commonality here does not refer to the universal condition of human wisdom. Rather, it means everyone with regard to its particularity and uniqueness can access wisdom which is expressed in a particular worldview. The commonality presupposes the uniqueness of each particularity both in time and place. If this particularity had not been respected, then commonality would have shown the hegemonic relationship between the prevailing dominant representation and the rest.

By contrast, the universal condition of the human mind does not imply a shareable thought. It is true that the universal condition is indifferent to time and place, yet at the same time, it becomes the supra-structural standardization of human thought. The universal condition disregards the uniqueness of each expression of the human mind. It requires every representation of human thought to be completely dependent only to the super-structural standard.

Commonality also explodes the relativistic account of closed thought systems inasmuch as it allows the possibility that all human thought can be shared with others even though they have their own particular paradigms and expressions. The shareability of human thought presupposes the basic idea that every human being is able to express *his/her* mind and is simultaneously able to “capture” somebody's thinking. It is true to

⁷⁰ van Binsbergen 2008:22.

some extent that all cultural representations belong to a temporal and spatial context, and the judgement or evaluation of their respective knowledge system should be in accordance with the value and standards of their own culture. In other words, the evaluation of a culture has to be culture-bound.⁷¹ Nevertheless the claim “culture-bound” is a virtual construction insofar as it is a part of an attempt to postulate an imagined parentage or an ancestral bond to something which is metaphorically said “the native land”. This imagined originality is often regarded as a monolithic representation of culture as if a culture embodied pure and authentic source without any external influences and interventions. This is the reason that one can agree with van Binsbergen to postulate such a reconstruction of a culture-bound as “cultural orientations”⁷². This term means that this (re-)construction of culture is impossible unless one admits that there has been interactive sharings or exchanges of models of thought in history of any nations. To that extent this (cultural) relativist argument admits implicitly a degree of understanding in the exploration of a cultural orientation. An observer that applies the standard of evaluation from the perspective of the analyzed culture can adopt such a measurement as his/her instrument during the observation. This indicates the inherent capability of a particular knowledge to be understood even by an outsider. In short, an interactive sharing of modes of thought can occur. What cultural relativists apparently miss is that the interaction between modes of thought does not have to end in the judgement of or evaluation of different life-worlds. (The interactive action between life-worlds is more than an evaluation of rationality. Many models of relationship between knowledge systems can resemble one of interpersonal exchanges of knowledge and understanding⁷³. They can be inspiring alternatives of the exchange of knowledge systems in the intercultural context). They can be inspiring alternatives of the exchange of knowledge systems in an intercultural context. From these complementary arguments, it follows, that the active interpersonal action of thinking, to express one’s thought, and the passive one, to understand somebody else’s mind, are indications that rationality is conceived within all forms of knowledge systems and constitutes “a general human trait.”⁷⁴

Therefore, this exploration is worthwhile because it promotes sagacious knowledge as a realization of intercultural epistemology in the context of intercultural philosophy and encounters. When promoting wisdom, one needs to keep in mind what van Binsbergen writes concerning the recognition of non-North Atlantic knowledge systems in the form of sagacious knowledge in intercultural encounters. He points out that:

⁷¹ Niekerk 1998: 59; Tianji 1991: 163; van Binsbergen 2003a: 284.

⁷² He employs cultural orientations as the main phrase to substitute ‘cultures’ in his book (2003a) cf Lombard 1990 vol 1 – 3.

⁷³ van Binsbergen 2003a : 284 – 285.

⁷⁴ Van Binsbergen 2008: 19.

“It is also a recognition of the fact that much of what ‘other cultures,’ outside the North Atlantic, have achieved in the way of expressions of traditional wisdom, must not be ignored or slighted as invalid or obsolete. On the contrary, it deserves to be acknowledged as genuine knowledge in its own right, as essential elements in the global knowledge heritage of humankind, based on an epistemology of its own, capable of solving some of the dilemmas of the human conditions as well as, or better than, dominant global/North Atlantic science.”⁷⁵

Such recognition entails an acceptance of the various formulations of sagacious knowledge. The acceptance itself presupposes the unique epistemological composition of each expression of wisdom in accordance with its own spatial-temporal cultural orientations. Furthermore, it presumes the inter-active praxis in the framework of knowledge production among such contextualities both in interpersonal and intercultural encounters. Therefore, to understand how this process of recognition occurs, one needs to reflect philosophically on the contextual discourse of sagacious knowledge.

1.2 The context of sagacious knowledge in the African context

This section will examine the contextual discourse of sagacious knowledge in an African context. Why Africa in this elaboration? The African context shows a dynamic process of recognition for its own mode of thought. The recognition “being Africa” started with the categorization of “savage” or “primitive” according to Europeans conception of the development of mankind.⁷⁶ These kinds of categorizations legitimized European colonialism on the continent. The “glorious” purpose of the occupation and a strategy for maintaining the colonies was the transformation of significant aspects of African life, including the economic production of the land, the mindset of the indigenous people and their culture and their religiosity. The aim of the transformation of the continent was the development of civilized African people according to the European perspective.⁷⁷

Gail M. Presbey in her article (2007) on Odera Oruka’s sage philosophy looks at the historical rationale used to justify colonialism in Africa arguing that Europeans did an injustice to the African people. She points out that the reason why some African scholars, like Henry Odera Oruka, present their respective critical thinking is in response of to exploitative categorization by Europeans during the colonial era.⁷⁸ These thinkers want to explode the image of the underdevelopment and the savagery of the African continent. Evidence shows that today many Asian people still think Africans are

⁷⁵ Van Binsbergen 2008: 22.

⁷⁶ Mudimbe 1988: 17ff.

⁷⁷ Ibid: 2-3.

⁷⁸ Presbey 2007: 150-151.

underdeveloped people because of the European scientific records about the continent⁷⁹. To emphasize this unfairness, Presbey addresses the issue of an “extraverted discourse.” She writes:

*“According to Hountondji, part of what was wrong about ethno-philosophy is that it was always written by a person, whether African or otherwise, who addressed a non-African audience, in the role of describing the African, so that the African could be better understood by the outsiders. Africans rarely addressed each other or focused on topics of mutual concern to themselves.”*⁸⁰

According to Presbey, it is time for African thinkers to demonstrate the unique African approach for their fellow African scholars or people. This indigenous approach reveals how Africans understand their own life-world. By doing this, Africans will share with each other their thought and knowledge systems in an academic framework for the sake of the development in their own terms of their life-world.

One of the most prominent efforts to reveal the indigenous African approach is the project of the Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka. In 1990, he published an influential book entitled *Sage Philosophy*. In this book, Odera Oruka argues that African people, especially the sagacious figures among them, are capable of engaging in logical and critical thought. Moreover, they have the ability to express their respective knowledge and understanding of their life-world. He finds that the African thinking model consists of two expression of knowing; they are the folk-wisdom and critical and analytical thought.⁸¹ Even though such discourses are mostly un-written and often are told by illiterate figures, these discourses show that African philosophical thought does not represent philosophical unanimity or a “culture philosophy.”⁸² African sagacious thinkers are able to articulate their criticism based on a contextualization of wise thought in a social and cultural setting.

This thesis will not address the debate concerning whether folk-wisdom and the folk-sage are the part of the philosophic sagacious tradition or not. Such a debate, Presbey mentions in her articles, should shift to a wider purpose. Given these categorizations of folk wisdom and the philosophical sage, one only has to perceive that together these compose the basic foundations of knowledge models outside the North

⁷⁹ In 1955, there was a significant conference in Bandung which was called the Asian-African Conference. The conference itself has inspired the colonized countries in Africa and Asia to gain their independences for the next decades. One might say that the conference managed to urge the end of European colonization in these continents. If one looks carefully to the event itself one will find out that the representatives of African countries were limited to 6 independent countries: Egypt, Algeria, Lybia, Ethiopia, Liberia and Gold Coast. One may say that most of the African countries did not declare their independence yet at the time of the conference. But, one can see clearly that the conference was more about the interest of Asian countries on which many wars broke because of the arm competition between the capitalist block and communist one. The interest of the most African countries which was under colonization was not the significant issue.

⁸⁰ Presbey 2007: 146.

⁸¹ Odera Oruka 1990: 5-6; cf. Presbey 2007; Ochieng'-Odhiambo 2006.

⁸² Odera Oruka 1990: xv, 44.

Atlantic model. (These basic foundations demonstrate a knowledge production and a critical reflection since these foundations realize the interactive models of sagacious thought, which is the theoretical and practical sagacity. Such interactive model of sagacious thought are the way of the folk-sages articulates their descriptive, explanative even apologetic reasoning and knowing and that of the philosophic sages demonstrate their critical and skeptical thought⁸³. (In a more pragmatic nuance, these foundations affect their societies, a goal that coincides with the socioeconomic development policies and programs.) Both the folk-sage and the philosophic sage are “endowed with an exceptional understanding of their people’s culture and problems.”⁸⁴ Whether they are God-sent messengers or critical and skeptical sages, the role of sagacious figures and their sagacity reveal the capacity of maintaining organized and systematic modes of thought. Odera Oruka has presented both types of sagacious figures in his interviews.⁸⁵

Given the contrasting categorizations of different structural modes of sagacious thought, I want to adopt the classification of the modes of thought in the African context as they are reflected by Odera Oruka and his commentators on sage philosophy. I refer to the categorization employed in Chapter 2 of Odera Oruka’s work (1990) under the title of “the four trends in African philosophy.”⁸⁶ This model of classification takes into account the previous discourses of African philosophical thought, as well as the one suggested by Odera Oruka himself. These classifications are:

- a. ethnophilosophy ,
- b. nationalist-ideological philosophy,
- c. professional philosophy, and
- d. sage philosophy.

1.2.1 Ethnophilosophy

When it was published the book “*La Philosophie Bantoue*” by Father Placide Tempels (1945) initiated a long and critical debate among both anthropologists and philosophers. Odera Oruka points out other earlier anthropological works had employed “unacceptable” terms when describing the mind of the African, including the “mind of the Savage,” “Primitive Philosophy,” or “The Philosophy of the Savage.” At one time these types of classification were accepted uncritically. However, eventually such classifications were dismissed because they refer to “a tendency for traditional

⁸³ Cf. the contrasted distinction between the characteristics and the roles of the folk-sages and the ones of the philosophic sage on Odera Oruka 1990: for example at p. 44 – 45. This categorization often repeats in the other critical evaluation of Sage Philosophy.

⁸⁴ Presbey 2007: 148.

⁸⁵ Odera Oruka 1990: 29, 36, 45; cf. Presbey 2007: 141

⁸⁶ Odera Oruka 1990: 27. Cf other classification models made by his commentators such as P.O. Bodunrin in Odera Oruka 1990, Didier Njirayamanda Kaphagawani, Lucius Outlaw and others in the same publication, also Janz 1998 in a separate article in the journal of *African Philosophy*.

unanimity typical of the animal instinct.”⁸⁷ Placide Tempels was among the first who argued for existence of an African philosophy. He was considered a “progressive” scholar at the time who argued that Bantu-speaking people possessed their own unique and consistent logic in their mode of thought. After spending time with them, Tempels found that Africans do possess their own rational even though Westerners classify them as irrational. Odera Oruka’s notes that Tempels’ conclusion is inevitable once you look at the philosophy and religiosity of indigenous people. Yet, he points out, still “it is for Europeans to formulate this philosophy *on the behalf of* the Bantu.”⁸⁸

After the publication of *The Bantu Philosophy*, at least two ethnographical projects regarding the philosophy and the religiosity of African people appeared in 1969. The first is John Mbiti’s *African Religion and Philosophy* (published by Heinemann 1969). This work appreciated Tempels’ project and considered it an indispensable work which contributed to further study of African religions and philosophy. The second is an article by Alexis Kagame, entitled “L’ethnophilosophie des Bantu.” This article was originally published as part of the book *Contemporary Philosophy: A Survey* (Vol. IV) edited by R. Klibansky in 1971.⁸⁹

Even though these projects on philosophy and religiosity stem from anthropological and ethnographical accounts, they are indispensable. Still much criticism has been made regarding such an approach. Odera Oruka categorizes ethnophilosophy as culture philosophy. He considers ethnophilosophy as the ideas, the beliefs, and the mythos “which underlie and justify a culture.”⁹⁰ The mythos mainly is the unanimity of maxims, aphorisms, wise sayings, truth claims, and the ideology of an indigenous people. In short, culture philosophy projects *popular wisdom* without any critical attempt to evaluate and to take a distance from this unanimity.⁹¹

Odera Oruka does not ignore the influence of culture philosophy or ethnophilosophy in his account of the philosophic sage. Presbey shows that Odera Oruka has an “ambiguous attitude” towards the role of ethnophilosophy or cultural philosophy in his major project. This attitude stems from Odera Oruka’s own disposition. He leaves it up to the reader of his book to determine the quality of the ethnophilosophy and popular wisdom of the folk-sage.⁹² If one inquires into the book, one can find a contrast explanation by Odera Oruka concerning the considered bias approach of ethnophilosophy. Odera Oruka asserts that ethnophilosophy to some extent is an indispensable point of reference for an African philosopher. The further discourse

⁸⁷ Odera Oruka 1990: 2.

⁸⁸ Odera Oruka 1990: 2.

⁸⁹ Alexis Kagame in Didier N. Kaphagawani’s article in the Odera Oruka 1990: 186; cf. Mudimbe’s critique of Kagame’s ethnophilosophical school see Mudimbe 1988.

⁹⁰ Odera Oruka 1990: 44.

⁹¹ Odera Oruka 1990: 53.

⁹² Odera Oruka 1990: 29, 36; Presbey 2007: 141.

of philosophical thought necessarily presupposes two referential approaches. The first one is to have a dialogue with the current culture with philosophy as the starting point. Even thinkers from modern civilized societies recognize this cultural reference. Then, the second approach, the philosopher has to go beyond the ideological unanimity of collective thought. Given these referential approaches, Odera Oruka writes:

“Sages and every reasonable man in society are supposed to be conversant with the philosophy of their culture, i.e. with its mythos. To have expertise in a culture philosophy is often the mark of the sages of the culture in question. However, in a free or well-informed society every reasonable person is conversant with the prevailing culture philosophy.”⁹³

It is true that in his book, Odera Oruka argues here and there against the identification of folk-wisdom and the critical mind of the philosophic sage. He seems to clearly define either position and offers a rigid distinction of the qualities between them. Presbey succeeds in presenting his distinct account in her text.⁹⁴ By contrast, I concur with Ochieng'-Odhiambo concerning the presumption of culture philosophy in the project of Odera Oruka. Culture philosophy, folk-wisdom and the folk-sage are the milieu or the subject-matter for further critical reflection and the philosophical re-evaluation of a cultural orientation in general.⁹⁵ What Odera Oruka wants to show is that culture philosophy implies a philosophical worldview. If one explores a cultural orientation, one should not ignore the fact that beneath this philosophical worldview underlies an ontological or metaphysical foundation which belongs to that cultural orientation.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the philosophy of culture (or the systematic formulation of the worldview) and the critical reasoning (or the systematic philosophical thought expressed by the philosophic sage) demonstrates:

“the fact that traditional Africa had both the folk-wisdom and critical personalized philosophical discourse.”⁹⁷

From this citation it follows that even the indigenous worldview, which is often considered as the primitive framework of thinking, expresses something indispensable for the indication of abstract reasoning and rationality within such a worldview.⁹⁸

Other African thinkers like Hountondji, Boundurin, Kaphagawani, Wiredu and Mudimbe also contest the position of ethnophilosophy. Paulin Hountondji as rephrased by Kaphagawani insists that African cultural philosophy is only a myth not a reality because the ethnophilosophy indistinctly differentiates between philosophy in the ideological sense as a set of beliefs claimed by a group of people and in the technical sense as systematic and organized philosophical thought. Furthermore,

⁹³ Odera Oruka 1990: 44.

⁹⁴ Presbey 2007: 129-140.

⁹⁵ Ochieng'-Odhiambo 2006: 22, 23; cf. Odera Oruka 1990: 44.

⁹⁶ Ochieng'-Odhiambo 2006: 27.

⁹⁷ Odera Oruka 1990: 38

⁹⁸ See Odera Oruka cited in Ochieng'-Odhiambo 2006: 25.

ethnophilosophy, like Tempels' Bantu Philosophy in the perspective of Hountondji is not an African philosophy inasmuch as the elaboration of the philosophy of the Bantu people is an anthropological or an ethnographical exploration of the worldview of the Bantu people. Hountondji considers Tempels' exploration as merely "the philosophy of Tempels" regarding the Bantu worldview. It is not the philosophy by the Bantu people themselves. An anthropologist or an ethnographer adopting a philosophical approach to the study of an indigenous people is not the same thing as an indigenous person expressing their philosophy.⁹⁹ Thus, ethnophilosophy can hardly be categorized as an African philosophy, since it must be the product of African thinkers who are dealing with philosophical matters in an African context.

In his critique in Odera Orika, Peter O. Bodunrin (1990) argues to some extent along the same lines as Hountondji. The pronouncement of ethnophilosophy is only the production of anthropologists, ethnographers, philosophers whose perspectives unanimously consider the collective African worldview (in the form of myths, folklore and folk-wisdom) as African philosophy. This perception of the African philosophy describes "a world outlook or thought system of a particular community or the whole of Africa." Therefore, it is likely a projected generalization from a particular worldview of an African community on the whole African collective, as if an ethnophilosophy were the philosophy of African communities as a whole. The European's anthropological and ethnographical fieldwork emphasizes that the African mode of thought is radically different from Europeans. Their model of thinking is judged to be irrational and illogical. The nuance of savagery is still constitutive in the works of such European ethnographers and anthropologists.¹⁰⁰ The further arguments Bodunrin posed are about the reason why ethnophilosophers insufficiently provide analytical and speculative arguments in their exploration of the philosophical worldview of an indigenous community. It is as if, with the formulation of an ethnophilosophy, indigenous people suddenly possessed a "new and impeccable" knowledge system.¹⁰¹ So far, Bodunrin wrote:

*"The pity is that ethno-philosophers usually fall in love so much with the thought system they seek to expound that they become dogmatic in the veneration of the culture to which the thought system belongs."*¹⁰²

To the extent of the philosophical study of an indigenous worldview, Bodunrin advocates the study of traditional beliefs as a possible point of departure. An African philosopher should deliberately recognize the knowledge production and system of his/her own people. This reference should be regarded only as a point of departure for the discourse performed by an African philosopher about philosophical problems. This

⁹⁹ Hountondji quoted in the Kaphagawani 1990: 188-189.

¹⁰⁰ Bodunrin 1990: 163, 165.

¹⁰¹ Bodunrin 1990: 172.

¹⁰² Ibid.

embeddedness in the traditional context should be followed by a disembeddedness of the context, so that the African philosopher can proceed with the relevant universal issues of philosophical topics. Bodunrin argues:

*“He may have to begin by an examination of philosophical issues and concepts that have loomed largely in the history of world philosophy, and he must not be charged for being unoriginal or being irrelevant as an African philosopher simply because he is discussing in the African context issues that have also received attention elsewhere.”*¹⁰³

If one goes further with his argument, it is clear that Bodunrin prioritizes an impartial philosophical approach for philosophical topics which exists as universal human matters. I will come back to this issue when I discuss Odera Oruka’s classification of professional philosophy in African philosophy. In short, ethnophilosophy is only a descriptive explication of the traditional worldview which exists in myths, folklores, wise-sayings, mores, symbols, rituals, and other artifacts. Such a worldview might be an indication of a mode of thought or knowledge production within a cultural framework. Nevertheless, the framework itself is ideological, uncritical and dogmatic in its explanation of the life-worlds.

Didier N. Kaphagawani also offers a critique of ethnophilosophy. He is critical of ethnophilosophy because he sees it as the result of adopting an anthropological and ethnographical approach and applying it to the African worldview. These empirical approaches assume that worldviews are comprised of metaphysical and ideological systems. These systems are implied in traditional wisdom, institutions and languages in Africa. According these approaches, the philosophical implication is inherent in the explication of the culture of reality. This implication is illuminating for the exploration of the traditional worldview.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, this argument has inherent philosophical implications and is equal with the religious model of knowledge. Kaphagawani suspects that such explorations are conducted for the sake of the dissemination of Christianity on the African continent. For the success of the Christian missionary project, missionaries were encouraged to know the cultural background of the African people who convert to Christianity. It was believed the best acknowledgement would be made if the missionaries knew well the traditional worldview.¹⁰⁵

Kaphagawani’s other grave objection to ethnophilosophy is on the issue of authenticity and that of differences in the African cultural orientation.¹⁰⁶ The ethnophilosophers tend to consider the holistic approach in each exploration of the African philosophical worldview. Such a holistic approach ignores the individual actualization of thought. This generalization does not take into account the

¹⁰³ Bodunrin 1990: 173.

¹⁰⁴ Kaphagawani 1990: 186.

¹⁰⁵ Kaphagawani 1990: 187.

¹⁰⁶ Kaphagawani 1990: 188.

demonstration of an individual model of thought. By generalizing the model of thought, the ethnophilosophy fails to acknowledge the authentic representation of individual thought and one of indigenous cultural orientation, as if the African philosophical worldviews were represented in the typical model of oral traditions. By considering African philosophical worldviews typical, thus indifferent models of thinking, the ethnophilosophers apparently deny the different representations of cultural orientations in the African context and their respective irreplaceable modes of thought. This kind of inference appears as a contradiction in the formulation of the ethnophilosophy. Kaphagawani points out this contradiction in following citation.

“This is the contradiction which faces most of the philosophers in Africa, particularly those who still think that ethnophilosophy is the only way to African philosophy. For they seem to simultaneously operate on the assumptions that differences between African cultures cannot be resolved, and that generalizations on certain aspects of African cultures are possible.”¹⁰⁷

Although he is critical of ethnophilosophy, Kaphagawani does not completely abandon the philosophical approach of the traditional worldview. To some extent, ethnophilosophy has its value due to the fact that a philosophical account necessarily confers with the traditional way of thinking. In this sense, Kaphagawani agrees with John Parrat’s account. In his articles, John Parrat notes that even Western philosophical systems once emerged from communal thought. For instance, the history of Greek Philosophy mentioned that Socrates and Plato engaged in many philosophical discussions and arguments in response to what was going on in Greece at that time (but the history of philosophy in the West notes that after the period of ancient Greek philosophers, philosophy emerged from the reflection and composition of critical argument in the form of texts). Besides reference to the traditional way of thought, ethnophilosophy seems to resemble the model of philosophical thought in the Asian context, like in the tradition of Hinduism and Buddhism. These Asian models of the philosophical way of thought actualize a movement of religious belief, yet they show a critical awareness towards the theoretical and practical mode of thought as well. Kaphagawani even underlines the need that an African philosopher should regard the traditional way of communal thought as an indispensable account of the mode of thought.¹⁰⁸

One can find Kaphagawani perspective of the need to keep the traditional way of philosophical thought developed further in Kwasi Wiredu’s account of ethnophilosophy. Though he agrees with some essential attributes such as rationality, systematic thought, objectivity, self-criticism, inherently conceived in a philosophical system, Wiredu still regards such attributes as non-constitutive evaluative elements for a contest of philosophical thought. He reminds us think of some non-rigorous, irrational, even

¹⁰⁷ Kaphagawani 1990: 188.

¹⁰⁸ Kaphagawani 1990: 189.

dogmatic philosophies from the history of Western philosophy.¹⁰⁹ Given the fact that the non-constitutive evaluative elements can emerge in any kind of philosophical thought regardless of its regional origin, the traditional way of philosophical thought should not be simply judged as irrational and unsystematic thought. Ethnophilosophy in this sense provides:

“...intimate relation between the thought of individual sage-philosophers and the communal world outlooks of their people.”¹¹⁰

Ethnophilosophy is a point of reference for individual African philosophers as well as the philosophic sages. It is the task of such philosophers to critically evaluate the substance of the traditional way of philosophical thought. Such formulation makes the unheard and unsystematic voices of the communal thought intelligible, primarily to fellow local scholars but also to outsiders far away. The purpose is to engage in intellectual exercises among local philosophers to contribute in the production of local knowledge systems, and to enrich the common discourse of the local mode of philosophical thought.

An alternative approach of the critical assessment of Tempels’ book is posed by the prominent African philosopher Valentin Y. Mudimbe. In his book *The Invention of Africa* (1988), Mudimbe dedicates a relatively long chapter which is composed of his detailed critiques, not only of Tempels’ account, but also of ethnophilosophy as a school of the traditional mode of philosophical thought in Africa. Mudimbe indicates some contested accounts in Tempels’ book and in the account of ethnophilosophy.

The hidden colonial agendas in *Bantu Philosophy* consist of three intentions. The first one is the intervention of the superior or advanced civilization into the supposed inferior one. The political correctness for the intervention is that it is the natural right of the superior people to introduce civilization to the indigenous (primitive) people. The second intention, which is the result of the first one, is to “exploit the wealth meant by God for all humanity.”¹¹¹ By using super-natural permission, the exploitation of natural and human resources in the continent is legitimized for the economic development of each individual colonizer’s country. Furthermore, the legitimization by the Transcendental Might also assists the dissemination of Christianity into the continent so that the indigenous people admit to belief the saving religion. Mudimbe summarizes these hidden agendas as the following:

“... that nature comes from God and that it is up to superior peoples to civilize their inferior brethren. Thus, the right to colonize was duplicated by a natural duty and a spiritual mission.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Wiredu in Kaphagawani 1990: 184.

¹¹⁰ Wiredu in Kaphagawani 1990: 190.

¹¹¹ Mudimbe 1988: 137.

¹¹² Ibid.

Mudimbe asserts that Tempels' disposition was at the crossroads of the sympathetic intention to abridge the discrepancy between the European and the African, and the claimed natural right (and duty) of the superior civilization to bring the indigenous people out of their savagery. By being in such tension, Mudimbe affirms that Tempels included these hidden agendas in his accounts of Bantu philosophy; even though Tempels intended to express his sympathy towards the Bantu people in order to assist them in formulating their philosophical mode of thought.¹¹³

The second contested account, Mudimbe argues is the mistake of equating Bantu philosophy with the philosophical thought of the entire African continent. Mudimbe finds that the ontological worldview of the Bantu people was generalized and applied to all African philosophical knowledge. Tempels' identification of Being and Force from Bantu thought tends to account for the African theory of ontology. The main objections to this generalization are related to the fact that Tempels formulated the dynamic conception of the Bantu ontological worldview based only on his pastoral service and observation in the Luba-Saba community. The particularity of his contextual observations is not sufficient to infer that this local conception can be applied to in a wider context to an African philosophical system. Mudimbe concurs with Tshiamalenga, a Zairian philosopher, who argues that Tempels account of the ontological conception of the dynamic identification of Being and Force is only a "hypothesis, a first attempt at the systematic development of what Bantu philosophy is."¹¹⁴

Given the typical European approach to the issue of the primitive philosophy in the African context and the generalization of a local dynamic conception of ontological thought onto the entire African continent, Mudimbe looks at ethnophilosophical schools as attempts to unearth the implicit philosophy which lies in the depths of African cultural orientations. One of these attempts was conducted by Alexis Kagame, who is a historian, a philosopher, and a theologian and was academically well trained in Rome. His realization of the "silent philosophy" depends on the employment of scholastic methodology and a linguistic analysis of the Bantu language. This attempt proposed an alternative academic exploration of the dynamic ontological worldview of the Bantu people. The aim was to complete the explication of Bantu philosophy which Tempels had previously started.

Kagame's approach clarifies and systemizes the dynamic ontological worldview. He analyzed the constitutive terms in the Bantu language, that is *-ntu* (the essence), and its derivations like *untu* (the category of substance), *kintu* (the one of things), *hantu* (one of time and place) and *kuntu* (category of quality and quantity as being in itself). His elaboration of these terms systematized Bantu philosophical thought. The systematization included the logical system, the criteriology and ontology, the theodicy

¹¹³ Mudimbe 1988: 136.

¹¹⁴ Mudimbe 1988: 140.

and cosmology, the rational psychology and ethical principles in Bantu philosophical thought.¹¹⁵

This systematization shows the embodiment of indigenous philosophical thought in an African cultural orientation. This attempt is indispensable for pointing to the rationality of an indigenous mode of thought. Nevertheless, the ethnophilosophical approach both in Tempels' and Kagame's exploration still faces a contradiction. On the one hand, the ethnophilosophical approach applies the European anthropological and analytical (linguistic) methods of observation and interpretation (mainly the scholastic ones). On the other hand, it insists on affirming the original alterity of rationality and organized and systematic knowledge in addition to the European model. As if ethnophilosophy was concerned with the task of defending the "anthropological dignity" and "an assessment of an intellectual independence."¹¹⁶ Moreover, there are serious implications for the purpose of the dissemination of Christianity on the continent. Mudimbe considers ethnophilosophy is a means to demonstrate the "Africanization of Christianity."¹¹⁷ The other implication of the ethnophilosophical approach is the issue of the origination and authenticity of African philosophy. The ethnophilosophical approach seems to demonstrate the radicalization of post-colonial critiques of knowledge production on the continent and the insistence in determining an imperative of cultural uniqueness.¹¹⁸ In other words, these last issues leads to the tendency to enhance the perspective that a culture is itself self-evident and bounded and that these qualities are considered the constitutive elements that determine the production of an indigenous knowledge system. Each knowledge system is considered completely distinct from the others. By contrast, Mudimbe makes us to think about the issue of origin and authenticity. When such problems arise elsewhere, it becomes impossible to assert a pure originality and authenticity, as if there were homogeneous cultural elements contained in every cultural orientation, and as if one was capable of distinguishing clearly between the indigenous and the foreign aspects in a cultural orientation.¹¹⁹

The last point of Mudimbe's critical assessment has to do with the real content of ethnophilosophy. This means that such an exploration of an indigenous mode of thought is a deep study of a worldview or *Weltanschauung*. The ethnophilosophical approach demonstrates a "philosophical reflection" and at best it is "a rationalization of a *Weltanschauung*." Mudimbe insists that ethnophilosophy fails to distinguish philosophy as a rationalization of a worldview and philosophy as an intellectual praxis of critical

¹¹⁵ Mudimbe 1988: 146-150.

¹¹⁶ Mudimbe 1988: 151-152.

¹¹⁷ Mudimbe 1988: 152.

¹¹⁸ Mudimbe 1988: 153.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*; cf. with van Binsbergen 2003a.

reflexivity on matters which one confronts in this life-world.¹²⁰ It is interesting to note that Mudimbe does not object to the philosopher employing a cultural setting as a necessary starting point for a philosophical exploration. It is not intended for the cultural milieu to become the determining factor for the continuation of the philosophical exploration, but rather the consideration of cultural background refers to the idea of the “contextualization of philosophy.” Mudimbe writes:

*“Yet, philosophy concerns the experience of humans, although it cannot be assimilated to it; philosophy bears on experience, reflects it without being congruent with it.”*¹²¹

Mudimbe seems to affirm the argument of F. Crahay, a Belgian philosopher, who calls for the contextualization of philosophy in African indigenous traditions. Though the tradition is only treated as the stepping stone for a further philosophical discourse on human affairs, the African philosopher should go beyond tradition. He/she should not be confined in the rationalization of mystical thought or the unanimity of ideological and collective *Weltanschauung*. The philosopher has to practice independently critical approaches and be capable to account for a systematic and organized philosophical mode of thought if he/she deals with contemporary human matters in life-worlds.¹²²

So far, given the perspectives of the African scholars discussed above and their respective accounts of the issue of ethnophilosophy, it follows that the critique of and the appreciation for ethnophilosophy implies binary approaches. On the one hand, these critiques contest the *etic* and *emic* approach of African philosophy. It seems that African philosophy is no more than a unanimous traditional worldview. Such a categorization refers to the dogmatic and ideological worldview of the indigenous people. On the other hand, the critiques recognize that philosophical system cannot be disembedded from the respective contextuality of their communal thought. Philosophical systems are always in a discursive discussion in different contexts. As I have already mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, I am not in a position to judge in this thesis which approach demonstrates the more comprehensive explanation of African philosophy. As far as the binary approaches are concerned, it is first necessary to move to other trends before it reflects critically on these approaches.

1.2.2 The Nationalist-ideologist philosophy

Odera Oruka names the second trend the Nationalist-ideologist philosophy based on his exploration on the text of the historical school¹²³. The historical school also deals with the recognition of African philosophy. Yet it formulates the issue in a different way. The school does not directly involve itself in the discursive debate on the definition and

¹²⁰ Mudimbe 1988: 156.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Mudimbe 1988: 157.

¹²³ Odera Oruka 1990:9

characterization of what is African philosophy or what is not African philosophy. This indirect involvement in the debate, according to Odera Oruka, is a sign that the school prefers to be neutral on this standpoint. The prominent scholars in the historical school are John Ulo Sodipo, Claude Sumner, V.Y. Mudimbe, Lucius Outlaw, Dismas Masolo, and some works by African Nationalists such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Leopold Senghor.¹²⁴

According to Odera Oruka, the main concern of this school is to collect and to evaluate texts which are regarded as the subject matter of African Philosophy. Prof. Claude Sumner from Addis Ababa University has issued one of the most complete historical collections and evaluations. His significant five volume exploration of “Ethiopian Philosophy” elaborates the texts of *Zar’a Ya’qob*. This historical figure who was a contemporary of René Descartes similarly had a predilection for rationalistic philosophy and those of the influence of the Semitic thought in Ethiopian philosophy. By using this historical investigation, Odera Oruka seems to accept that Sumner’s position is neither radically critical of the issue of ethnophilosophy or a rationalization of the traditional worldview, in the Ethiopian context, nor does he indicate that he contributed his exploration to the systematic construction of an African philosophy. Even though Sumner also issued two relevant articles concerning the topic of African Philosophy, he maintained his neutrality by himself avoiding directly discussing the debate of African philosophy.¹²⁵

Other prominent scholars associated with this second trend also adopt the typical academic attitude concerning the issue of African philosophy. According to Odera Oruka, Mudimbe does not put himself in a definitive position either, by taking into account rationality and critical reasoning as the coherent normative standard in African philosophy, or to regard the rationalization and systematic approach of the traditional worldview as a form of African Philosophy. Meanwhile, a nuance of the post-colonial standpoint can be found in the work of Lucius Outlaw. Outlaw refuses to accept the belief that African people lack logic and rational thought. The label of unreason or irrationality is the perspective of some Western academia whose racism and arrogance imposed this on the African people.¹²⁶

Other commentators on Odera Oruka’s categorization of the four trends in African philosophy tend to offer an account for the nationalist-ideologist philosophy group. Peter Bodunrin, Lucius Outlaw, Didier N. Kaphagawani identify this group is engaged in a political struggle for the recognition of the “original root” of African cultural orientations. This struggle implies a revival of African characters either on the individual or the communal level. The revival includes all aspects of cultural life, whether at the practical level of life-world or the theoretical one. The former has to do

¹²⁴ These names of scholars are mentioned in Odera Oruka see Ibid.

¹²⁵ Cf. Odera Oruka 1990: 21.

¹²⁶ Odera Oruka 1990: 21.

with the social, economic and political domain; while the latter refers to philosophical thought. The claim of the nationalist-ideological philosopher is that African cultural orientations represent the original version of both the practical and theoretical levels. This conviction enhances the distinction between foreign influences and the traditional aspects of the African cultural orientation and their original characteristics. Though the effort to preserve the original philosophical aspects of African traditional life-worlds is considered a political aim not really associated with the more philosophical modes of thought,¹²⁷ the group admits the political role of an African philosopher. Kaphagawani describes such a role as:

“(the political role) of assuming a leading position in the question of the best options, befitting Africa’s divergent or different conditions, of social and political organization and the re-examination and re-appraisal of the traditional culture in the hope of identifying and preserving what is useful and worth preserving and worth developing from what is obsolete and fit for the dust bin.”¹²⁸

Thus, the selection of which cultural aspects are worth preserving and which are not is made by an African philosopher after he re-evaluates the traditional aspects. The decision of what is worth and worthy of promoting as traditional aspects, is assisted if the philosopher occupies a significant political position. While the selection becomes complicated in its realization, it is considered the task of the cultural nationalist to conduct explorations in traditional culture. The interest of national unity and the desire to avoid the negative impact of other outside cultural assimilations in a free country becomes the major issue for this group.¹²⁹ The importance of the exploration of African tradition for the sake of national unity seems to be part of Odera Oruka’s project in his native country Kenya. Thus, though the group is regarded as “not in the strict sense, really philosophical”¹³⁰ or as part of Black Nationalist movement, one cannot ignore the existence and the role of the group. Bodunrin comments:

“We began to think of the traditional social order and to seek salvation in the pristine values of our ancestor. Nationalist-ideological philosophy is a response to this challenge.”¹³¹

1.2.3 The professional philosophy

Ochieng’-Odhiambo believes that the reason why Odera Oruka proposes philosophic sagacity or sage philosophy in the debate between ethnophilosophy and professional philosophy is because Odera Oruka wants to prove that there are several critical individuals who are capable of expressing their respective analytical and critical modes

¹²⁷ Lucius Outlaw 1990: 234; Kaphagawani 1990: 193ff; Bodunrin 1990: 166.

¹²⁸ Kaphagawani 1990: 194.

¹²⁹ Ochieng’-Odhiambo 2006: 26ff.

¹³⁰ Lucius Outlaw 1990: 234.

¹³¹ Bodunrin 1990: 166.

of thought in the African context. The African mode of thought is not only a unanimously traditional worldview or a collective and ideological mode of thought, but also from the African soil some individual thinkers are present.¹³² He does not believe these individual thinkers have to be literate and well educated scholars, but rather these indigenous figures can express their analysis and critique of their surrounding life-world based on their respective wisdoms and experiences.

What is important in the debate is the fact that there are some well educated and trained African philosophers. Their critical voices are part of the theoretical and philosophical discourse in African cultural orientations. They argue that *there is philosophy* in the African context. The existence of philosophy in Africa can be shown by the number of African professional philosophers who have individually adopted a critical philosophical approach. Ethnophilosophy in this sense can be viewed as the rival of professional philosophy, inasmuch it is an elaboration of a worldview only. It shows the rationalization of a unanimous ideology, the traditional mode of thought, the mystical, as well as mythical thinking. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that ethnophilosophy is the result of adopting an anthropological and ethnographical approach; it is not philosophy in its real qualification.¹³³

According to Odera Orika, most African professional philosophers belong to the rationalist school. They are Peter O. Bodunrin, Didier N. Kaphagawani, Paulin Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu, and Henry Odera Orika himself. The rationalist school argues that philosophy in Africa has to be distinctly defined from the traditional worldview, religions, myths and mysticism. The necessary conditions for the pronouncement of philosophy in the African context are the use of reason, i.e. rational, critical, and analytical thinking. Without these properties, the African scholars cannot proclaim the existence of philosophy in the African context. The problem is how to demonstrate the existence of such critical reasoning and rational modes of thought in the African context. For this purpose, the rationalist school insists on the requisite condition of writing discourse and literacy, even though Odera Orika rejects these requirements as necessary conditions for the existence of philosophic thought and philosophy.¹³⁴

As far as writing and literacy are concerned, the African philosophers have to be capable of showing these in their philosophy. The absence of these requirements only reinforces the belief that there is no critical and rational thought in the African community. There are only belief systems and traditional worldviews in which one can establish unanimous and ideological thinking, as well as mythical and mystical modes of thought. These models of thought cannot be classified as “philosophy.”¹³⁵ Thus, what is categorized as “philosophy” presupposes the individual thinkers who have their

¹³² Ochieng'-Odiambo 2006: 22.

¹³³ Bodunrin 1990: 167.

¹³⁴ Odera Orika 1990: 16.

¹³⁵ Bodunrin 1991: 166.

philosophical education and professional training as “philosophers.” By adopting the Western model of the discipline of philosophy such as logic, epistemology, ethics, ontology, metaphysics, philosophy of science, the history of philosophy, etc., a professional philosopher in Africa can produce his/her own philosophical thought on relevant topics of the universal themes of humanity, whereas the contextuality of his philosophy in an Africa cultural setting is not a must.¹³⁶

From this characterization of the professional philosopher in Africa, it follows that, first, literacy and a critical and rational discourse in writing are the necessary conditions for the development of philosophy in the African context. Bodunrin asserts that these requirements are:

“...immensely important because of the honoric way in which philosophy has come to be seen. Philosophy has become a value-laden expression such that for a people not to have philosophy is for them to be considered intellectually inferior to others who have.”¹³⁷

Bodunrin’s proposition above indicates the second inference from the account of professional philosophy. It emphasizes the necessity of literacy and writing for philosophy in the African context for the sake of the (*national*) *self-esteem*. The existence of philosophy in Africa proves *the respect of self-identity* not only as individuals, but also as nation’s on the continent. This reinforces the persistent academic belief that Africans have to provide their critical and rational writing discourse in philosophy. Odera Oruka in this sense also insists on the capability of African individuals to reason rationally. He underlines the fact that reason is a universal property of humankind, regardless of individual or collective performance.¹³⁸ The interest to improve the national self-esteem appears as the second factor in the discourse of philosophic sagacity on the continent. Ochieng’-Odhiambo distinctly addresses this factor in his theory of philosophic sagacity.¹³⁹ In the terms of Presbey, the issue of the respect of self and nation on the continent arises with the demand for justice against the one-sided perspective of African modes of thought. That is the commonly accepted one of underdeveloped in all aspects of cultural orientation. This view clearly shows an unfair conception of the continent.¹⁴⁰

Odera Oruka, who may also be considered to belong to the professional philosophers, intends to show the existence of African philosophy in a distinct way. He takes an alternative path which focuses on the existence of sagacious figures in the African community. In this sense, as Presbey writes, he used philosophy because:

¹³⁶ Kaphagawani 1991: 195; cf. Bodunrin 1990: 173.

¹³⁷ Bodunrin 1990: 166.

¹³⁸ Odera Oruka 1990: 16.

¹³⁹ Ochieng’-Odhiambo 2006: 26-27.

¹⁴⁰ Presbey 2007: 150.

“... (he) viewed it as a tool to expose injustice and to fight for people’s right using reason and argument.”¹⁴¹

Given the grand scheme of the discourse of ethnophilosophy and professional philosophy, I will now move to the discussion of the last category in African philosophy.

1.2.4 Sage philosophy

The last trend in Odera Oruka’s account of African philosophy is his exploration of the philosophic sage in Kenyan communities. Most of these sagacious figures are illiterate, yet they are capable of expressing their reasons and arguments. The illiteracy and lack of written discourse in Odera Oruka’s project have become the main point of objection for some prominent African philosophers, such as Bodunrin and Kaphagawani, and indirectly by Mudimbe’s critique of ethnophilosophy. Bodunrin considers Odera Oruka’s project only to be an ethnographical or anthropological research study into the traditional and ideological worldview.¹⁴² In spite of the critiques posed by these professional philosopher, Odera Oruka points out the capacity of these individual sagacious figures who engage in philosophical reflection inasmuch as they reveal that reason and rationality constitute the quality of human life.

By comparing the presentations of the philosophical thought of these sagacious figures with the explication of the traditional worldview and ideological thought either by ethnophilosophers or ethnographers, Odera Oruka provides a categorization of wise African thinkers.¹⁴³ The first type of sagacious figure is the folk-sage. The folk sage is an honored person who articulates the traditional worldview of his/her people. This person is also able to bring order to his/her own community based on the ideological teachings of the traditional worldview. The folk-sage is versed in popular wisdom, communal wise sayings and traditional modes of thought. These types of sagacious figures include among others, poets, herbalists, medicine men, musicians and fortune tellers. Odera Oruka concludes:

*“The common thing they have is that their explanations or thought do not go beyond the premises and conclusions given by the prevailing culture.”*¹⁴⁴

The second type of sagacious figure is the wise person who is able to make philosophic arguments.¹⁴⁵ This type of philosophic sage is able to engage in critical thinking or the assessment of the cultural worldview of his/her people. This figure even contests the prevailing ideological mindset and worldview, in order to seek a clarification from the unanimity of communal thought. In other words, the sagacity he

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Bodunrin 1990: 167; cf. Kaphagawani 1990.

¹⁴³ Odera Oruka 1990: 28, 44-45, 56ff; cf. Ochieng’-Odhiambo 2006; Presbey 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Odera Oruka 1990: 45.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

or she pronounces has a philosophical quality. By this qualification, the philosophic sagacity conceives of a sage and a thinker who explicates a reflective re-evaluation of the traditional worldview and the underlying belief system. These philosophic sages do not ignore their respective communal thought. They are always in a conversation with the traditional system of mind and belief. By contrast with the ordinary sage, they simultaneously overcome the limits of the ideological knowledge of his/her people or cultural context. Though philosophic sages are not necessarily philosophers, these critical figures underline the existence of critical individuals; they highlight the capability to *use reason* to seek insight into their surrounding life-world.¹⁴⁶ The use of reason is the main purpose why the articulation of the philosophic sage is not merely an ethnographical project. What Odera Oruka has tried to do is to raise the African mode of thought from the level of *gnosis* to one of *episteme*. It is the task of African critical thinkers either he or she is the philosophic sage, or the educated and trained philosopher to argue against the categorization of the underdevelopment of African cultural orientations. By making distinctions between the folk-sage and the philosophic sage, Odera Oruka also distinguishes popular wisdom from didactic wisdom, philosophy as the general unexamined worldview of a people and philosophy as the critical evaluation of the worldview and the free reflection on ideas and concepts as the mirror of reality.¹⁴⁷

One must carefully consider the distinction in Odera Oruka account of the philosophic sage as the exclusion of the folk-sage from his account. In several places in his book, Odera Oruka reminds that one cannot completely separate the elements of popular wisdom which is often associated with the folk-sage from the didactic wisdom, articulated by the philosophic sage. Such distinctions show different models of the employment of reason in the African context. Odera Oruka considers these models as complementary to each other as supporting modes of thought in an African context. He writes that there is an “*overlap between a philosopher to have wisdom and a wise man to be a philosopher*”¹⁴⁸. In other places he writes that he leaves it up to “the reader to define which sagacious figure is the folk-sage and the philosophic one”¹⁴⁹. I concur with Ochieng-Odhiambo who argues that the inclusion of articulations of popular wisdom and the folk-sage are an inherent part of Odera Oruka’s argument concerning sage philosophy.¹⁵⁰

From Odera Oruka’s account of sage philosophy one can infer some of the following points:

1. The use of reason is the constitutive property of humanity. I want to avoid the inference that the use of reason represents the universal condition for humanity. If

¹⁴⁶ Odera Oruka 1990: 16, 45.

¹⁴⁷ Odera Oruka 1990: 16, 28, 53.

¹⁴⁸ Odera Oruka 1990: 16, 36, 54.

¹⁴⁹ Odera Oruka 1990: 16, 28, 29, 36, 53, 54.

¹⁵⁰ Ochieng’-Odhiambo 2006; by contrast with Presbey 2007.

the use of reason is a common quality for any cultural orientation, the articulation of how to use reason is rather different from one cultural orientation to the others. What is regarded as mythical and mystical thought, ideological unanimity and an unexamined worldview, is claimed by people as reasonable for their own model of thought. Thus, a comprehensive approach to the articulation of reason is preferred, rather than a one-sided one.

2. By providing a comprehensive approach to an indigenous mode of thought, the project of sage philosophy initiates the way for exploring the content of wise sayings and the critical arguments of both the folk-sage and the philosophic sage. The content of these expressed modes of thought, as long as they are transcribed, represents not only a type of worldview of the people, but also a principle of thinking that maintains an understanding of life-worlds.
3. From the first and the second point, a further inference may follow that the exploration of the content will reveal the various models of reason and rationality. Indeed each mode of reason and rationality has a unique empirical and theoretical approach in order to explicate the reality of the life-world. The thesis wants to point out that these models of reason and rationality can interact with each other; that they even represent a typical worldview and principles of thinking and have epistemological foundations. The existence of epistemological foundations enhances the possibility of sharing their respective understanding of their life-world. In the second part, I will analyze this typical worldview and principles of thinking.

1.3 The implications of an affirmative worldview and the principle of affirmation in the African model of philosophic sagacity

My exploration of the African philosophical mode of thought is moving one step further. The previous section has already delineated the context of sagacious knowledge in the discourse between wisdom and philosophical accounts on the African continent. The thesis intends to move from the discursive debates of the prerequisites of African philosophy, to an elaboration of the content of philosophical sagacity. Yet before conducting my analysis, I should reveal such implications within the context of sagacious knowledge in Africa. These formulations are gathered from the lesson learned from African philosopher's presentation of their philosophical accounts.

1.3.1 Illiteracy and the non-written philosophical thought vs. critical philosophy

Odera Oruka and Bodunrin have been involved in an intense debate on the necessity of literacy and literature (writing) vis-à-vis illiteracy and the existence of no written literature presenting philosophical accounts in the African context. Bodunrin argues that the lack of literacy and written philosophical accounts has caused a late start for African

philosophy.¹⁵¹ Odera Oruka finds such a statement ungrounded inasmuch as literacy and literature or philosophical writing (and other forms of a knowledge system) cannot become the criteria for determining the existence of a philosophy on the continent.

In contrast, he insists that the non-written or oral transmission of the philosophical accounts in the African traditional worldview contributes to the improvement of African philosophical accounts. If literacy and literature were the criteria to determine whether there was African philosophy, then professional philosophers in Africa would have to detach themselves from their respective cultural orientations. It is impossible to ignore the influence of cultural aspects in a philosophical account. The case of classical Greek philosophy suggests how the cultural habits like delivering and contesting opinion in public space, or involving in a debate or a dialogue with other persons or groups initiated the philosophical discourse among the intellectuals, or the thinkers (such as the pre-Socratic philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc.). This comparison underlines the inevitable embeddedness of the philosophers in their respective language and cultural orientations¹⁵².

Nevertheless, apart from the debate concerning literacy and literature as a prerequisite for philosophy, I think is a typical consideration suggested by the arguments of Odera Oruka and Bodunrin They have taken on the struggle of recognition to show that African individuals have critical and analytical modes of thought. They also consider literacy and literature as an example of the intellectuality in the African context. Such written performances presuppose the underlying organized and systematic thought. It is the fact that both thinkers improve the organization and systematization of traditional thought on the continent. In other words, they transform the *gnosis* in the traditional mode of thought to be the *episteme*. This transformation has made traditional thought and the thinking of professional philosophers in Africa intelligible to other cultural orientations.

To some extent, Bodunrin was right in his effort to promote literacy and literature for African philosophy. This effort seeks to work against the division of human civilization, as if there were the more complicated and developed civilization and the more simple, primitive and underdeveloped ones.¹⁵³ His effort also makes the African mode of thought public and intelligible to others. If a mode of thought is intelligible to others, this indicates the level of shareability of the thought among different cultural orientations. To the extent of the intelligibility and share-ability of the mode of thought, Odera Oruka's contribution represents major progress for the improvement of his people's critical and analytical thought. The transcription of his interviews with wise men enhances the awareness of the existence of "oral literatures"

¹⁵¹ Bodunrin 1990: 169, 176; cf. Odera Oruka 1990: 48-49.

¹⁵² Odera Oruka 1990: 50.

¹⁵³ Finnegan 1973: 113.

in the African context. Such transcripts show that the non-European societies have their respective intelligible modes of thought.¹⁵⁴

What is significant in the debate among the prominent African philosophers about their philosophical account and modes of thought in general, is concerned with the presentation of organized and systematic modes of thought, especially in the model of sagacious knowledge. The folk-wisdom, philosophic sagacity, as well as modern philosophical accounts in the African context explode the assumption of the strong association between literacy and writing, and the presupposition that those are prerequisite for philosophical modes of thought.¹⁵⁵

1.3.2. The implication of the affirmative worldview in Sage Philosophy

The next lesson learned from the discourse of African sagacious knowledge is a serious question posed by Gail M. Presbey. Does the critical sagacious knowledge exclude ordinary folk-wisdom? Presbey prefers to separate the ordinary or popular wisdom from critical and philosophic wisdom. Though she indicates that these modes of thought are somewhat correlated, she cannot agree with the inclusion of the popular wisdom and the ordinary wise man into the category of sage philosophy.¹⁵⁶

Her critique of Ochieng'-Odhiambo's account of this inclusion is made in two approaches. The first approach says that if the inclusion of popular wisdom and ordinary wise men into the account of sage philosophy is based on the ethnographical exploration of ethnophilosophy, such an inclusion should be critically reviewed since such ethnographical exploration employs the "superior-to-inferior" approach of the model of reason and rational mind. Thus, the inclusion could be rejected. Meanwhile, if the inclusion is grounded on the perspective of local sage men, either the folk-sage, or the philosophic sage, one has to regard that the inclusion is inescapable as the consequence of such exploration. Thus, the outsider's exploration into the indigenous mode of sagacious thought or the *emic* approach implies critical considerations. If such an *emic* approach employs a "universal-to-particular" perspective, such as the one in Bantu Philosophy, the elaboration of indigenous sagacious thought is only an appropriation of the mode of thought into the standard of universal scientific knowledge. By contrast, if the approach employs the "local-to-local" exploration, even if an *emic* agent conducts the exploration, such an approach possibly provides a fair, even comprehensive, evaluation of indigenous sagacious knowledge.

I consider the inescapable inclusion of ethnophilosophy or folk-wisdom in the sage philosophy which Presbey cannot completely reject as the second approach in Sage Philosophy. In the meantime, Presbey also seems to accept the second approach

¹⁵⁴ Finnegan 1973: 115.

¹⁵⁵ Finnegan 1973: 114.

¹⁵⁶ Presbey 2006.

inasmuch as popular/folk-wisdom and the sayings of ordinary wise men are the contextual settings for the critical conversation and evaluation by the philosophic sage. The second approach is what Ochieng'-Odhiambo meant in his account of the tripartite aspects in sage philosophy.¹⁵⁷

Given the tripartite aspects Ochieng'-Odhiambo implicitly makes a similar inference that sage philosophy should be regarded from a comprehensive viewpoint rather than a formulation of a distinct definition of the category of sagacities: the popular and the didactic wisdoms. The tripartite aspects are a comprehensive approach which considers the interconnection between the types of sagacity and between the sagacities and the contextual setting. In this respect the folk-sages interconnect with the two others, the critical sage and the contextual setting of sagacity on which a conversation between these two types becomes realized. This comprehensive approach of the tripartite elements in the sage philosophy address us to take into account the interconnectivity of the elements and the interactivity of the elements in order to construct the dynamic viewpoint of the sagacious knowledge. Both idea, the interconnectivity and the interactivity indicates the underlying principle of thought which guides our understanding of how a philosophy in African context should be perceived. That underlying principle which implicitly lies in the heart of the debates between Presbey and Ochieng'-Odiambo, and also in the heart of the categorization of sagacity made by Odera Oruka is the principle of affirmation. If one consider this underlying principle of affirmation, then one could agree with Presbey who associates Odera Oruka's project on sage philosophy with the issue of bringing justice to the people of Africa: that there are some critical and analytical individuals who are capable of expressing their philosophical ideas distinctly, yet not separated from the popular wisdom, aphorisms, maxims, and ideological thoughts¹⁵⁸.

1.3.3. An implication of affirmation as the epistemic foundation for the intercultural encounters

These complementary approaches articulated by African scholars presumably indicate an alternative account of the mode of (philosophical) thought in the non-North Atlantic cultural orientations. The discourse of philosophic sagacity in African context can be compared with the North Atlantic mode of thought. The North Atlantic mode of thought is determined by a main presupposition, that is, the prerequisite of the universal, both in empirical, theoretical and the philosophical models of thought. The universal in this context means the impartial or indifferent qualification of any knowledge models. Given the impartial quality of knowledge system, it is necessary to construct series of verification or justification for articulated opinions so that these opinions can pass over

¹⁵⁷ Ochieng'-Odhiambo 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Presbey 2007:150.

a boundary of subjectivity. The contest followed by the justification of these subjective opinions leads to the objective standard of truth. A methodology then equips scientists or thinkers in achieving the standardized level of objective knowledge. Thus, scientific knowledge and philosophy in the North Atlantic version are the ongoing elaboration of life-world for the sake of the achievement of truth.

For centuries, scientists and scholars have developed the method of judgement in order to separate opinion and esoteric knowledge (*gnosis*) from justified public knowledge (*episteme*).¹⁵⁹ The *episteme* has to embody the prerequisite of the universal. Consequently, mere opinion and esoteric knowledge, or the particulars have their respective subsequent places. Thus, the empirical and theoretical science, and philosophy have to conform to the rules of judgement in order to transcend to the level of universality. Once a knowledge system is declared universal, this qualification should be followed by any scientists, scholars, thinkers, even ordinary practitioners of a scientific and technological knowledge. Furthermore, the universality of scientific and philosophical knowledge systems should influence individuals in any society, and strengthen their respective belief towards true knowledge.¹⁶⁰

Although this proposition seems positivistic, and this “belief” has been criticized by North Atlantic scholars, the presupposition of the universal knowledge system, and the method of judgement are still indispensable for the academic, scientific and philosophical community in the North Atlantic region. Moreover, such a presupposition still is regarded as the standard of measurement for non-North Atlantic models of knowledge systems. Given this standardization of the universal for the measurement of reasonability and rationality of any knowledge system, one infers that the prerequisite of the universal is the epistemological foundation for the scientific and philosophical “worldview” in the North Atlantic region.

Back to the complementary approaches by the African thinkers, one also could take into account Odera Oruka’s proposition about the conversation between an individual and critical thinker with his/her cultural orientation.¹⁶¹ If an individual thinker employs the measurement of universality for his/her process of thinking, he/she detaches himself/herself from the contextual situation and produces a knowledge system which does not correlate with the context. Given the detachment, such universal knowledge systems would completely distinguish themselves from their context. It also establishes as the text which has nothing to do with “the recognition of life-world.” In being the text, the knowledge system both in scientific and philosophical forms, does not have to do with human praxis; it is concerned only with the “theoretical.” The universal quality and the text, in this sense, articulate the knowledge system as the “open” system. By contrast, in fact such an establishment only transforms the North-

¹⁵⁹ See Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 79.

¹⁶⁰ Finnegan & Horton 1973: 18.

¹⁶¹ Odera Oruka 1990: 44.

Atlantic model of thought into a closed knowledge system inasmuch as the models of thought cannot be evaluated by other knowledge systems. This is the implicit reason why Odera Oruka suggests that Bodunrin evaluate his account of the development of African philosophical thought in accordance with the standard of the universal quality and the production of the text.

Since contextuality is a significant of philosophical thought, the complementary approaches, the theoretical and the practical sagacious knowledge, indicate that exercises in thinking aim to search for the truth, but also to guide human praxis. According to these African thinkers, reason and rationality should be capable of answering the problematic issues of confronting humanity in the practical domain, also in the theoretical one. Yet, this “style” of approach should not be defined by the stereotypical judgement that non-North Atlantic models of knowledge systems prefer “action” to “thinking.” No matter which side they take in the intensive debate concerning African models of systems of knowledge, Odera Oruka and his contemporary African thinkers and scholars articulate the typical account. They assert “the use of reason” in order to accompany and assist “the action,” which will be contextually actualized in daily behavior.

Philosophic sagacity accommodates these dynamic approaches so that the philosophic sage perceives a complementary relationship between the theoretical and the practical purpose of sagacious knowledge. Given these complementary approaches to philosophic sagacity, one begins to realize the implications of epistemic foundations in African traditions of sagacious thought. This epistemological foundation appears as an alternative prerequisite of the capacity to think and reason, other than the Western one. I consider this epistemological foundation as the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview. Later in the next chapters, I will explicate these basic foundations for human’s thinking and reasoning capacity. For now it is enough to pose a further challenge that this non-North Atlantic tradition of philosophic sagacity or the sagacious knowledge system can accompany the North Atlantic knowledge system. If this were the case, then the North Atlantic perception and conception of the others would be transformed from one which transcends or views others at a distance to one in which others stand side by side with them.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Cf. van Binsbergen 2003a: 40; 2008: 55; van Niekerk 1991: 54 .

Chapter 2: Philosophic sagacity in the Asian context

This chapter highlights a critical discourse of philosophic sagacity in the Asian region. One can see a slightly more different context in the Asian model of philosophic sagacity than if one compares it with the African model. Since 3 – 5 millennia years ago some regions in Asia had produced literatures. This fact shows that in some parts in the Asia were classical texts produced about the sage and sagacity. For example, Chinese classical texts were circulated and inspired philosophical writing both in Asia and in the West. Many translations of the texts into European languages have been made since the last century. Other historical kinds of texts have also been discovered from the exploration of Hinduism and Buddhism in the South, East, and Southeast Asia. The availability of texts does not presuppose the existence of a systematic and organized mode of thought. In the Chinese classical texts, for instance, the prominent Chinese philosopher Fung Yu-Lan recognized the lack of formal organization and systematization of the texts of Chinese philosophy.¹⁶³ The texts themselves point to the lack of systematized and organized qualities. It is clear that the lists of topics in Lunyu and Daodejing, for example, are not well composed in sequential order. This, however, does not demonstrate the lack of rationality, according to Fung Yu-Lan, even though the texts do not provide the basic requirements for a rational knowledge system. Fung Yu-Lan argues that the Chinese sages did not only write for the sake of theoretical knowledge. The sages' intention seems to be to persuade readers' insofar as the texts will encourage them to conduct themselves in accordance with the wise advice offered.

In Asia, the stereotype regarding the quality of knowledge systems that is applied is the priority of practice over theory. Nonetheless, this stereotype seems only a rationalization of the lack of a systematic and organized knowledge system. Such rationalization should be critically reviewed inasmuch as the texts embody a typical quality of rationality which might not correspond with the North Atlantic model of systematization and organization of written thought. In the case of Chinese classical texts, the quality of rationality represented in the texts is determined by Chinese epistemological foundations.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the models of sagacious thought that can be found in selected Asian regions. It is crucial to acknowledge that Asia is a vast region with complex diversity. One cannot ignore such complex diversity in Asian

¹⁶³ Fung Yu-Lan 1969: 4; cf. seven arguments in the debate of “the legitimacy of Chinese Philosophy which are presented in Defoort 2006: 625-630.

region. It is a prerequisite for a study of the wisdom tradition in Asian context. Nevertheless, it will take a long time if one discusses the Asian wisdom traditions from one by one in details. It is important to point out that this thesis tries to avoid making generalizations about the wisdom tradition in Asia, while it describes the various arguments from the selected regions. Given such prerequisite, I have had to limit an exploration of philosophic sagacity in this thesis to the South, the East and Southeast Asian regions. I have selected for the purpose of this thesis, the Chinese context of the wisdom tradition and the Southeast Asian one. This selection also considers numerous analytical and critical studies that have been conducted by either North Atlantic scholars or indigenous scholars. Scholars have been inspired by such studies to improve their research technique and approach to modern way of life. They have even developed modern humanities, behavioral and social sciences. The study of modern managerial leadership, the value-based organizational studies, and the crisis and conflict studies are the influence of such inspiration from the Asian sagacity employed in the modern scientific knowledge systems. Given the purpose of this chapter, it will start this chapter with a reflective description of the diversity of the Asian cultural context.

2.1 A reflective description of the model of sagacious thought in the South and East Asian Wisdom traditions

The complex diversity in the wisdom tradition represented in the South, the East and the Southeast Asian regions points to the influence of various religious beliefs, i.e. Hinduism and Buddhism, in addition to the primordial Chinese wisdom tradition like *Confucianism* and *Daoism*. The first thing to notice regarding such religious beliefs, time-honored rituals and philosophical model of thought, is that the Asian context does not distinguish the sagacious knowledge according to two classifications, like the prominent African philosophers do. There is no distinction of the folk-wisdom or the communal ideology and the philosophic sagacity, or the critical and analytical mind of the individual sage made by the ancient or contemporary Asian thinkers or philosophers in the Asian sagacious knowledge. The categorization of the popular wisdom and the didactic one is the invention of contemporary African philosophers while they critically explore their models of philosophical thought.

Meanwhile, the Asian context only acknowledges the wisdom tradition. Such wisdom tradition consists of theoretical knowledge (or the philosophical), *sophia*, and the practical one, *phronesis*. Both modes of thought are blended into a composition of the sagacious texts. The texts themselves are more like an “encyclopaedia” than philosophical treatises. One can regard the text of *Lunyu* in the light of a “complete handbook of life.” The handbook of life articulates normative standards for any individual who intends to “follow the (personal) path of life” or “the way.” The idea of “following the way” is inevitable in the wisdom tradition. The way itself, as Frank J. Hoffman’s articulates the term, is a constitutive term for understanding the Asian

wisdom tradition. The path, the way, or in Sanskrit (also in Javanese) “*marga*,” Pali “*magga*,” Chinese “*dao*,” Japanese “*michi*,” or “*do*,” Korean “*do*,” and Sundanese “*galur*” has three substantial meanings.¹⁶⁴

1. A road (usually a highway), way, or foot-path.
2. The road of a moral and good life, a path of righteousness in accordance with the moral standard, the way of salvation.
3. A stage of righteousness in accordance with various conditions of *Arahantship* (in Indian Hinduism, a four stage process needed to enter the stream or salvation. At least there are two types of *Arahantship*: the returning one once after the illumination and the never-returning one after the event).

By revealing these denotative meanings, “the way” coheres with the “real” way of life; it is the way people should actualize their respective individual lives. It is not only about morality, but it is also about the comprehensive awareness of what is life. What should one do with his/her own life? Hoffman adds:

*“So ways are not abstract structure remote from people. It is people who are on the paths, dancing, practicing, doing martial arts, tea ceremony or whatever is appropriate to a particular Dao. In sum, Dao is path, road, way, the way nature goes, indescribable, ineffable; philosophically method. In compounds there are other possibilities.”*¹⁶⁵

To follow the way, to be able to be on the right path, an individual should employ his/her body and mind, “the somaticity and the rationality.”¹⁶⁶ One cannot dispense with the unity of the body and the mind. Both are prerequisite during meditation and for the praxis of daily activity. Given this prerequisite, can one infer that the unity of body and mind reflects a model of rationality that is implied in the Asian wisdom tradition of the way? “The way” constitutes rational modes of thinking both in theoretical and practical versions.

It is interesting that Hoffman’s approach to the second chapter of *Daodejing* reveals the silence or no spoken words which is derived from adopting a non-active attitude or *wú wéi* (無為)¹⁶⁷ as the ultimate form for the rational models of thinking in the East. The last lines from the chapter 2 on “self-cultured, self-development” (*yāng shēn* 養身) articulate the following:

¹⁶⁴ Hoffman 2002: 199.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Hoffman 2002: 200.

¹⁶⁷ Hoffman 2002: 198.

Therefore the sage goes 是以聖人處「無為」之事， Shì yī shèng rén chǔ wú wéi
about doing nothing, 行「不言」之教。 zhī shì,
Teaching no-talking¹⁶⁸ Háng bù yán yù zhī jiāo

What is significant in these lines is the wordless teaching, or speaking no words, as the achievement of sagacious theoretical and practical knowledge, both by the body and the mind. After the sage reaches an awareness of the comprehensive unity of the opposite binary of everything he/she perceives and conceives of, then he/she arrives at a condition where either words or propositions can no longer express the true sense of “The Way.” Only silence proves the “rational” mode to comprehend the truth within such words and propositions. Hoffman compares this maintenance of silence with Kurt Godel’s undecidability of *incompleteness theorem*. Given this comparison, Hoffman tries to reveal the undecidability of articulating the truth within a formal system of serial argumentation and reasoning even if the system itself shows consistency. The truth is acknowledged “by jumping outside the system.” Staying in the system only makes the truth become incomplete and unknown. By “jumping outside the system” then the truth is perceivable and conceivable; but this refers to an act of becoming silent.¹⁶⁹ This is the reason why the wisdom tradition in the Asian context invites any wandering individual to accept silence by way of meditation. It is because the practice of meditation leads individuals toward an “empty mind” (*mu-shin*) and “non-sectarian thinking” (*mu-shukyo*)¹⁷⁰.

It is precisely this that Hoffman has taken into account. His “etic approach” to the wisdom tradition in Asia formulates the constitutive terms for understanding sagacious knowledge theoretically and practically. His account of “silence” as the maintenance of a wise attitude corresponds with Nishida Kitaro’s account of the metaphysical perspective of Eastern “nothingness” (wú 無)¹⁷¹.

Nishida argues that the cultural orientations in the East embody nothingness as a metaphysical perspective, whereas ones in the West imply “being.” This metaphysical perspective is the precondition for any cultural orientation. This precondition also determines philosophical investigations both in the West and the East. Nishida explains how Greek culture, which influenced the development of Western cultural orientations, depends itself on the account of the ultimate being. Nishida calls this account the

¹⁶⁸The Chinese characters and the Romanization of the pinyin are quoted from: <http://www.yellowbridge.com/onlinelit/daodejing02.php>. For the translation of the quotation above into English see Lao Tsu in Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English’s translation (1972/1997).

¹⁶⁹Hoffman 2002: 201-203. Quoting Casti and DePauli, he writes: “*what perhaps equally surprising is that for every such formal system M, the statement G can be constructed ... so that is actually true – when looked at from outside the system. Consequently, although G is undecidable within M, it is actually true and can be seen to be true by jumping outside the system.*”

¹⁷⁰Hoffman 2002: 207.

¹⁷¹Nishida 1970, part 2 chap. 3.

ultimate of affirmation. Meanwhile, in comparison with the East, the Indian culture is an example of the other model of the metaphysical standpoint. As it is revealed in Brahmanic religion, the viewpoint is characterized by an absolute of negation. In this sense, Nishida reconsiders the classification of Indian religiosity as Pantheism. He explains:

“In the very lifeblood of Indian religion, it is not merely that all things are merely God; there must be even a denial of all things. This meant an absolute negation-qua-affirmation. In Mahayana Buddhism, it attained to the philosophy of ... (‘phenomenal being, precisely as it is, is emptiness; emptiness, precisely as it is, is phenomenal being’).”¹⁷²

The substantive understanding in his proposition is the account of “*the absolute negation-qua-affirmation*.” One can indicate this type of metaphysical standpoint in Chinese classic philosophies. The teaching of the benevolent manhood or “human-heartedness” (*jen*)¹⁷³ for the Sage king advocates a preservation of the rituals inasmuch as the rituals will improve and rectify the personality of human kind, especially the affectionate and volitional aspects. Moreover, Confucius insists that the rituals are the heavenly standard or “the Way” to achieve a sagacious quality of individual life.

In this sense, heaven has given a mandate for mankind so that human nature is the articulation of “the Way.” Confucius mentioned heaven in his teaching for the sake of the preservation of morality for the Sage king and his subjects. By indicating heaven as the source of morality, Confucius represents the Chinese cosmology and cosmogony. According to Fung Yu-Lan’s account, Chinese cosmology gives Heaven (*Tian*, 天) several associative meanings.¹⁷⁴ Heaven is associated with the physical sky and nature, the palace of the highest gods, the dwelling place of gods and goddesses, the universe, or the immaterial Nature. The physical sky or the natural is in apposition of the earth (*di*, 地). Together these physical natures form a substantial conjoin “Heaven and Earth” (*Tiandi*, 天地). Furthermore, these physical entities together with the dwelling place of gods, goddess and the palace signify Heaven as a material entity. In North Atlantic philosophical terms, Heaven is a “substance” which has attributes. While the latter, the immaterial Nature signifies Heaven in terms of “the essence” of all perceptible or abstract entities. The associative meaning of Heaven as the essence then connotes the absolute. The substantial conjoined terms “Heaven and Earth” (*Tiandi*, 天地) can also refer to the juxtaposition of the essence and the substance. In this sense, the substance does not blend into the essence. The substance emerges in diametrical position to the essence. This is the reason why Fung Yu-Lan defines “heaven (*Tian*, 天) is mentioned

¹⁷² Nishida 1970: 240.

¹⁷³ Fung Yu-Lan 1969: 69.

¹⁷⁴ Fung Yu-Lan 1969: 31.

in apposition of the earth (*di* 地),” “Heaven and Earth” (天地). This diametric of the essence and the substance becomes one of the constitutive understandings in the Chinese worldview. By describing the diametrical composition, Chinese cosmogony presumes the contrasting structure¹⁷⁵ as the source and the mother of the physical or natural universe and of living things. These presumptions become clear in the text of *Daodejing*. This constitutive understanding in turn emerges as the framework for mankind so that every individual can take their own path in life.

Thus, Confucius employed the Chinese cosmological account of Heaven and cosmogony as the essence in order to explain the immaterial condition of Nature as the source of all morality and the rectification of mankind. As I just explained, the essence refers to the absolute non-being or the absolute negation-qua-affirmation in Nishida’s terms. The absolute in this context, according to Nishida, conceives of self-contradiction in relation with itself and with the relative agent outwardly. On the one hand, the absolute does not need another agent in order to clarify the true absolute self-identity. The absoluteness, on the other hand, is impossible to be intelligible without the comprehension by the relatives. To this extent, the relatives necessarily exist. In other words, the absolute negates the relatives insofar as the absolute gains its true absoluteness and it distinguishes exclusively from the relatives. At the same time, the absolute has to negate itself in order to be associated with the relatives. This second-negation is necessary to the extent in establishing true absoluteness as its comprehensive self-identity. In order to explain this precondition of double-negation, or *absolute nothingness* in the metaphysical perspective of the absolute, Nishida writes:

*“Because it is absolute nothingness, it is absolute being. It is because of this coincidence of absolute nothingness and absolute being, that we can speak of the divine omniscience and omnipotent. ... The absolute is not merely non-relative. For it contains absolute negation within itself. Therefore the relative which stands in relation to the absolute is not merely a part of the absolute or a lesser version of it. If it were, the absolute would indeed be non-relative but it would no longer be the absolute, either. A true absolute must possess itself through self-negation. The true absolute exists in that it returns to itself in the form of the relative.”*¹⁷⁶

In this sense, heaven exists in juxtaposition with the earth as the embodiment of the relatives. Without the earth as its relative, heaven as absolute nothingness, the source of mankind’s morality, has no meaningful existence for mankind. Within this framework of mind, Confucius always exhorts his followers and audience to preserve the rituals and to this extent take “the way” respectively.

The identity of absolute nothingness becomes evident in the texts of *Daodejing* (and to some extent Chinese Buddhism also elaborates this significant metaphysical term). Lao Tzu identifies the Way with this characterization in order to emphasize “the

¹⁷⁵ Shen 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Nishida 1987: 69.

negation of the world *qua* affirmation of it.” Nishida employs the last proposition in order to explain that absolute nothingness, or the denial of the existence of myriad things (or the relatives) at the same time, emerges as an absolute affirmation of them. As if the absolute did negate the earth; whereas “in actuality” it affirms the existence of it. This tautological proposition is an inevitable description that reflects the comprehensive framework within which the sagacious person affirms both the subjectivity and objectivity of the actual world.¹⁷⁷ Many verses in *Daodejing* presume this metaphysical standpoint of *the absolute negation qua affirmation* as a foundation for wise men so that they could initiate his/her journey on “The Way of Life.” Nishida identifies at least three chapters as instantiations for his explanation. I would like in addition, to mention two more chapters to show this metaphysical account. They are chapter 1, 14, 18 (Nishida’s instantiations), 4 and 7 (these chapters are my suggestions).¹⁷⁸

Chapter 1

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.	道可道，非常道。	dao ke dao, fei chang dao;
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.	名可名，非常名。	ming ke ming, fei chang ming.
The named is the mother of ten thousand things.	有，名萬物之母。	you, ming wan wu zhi mu.

Chapter 4

The Tao is an empty vessel; it is used, but never filled.	「道」沖，而用之或不盈。	dao chang, er yong zhi huo bu ying.
Oh, unfathomable source of ten thousand things ... ¹⁷⁹	淵兮，似萬物之宗	yuan xi, si wan wu zhi zong.

Chapter 7

Why do heaven and earth last forever?	天地所以能長且久者	tian di suo yi neng chang qie jiu zhe,
They are unborn	以其不自生	yi qi bu zi sheng,
....		
Through selfless action, he attains fulfilment... ¹⁸⁰	非以其無私邪？故能成其私	fei yi qi wu si ye? Gu neng cheng qi si.

¹⁷⁷ Nishida 1970: 244.

¹⁷⁸ The translation of these chapters (1, 4, 7, 14 and 18) is taken from Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English’s translations (1972/1997). I take into account a comparison of their translations made by D.C. Lau (1979). The Chinese pinyin is taken from <http://www.yellowbridge.com/onlinelit/daodejing>. The Romanization or transliterations of *Daodejing* see www.edepot.com/taotext.html.

¹⁷⁹ Lau’s translation: *Deep, it is like the ancestor of the myriad creatures.*

¹⁸⁰ Lau’s translation: *Is it not because he is without thought of self that he is able to accomplish his private ends?*

Chapter 14

It returns to nothingness	復 歸於無物。	fu gui yu wu wu.
The form of the formless	是謂無狀之狀,	shi wei wu zhuang zhi
The image of the imageless	無物之象,	zhuang,
It is called indefinable and	是謂惚恍。	wu wu zhi xiang,
beyond imagination ¹⁸¹	迎之不見其首	shi wei hu huang.
		ying zhi bu jian qi shou;

Chapter 18

When the great Tao is	大道廢,	da dao fei,
forgotten	有仁義:智慧出	you ren yi.
Kindness and morality		
arise ¹⁸² .		

From these chapters it follows that the essence or the *absolute negation qua affirmation* is associated with the source and the mother of the physical universe and all living things. The source and the mother connote the metaphysical idea, the “emptiness,” or Nishida’s term “nothingness.” This idea underlies the substantive properties like immortality, infinity, absolute; and their derivative actualities like silence, wordless actions, non-activity, and “now-and-here” or spatial-temporal simultaneity. The derivative actualities are profound properties for the sage; they are also profound virtues of sagacity commonly found in the South, East and Southeast Asian context. The sage should maintain these properties in following his/her journey on “The Way.”

Such properties are not limited only to “a speechless action.” The silence is the actualization of sagacious attitude and wisdom itself for the sage. It is the limit of philosophical propositions to argue about ontological, epistemological and ethical standpoints. Hoffman identifies the two types of silence. First, it is a result of “*the explosive process of philosophical argumentation and reduction to no spoken words.*”¹⁸³ This silence is occasioned by the limitation of the interest of philosophy to delineate everything in philosophical argumentations, just as Godel’s G statements, the undecidability of the truth within a system. In other words, silence is an act to stop philosophical argumentation. Secondly, the silence is not only an act of getting out of the undecidable system of philosophical argumentation. Silence is also a result of the “*implosive process of sagely silence and reversion to silent illumination with no spoken words.*”¹⁸⁴ This type of silence is an inner intentionality within the sage going back to the unfinished philosophical matters which have already been argued previously by using philosophical arguments. This time the internal movement is without philosophical argumentation. The silence is to illuminate the philosophical matters in

¹⁸¹ Lau’s translation: *And returns to that which is without substance/ This is called the shape that has no shape/ The image that is without substance/ This is called indistinct and shadowy.*

¹⁸² Lau’s translation: *When the great way falls into disuse/ There are benevolence and rectitude.*

¹⁸³ Hoffman 2002: 206.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

the light of emptying the mind so that the sage can open his mind to “non-sectarian thinking,” to see and to understand everything (reality) in itself. By adopting this no-spoken-words activity, the sage maintains the unresolved truth. This is what Nishida means with “*the absolute negation qua affirmation*.” Silence is intended to negate philosophical argumentation and to transform these into the affirmation of the speechless conception of the truth. By this affirmation, the sage carries on “The Way” in no-word action, “*wu wei*” (無為).

To this point the discussion has been about the Chinese metaphysical setting of the sagacity and the sage. Nishida continues with the explanation of the “primordial Japanese metaphysical point of view” prior to the dissemination of Zen (Chan) Buddhism in Japan. Nishida describes the primordial metaphysical standpoint in Japan as the thinking of “*an ever self-determining reality*” that is “*as taking the world of active intuition as its centre*.”¹⁸⁵ This formulation of the metaphysical standpoint places the primordial Japanese account of reality side by side with Chinese metaphysical standpoints. These metaphysical standpoints indicate the immanent worldview. This immanent worldview stands for the reciprocal correlation between subjectivity and objectivity, both *noema* and *noesis*. This worldview conceives of the substance as constitutive, as the essence. By contrast, the Western philosophical system separates subjectivity from objectivity. Subjectivity signifies the actual world from empirical approach to reality; while objectivity represents a transcendental abstraction of the actual world by which principles and normative standards are determined. The former lacks a determinate picture of the actual world; whereas the latter provide a self-determinant conception of reality. The former must *necessarily* be negated by the latter in order to achieve the impartial and indifferent condition of knowledge. The latter determines the truth value of knowledge about reality. In this sense, either has its own direction, and the former must yield itself so that the latter can transcend the actuality (particularity) into the universality. Thus, both cannot be true simultaneously.

Nevertheless, Nishida argues that both subjectivity and objectivity rely on each other. This reliance depicts an interconnection of both contradictory sides. He writes:

*“Subjectivity and objectivity may be regarded as different directions of that of self-contradiction. Our self does not exist apart from this self-determination of reality. It can be conceived in relation to the affirmation and negation of reality. The world can thus be conceived from the standpoint of our active self. The concrete world of things must indeed be such a world. We see things through action.”*¹⁸⁶

I will explore the epistemological foundation implied in this paragraph in the second part. Meanwhile, it is enough to emphasize the intuitive capacity to perceive such dynamic reciprocity of the self-contradictory mind in Japanese culture. This active

¹⁸⁵ Nishida 1970: 246

¹⁸⁶ Nishida 1970: 246.

intuition enables the mind to perceive temporal determinations (the subjective or interior side) and spatial determinations (the objective or exterior side) at the same time. The intuitive perception constructs a tautological proposition such as “*subjectivity determines objectivity, and objectivity determines subjectivity.*”¹⁸⁷ In this sense, active intuition leads beyond moral sentiment. On the one side, subjectivity represents actual human intention toward unorganized behaviour (the metaphors are “feeling” and “will”), even though the individual mind acts against such a tendency. Objectivity, on the other side, refers to a standardization of an organized behaviour according to the set of moral advocates (the metaphor is “ratio”). Principles and the code of morals become the rules of conduct and they prevail irrespectively of the individual’s intentions. The Japanese disposition, according to Nishida, neither follows the subjective side, nor the objective one. It would rather oscillate between these sides and it is the role of an intuitive awareness to decide the preferred expression in an event. Nishida writes that “the ‘aware of things’ is also felt within.”¹⁸⁸

This role of awareness that leads individuals into “the depth of practice” is inevitable in Japanese culture, even if after Zen Buddhism spread among the islands. This awareness is a moment when individuals experience the contradictory selfhood; the destructive (unorganized) intention is recognized side by side with the (controlled) constructive side of selfhood.¹⁸⁹ This recognition is the reason why Japanese people prefer the “depth of practice” as enlightenment rather than merely the theoretical verbalism of life.¹⁹⁰ Thus enlightenment is the moment of realizing the creative action into the problematic matters of human behaviour.¹⁹¹ This creative action in life plays a profound role in Japanese sagacious thought. Unless one can identify intuitive perception and the act of creativity, it will be difficult to understand the Japanese model of sagacious thought and knowledge.

To summarize the model of sagacious knowledge in the South and East Asia, I would like to point out some of the indispensable grounds for sagacious thought. After these points are summarized, the thesis will continue to explore sagacious knowledge in the Southeast Asian context.

- a. The metaphysical standpoint of the East, in summary, is “nothingness.” This is implied in Indian, Chinese and Japanese models of sagacious thought. Although the tone of the expression of the standpoint varies from one region to the other, this metaphysical viewpoint emerges as the inevitable ground for wise men and

¹⁸⁷ Nishida 1970: 248.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Nishida 1970: 253; cf. 1987: 76-78.

¹⁹⁰ See Suzuki 1959/1988: 8-10.

¹⁹¹ Nishida 1970: 249.

wisdom.¹⁹² In other words, it determines the construction of sagacious thought; also it directs the sagacious attitude for the sage and for individuals who follow the path of sagacity.

- b. In South and East Asia, sagacious thought and their sages always advocate that individuals have to take a pathway to sagacity in order to obtain the level of the sage. The idea of “the Way” reveals the teaching of the sagacious practical attitude and the moral advice is only a means in the journey of sagacity itself. The more fundamental is an awareness of the ontological foundation of life. The awareness is to reveal the creative quality of life. Life is *more than* the mind can conceive. The thesis will examine the creative quality or the “more-ness” of life in the next part.
- c. Indeed, one has to be able to perform the required effort in order to keep “walking on the sagacious pathway.” As it is pointed out in van Binsbergen’s definition below, this sagacious effort produces:

*“creative practical knowledge that allows one to negotiate the pitfalls and contradictions of human life (especially in those domains of which we might say today that they are not tightly rule-governed and thus carry considerable uncertainty, ambivalence and incompatible multiple truths), and to accept both the social nature of human life, and its finitude.”*¹⁹³

- d. To this extent, practical knowledge has to do with the required wise attitude of metaphorical silence. Silence indicates not only an ability to overcome the problematical affairs in life, but also the capability of staying focused on the matters. Firstly, it is to confront the affairs by a critical act. According to Nishida, the first level is to negate affairs. He thought being critical is the way to get out of the affairs and to analyze them. Secondly, it is to affirm the affairs by the way of acceptance. Again, Nishida defines the second level, as the affirmation to the affairs. Acceptance means to adopt an open mind in order to perceive that *creative quality* of the matters that they are *more than* they are conceived of by the mind. In other words, either to criticize to or to stay in the problematical affairs signifies wisdom as “*the creative vision*” to deal with human affairs in an individual or a collective context.
- e. Wisdom as the creative practical vision is a “practical” knowledge system insofar as it passes over the boundary of morality. It is more likely an aesthetic intuition than theoretical reasoning of what one ought to do or not. To some extent, aesthetic intuition has to do with non-activity, wordless action to deal with human matters in life. Alternatively, it is associated with the awareness of dynamic affirmation to both, the *noesis*, the subjective direction to the personally perceptive action, and the *noema*, the objective direction to a standardization of

¹⁹² Nishida has distinguished between the pessimist (India), the moral (China), and the creative (Japanese) cultures. See 1970: 247.

¹⁹³ Van Binsbergen 2009: 52.

the rule of conduct. The awareness then makes essence as significant as substance, even if the paradoxical opposition is obtained by this equivalence.

2.2 The sagacious knowledge in the Southeast Asian context

It is important to keep in mind that wisdom helps individuals discern the source and the consequences of their actions. This discernment refers to the awareness and creative disposition towards life in itself. In this sense, wisdom inevitably connotes an event of enlightenment for the sage. These are typical properties of the sagacious disposition: self-discernment, awareness, creative vision, and enlightenment. These properties are also familiar in the Southeast Asian context.

2.2.1 The Chinese influences

I want to start with the historiography of Southeast Asia in order to explicate the properties of sagacious knowledge in the region. I refer to Denys Lombard's work on *Le Carrefour Javanais* or *The Java Island as the crossroad for the South, the East, and the Southeast cultural orientations* – especially volumes 2 and 3. The French prominent cultural historian noted that Southeast Asia has become a crossroads where traders, wise and clever wanderers, missionaries, and kings' personal envoys from the South and East met with the ones from the region since the 5th century CE. Some Chinese texts, produced by *Faxian*, the Chinese Buddhist Monk, annual reports by the Southern Chinese dynasties, *Songshu* and *Liangshu*, and the texts of *Tangshu*, *Xin Thangshu* and *Songshi*, for example, mentioned the name of Java Island as *Ye-po-ti*, or *She-po*, or *He-ling*, while a name of a place in Java referred to the people as “*Kunlun*” from that region. The name of places and the nickname of the people demonstrate the active interaction between the various cultural orientations in the region.¹⁹⁴

Outside the Indonesian Archipelago, Martin Stuart-Fox, who writes about the international relationship between the Chinese Empire and the Southeast Asia kingdoms, provides some even earlier dates. The Australian historian mentions the first contacts between the regions were initiated even in the first century BCE. Chinese merchants, adventurers, and envoys – mostly Yue people who inhabited coastal China south of the *Yangze (Huang Ho)* River, the Yellow River – sailed to the Malaysian coast. Some of these *Yue* people also made contact with the Cham, the coastal people in Central Vietnam. Other traders ventured into the Gulf of Thailand. Nevertheless, most of these Chinese agents failed to occupy the southern sea inasmuch as the sea travel was dangerous. Only a few agents were successful in constructing their respective small and localized kingdoms.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Lombard 1990/2005 vol.2: 12-14.

¹⁹⁵ Stuart-Fox 2000: 24-25.

Lombard provides extensive data concerning Java Island showing the intensive “interactive learning” among cultural orientations in the region. He mentions the process of interactive learning as the *osmosis* among the Indian, Chinese, and Southeast Asian people. The interactive learning had been distributed in all domains of life and it determined the creative production of knowledge systems in such domains during the first ten centuries CE. Thus the interaction was not about the translatability of the languages of the cultural orientations and the use of the language in the taxonomy of places. In the case of Chinese heritage in the Southeast Asian cultural orientations, Lombard notes the exchange has occurred since the 5th century CE in the area of agriculture, farming, and food production, i.e. the method and technique of wet rice fields, tea, peanuts, corn and sugar cane plantations, the breeding of cattle; the area of metallurgy, of the technique of sea navigation, ship construction (the *jung* ship), and fishery; the construction and architecture of houses and cities. These are the physical forms of the exchange; whereas the osmosis also influences non-physical domains. These non-physical domains include the *creative* exchange of lifestyle, leisure styles, pleasure accessories, handicrafts and health culture such as local herbal pharmacies (*jamu*); the method and technique of accountancy, networking trades and associations, *creative* composition of local literature in addition to the existing folklore; the display of performance art such as puppet drama (*wayang*) and music; and also ritual and spiritual assimilations of the religious beliefs.¹⁹⁶

In ritual and spiritual exchange, the osmosis of the tradition of wisdom has occurred. Sagacious knowledge was represented in the form of the ritual of popular festivals, the medical practitioners (i.e. acupuncture), shamanism and fortune tellers (based on *Feng shui* and *I Ching* predictions) and the fictional narratives of the martial arts. Lombard reminds us that the reason why religious beliefs could (before the dissemination of monotheism occurred) be assimilated with each other was because these esoteric knowledge systems showed a *basic resemblance*.¹⁹⁷ Western terminology for this basic resemblance of indigenous beliefs is “*animism*.”¹⁹⁸ I reject this sort of categorization insofar as the resemblance can be shown to reveal a unique epistemological foundation. Each religious belief displays in their respective way the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview which will be examined in the next part. It will suffice to note in this part that this unique epistemological foundation formulates wisdom as “a persistent disposition of following the pathways.” The preferential option for the persistent disposition constitutes the model of individual sagacity about which Chinese people learn from the teaching of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.¹⁹⁹ Yet, this nuance of individuality does not

¹⁹⁶ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2 chap. IV.

¹⁹⁷ Lombard 1990/2005 vol 2: 329.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; cf. Boelaars 1984: 18.

¹⁹⁹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 333 cf. p. 180ff.

denote individualism in the same way as it is conceived in the North Atlantic. Individual sagacity is an inherent part of a symbiotic coexistence with the community, nature, and heaven. The two first domains connote the earth which is always in apposition with the later, the heaven. The fictional narratives of martial arts, which have typical plots, advocates this model of individual sagacity which defends weak people for the sake of social justice by conquering the bad, at the same time he or she is accomplishing his/her own pathway to the sagacious life. This heroic action is not about martial arts, it reveals individual effort to achieve the quality of sagacious knowledge (enlightenment) and attitudes. The (heroic) sage's self-perseverance to keep following the sagacious pathway is the desired and prerequisite action. "Walking on the way" is not only a metaphor for sagacity, it is also a real activity conducted even by modern Asian people.

2.2.2 The Indian heritages

Meanwhile, Indian influence on the Southeast Asian region started three centuries earlier than the Chinese.²⁰⁰ The initial contact was made by Indian traders. They probably had discovered their own trade route along the Southeast Asian coast long before the *Yue* people started to build their commerce there. The route began in South India across the Bay of Bengal and sailing through the Melaka Strait, to Southern Sumatra and Northern Java. Along with the trade, there had also been "an Indianization" of the region since the 2nd century CE. The adaptation of Indian civilization was associated mainly with the dissemination of Hinduism and Buddhism in the region. Lombard mentions the second phase of the process; but this was partly carried out by Moslem traders. These included for example the Gujarat traders. The second phase of the Indianization of the region should be viewed in light of the spread of Islam in the region in the 14th century CE. The spread of Islam in the region was carried out by the Arabic and Chinese traders along with the Indian ones.²⁰¹

The dissemination of Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia had a profound effect on the development of the primordial cultures in the region. In the case of Java, the development mainly improved agriculture and water management used for the wet rice fields. Stuart-Fox indicates that these developments resulted in the construction of a concentric government, political structure and power relations, in accordance with the model of Indian kingdoms or empire. The management and concentric governance of communities, the hierarchical construction of social power represented the employment of the Indian conception of *mandala*.²⁰² To define a kingdom or a community with this

²⁰⁰ Stuart-Fox 2000: 26; cf. Lombard 1990/2005 vol.3: 4-9. Lombard does not mention the precise period of the process. He only accounts for two "mutation" of the region by the major religions. Probably the first mutation of the region refers to the Indian model of civilization, which was the dissemination of Hinduism and Buddhism in the region, corresponds to Stuart-Fox's periodization.

²⁰¹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 4-5 cf. vol 2: 22, 31.

²⁰² Stuart-Fox 2000: 28-29. He selects the Funan Kingdom in Southern Vietnam.

Sanskrit term, *mandala*, is to delineate a worldview of a *cosmic unity* in the form of a dynamic and concentric cycle.²⁰³ This worldview is not only a metaphorical term for defining the model of concentric power relations.²⁰⁴ It is also a coherent paradigm of ontological, epistemological and ethical accounts of life. I will come back to this coherent paradigm in the next part. The paradigm is a basic presupposition that influenced the region in order to reconstruct cultural, social and political life. This reconstruction also developed indigenous religious beliefs into a complex conception of life and being.²⁰⁵

The development of rural communities into agricultural ones and kingdoms affected the production of knowledge concerning technical and agriculture skills and the theoretical conception of agricultural life.²⁰⁶ The first domain has to do with the maintenance of wet rice fields, irrigation of the fields, and manual labor on the land. The latter conceived of the formalization of land distribution between the king and his vassals, the reconstruction of the concentric structure of social stratification, the organization of kingship and governmental institutions. Concerning the application of the theoretical conception of the concentric organization of kingship and society, it is indispensable to notice Lombard's argument. He argues that the concentric power of a Javanese king over his kingdom resembled the model of a concentric one similar to the European conception of the pyramidal power relation. Lombard refers to the Javanese classical literature, *Tangtu Pagelaran* and *Negarakertagama* (during the kingdom of Majapahit), and the repetition of such a model in the latter Mataram Kingdom (the end of the 16th until the 19th centuries CE).²⁰⁷

This literature mentioned that a Javanese king has many vassal leaders who built or kept a concentric circumference, a *mandala* for their respective territory or *sima*. Such leaders were the relatives from his clans, a heroic local leader, an honourable head of the village, or religious leaders (Hindu or Buddhist). The king and such local leaders bound each other in a treaty concerning a tributary system so that the king could guarantee that his vassal leaders were obliged to protect his *mandala* and to acknowledge the divine identity of the King. The King was regarded as the reincarnation of a certain Hindu God, whether Visnu or Shiva, and the *axis mundi*, the centre of the world. By establishing this, a concentric hierarchy of power relations was maintained as if the power relation was constructed according to a pyramidal structure of governance. Nevertheless, the treaty preserved the mandalas so that the local leaders enjoyed autonomy over their own respective territories. The King would not interfere in the internal affairs of their local governance because of the equality of the mandalas.

²⁰³ Cf. Sumardjo 2003: 65.

²⁰⁴ Stuart-Fox 2000: 29; cf. Tooker 1996.

²⁰⁵ Stuart-Fox 2000: 26.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Boelaars 1984, chap. 2 .

²⁰⁷ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 28-29 & 35ff.

However, the King would protect the mandalas from external aggression. Thus the ancient kingdoms in the Java Island, such as Majapahit Kingdom and the latter Mataram Kingdom, were an echo of interdependent *mandala* structures which were usually employed in the Southeast Asia region. Such interdependency affected a juxtaposition of the unitary political system and self-determination of local leaders over their respective territory or *sima*.

What is significant about this analytical description of ancient kingdoms on Java Island is that there was an improvisation of the model of power relations in the political structure of the kingdoms. Such improvisation developed an alternative model to the Indian conception of power relations. The Hindu and Buddhist model of political structure to some extent affected the model of a reorganization of local communities into a unified kingdom. The construction of ancient kingdoms indicates this development.²⁰⁸ Meanwhile, the indigenous aspects of the Javanese model of society did not dissolve into unitary kingdoms. The Javanese models of equal and *relatively* interdependent communities were preserved so that, according to Lombard, such models were referred to after the political bond between the Hindu and the Buddhist kingdoms weakened and the kingdoms disappeared. The local leaders then revived this indigenous model of interdependent communities.²⁰⁹ In other words, the Javanese models of collectivity managed to develop a conception of simultaneously unitary or hierarchical kingdoms and equality or interdependent mandalas or communities.

The preservation of the indigenous model connotes the paradigmatic vision of the purpose of social and individual life. The formulation of the individual or collective purpose of life conceives of the harmonic correlation between the macrocosm (the universe, the heaven) and the microcosm (an individual or a collectivity). The metaphorical terms for this harmonic correlation are *consistency, order (secure), and peaceful as well as prosperous life (tetep, tertib, tentrem)*.²¹⁰ Such a harmonic correlation in life requires in turn the formulation of noble virtues and wisdom. Lombard identifies the harmonic correlation between the macrocosms and microcosm in a symmetrical diagram which is in Javanese called *mancapat (kalima pancar)* or “the concentric structure of four-compass direction.”²¹¹ This metaphorical diagram represents a dynamic comprehensive worldview, *mandala* or the concentric circumference. By defining this connotation the basic disposition of the individual attitude and collectivity has to be able to express such a worldview in a sagacious knowledge.

The ability to reveal such a worldview in a sagacious knowledge in Hinduism and Buddhism refers to the persistent disposition to follow the pathway of sagacious

²⁰⁸ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 16.

²⁰⁹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 24.

²¹⁰ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 132.

²¹¹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol.3: 99-101 cf. Sumardjo 2003.

life. In cultural orientations in Java Island the pathway of sagacious life is not a linear journey which has a beginning and an end, a birth and a death. Rather, the pathway of sagacity depicts life according to a spiral cycle diagram. The depiction of a spiral cycle is deduced from the description of the *mandala* as circular movement in Buddhist terms of the phenomenon of life and the Javanese connotation of *mandala* with *mancapat kalima pancar*.²¹² The concentric structure of the *mancapat* is made up of a horizontal and a vertical axis both which cross each other right in the centre. The axes signify the compass points, the north and the south, the west and the east. It also explains an association between the four directions with the Javanese term of days. In turn, according to the Javanese mind, the connotation of place and time with the concentric axes explains the idea of circular movement in the *mandala*.

Now how does the Javanese mind of *mancapat kalima pancar* cohere with the inherent circular movement of the *mandala*? Lombard tries to address the coherence between these theoretical accounts of life, even though he finds it difficult to perceive this non-linear conception of time and space. He writes:

*Habitus que nous sommes à votre temps historique, homogène et linéaire, ce n'est pas sans ne que nous pouvons compaetidre ce temps immobile, enfermé dans les choses. Ici la société ne progresse pas le long d'une route, en laissant son passé dernière elle; elle croit sur elle-même en l'expusant a périphérie à la façon des pelunes d'un oignon.*²¹³

*Par delà "le temps en miettes" de ce cycle de 210 jours, l'idée d'un temps cyclique à plus grande échelle s'est peu formée. Il est possible qu'elle ait été empruntée à la cosmogonie indienne, selon la quelle quatre âges doivent se succéder dont le dernier, le kaliyuga, qui précisément celui où nous sommes, doit se terminer par une grande catastrophe, "préface à un nouveau départ. Beaucoup pensent égalisent à java, que doit venait un "temps des cataclysmes" (zaman kala bendu) un "temps de démençe" (zaman edan), é prevue nécessaire dont l'humaniste sortira régénérée.*²¹⁴

Lombard identifies the temporal movement as "growing from inside through the past into the present, metaphorically like the layers of onion" (*elle croit sur elle-même en l'exposant a périphérie à la façon des pelunes d'un oignon*) supports the idea of the movement of a spiral cycle. The significance of the movement is that there are continuous repetitions of the past or the old in a "new embodiment" of time and space.²¹⁵ The new embodiment is not merely an alternative appearance of the same essence. The new embodiment is growing layers of complexity of a specific occurrence in a particular place, something that reveals completely different presentations compared with the older one. Thus, the harmonic correlation between macrocosm and microcosm is always revealed in a new embodiment of simultaneity of time and place.

²¹² Cf. Sumardjo 2003: 327.

²¹³ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 102, in the original French edition p. 94.

²¹⁴ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 103, in the original French edition p. 95.

²¹⁵ Cf. spiral explanation in the Burmese history in Aung-Thwin, 1991.

The occurrence here and now does not bring back the older or the past form; the alternative does not repeat the same conditions of the past and in order to implement them in the present time. To some extent the new embodiment is a refreshment of the idealized conditions of the past. To that extent, the refreshment becomes a complete contextualization of the idealized past into the present condition, so that metaphorically the past conditions appear as the infinite shadows reflected on the 'face-to-face' mirrors. The spiral movement indicates the growing layers of circumference so that every phase of a coming layer is both anticipation of the future and continuation of the previous layers to some extent. The spiral movement reflects the infinite shadows of the past conditions. In this sense, it can be said that the centre projects the reflection of the idealized condition of the initial phase (in the past) into coming layers (the present and the future). This is the reason why the moral advocate, the pious lessons and the story of wise wanderers always reverberate the necessary going back to the initial phase of the journey of life. The initial phase connotes the idealized past conditions which is comprised of noble virtues and values of life. The advice to "be aware of the origin" (such as, "*eling ka purwadaksina*," in Sundanese language) reveals the moment to reflect on contemporary attitudes or actions in regards to these noble or sagacious dispositions. Alternatively, this advice is a projection of these wise dispositions to persons who intend to achieve his or her sagacious disposition (the enlightenment) by taking the pathway of life. This advice also implies the conception of selfhood. The self as microcosm must indicate the harmonic correlation with the centre or the macrocosm which is represented by the axis mundi, the King and his kingdom. The self does not have intrinsic value in itself, as if the self were an independent agent. The selfhood does have its value as long as it coheres (*serasi*), in a harmonic relationship (*seimbang*), with the centre.²¹⁶ The self's coherence to the external centre has intrinsic value for its existence. In this respect, the individual should be aware of his/her inherent position in the larger constellation of existence. This is the reason why a Javanese individual knows the position in the hierarchical social and cultural structure where he or she belongs, that is, to be an intermediary²¹⁷. This is the reason why a Javanese individual knows intermediary as the function of interactivity in hierarchical social and cultural structure to where he or she belongs. This awareness of this function often enhances individuals to interconnect with the centre by keeping aware and articulating the noble virtues and values. By doing this, the position will preserve both the projection of the centre into the individual consciousness, and the reflection of such noble virtues and values in the sagacious disposition of individuals in accordance with the place where the individual belongs. The preservation of the individual's intention to stay connected with the centre keeps the circular layers and movement of the mandala.

²¹⁶ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 129ff.

²¹⁷ See Beatty 1996.

In other words, the Javanese case shows that the combination between the circular layers and the movement of the mandala as heritage of Hinduism and Buddhism and the indigenous conception of the spatial-temporal simultaneity *mancapat kalima pancer* as the inevitable presupposition for an individual effort to achieve the sagacious knowledge or enlightenment. Such effort becomes clear in the moral advice and teaching concerning the good life, in the written and oral transmission of pious lessons, and in the journal of the wise wanderers (*satriya lelana*). The narrative forms display journeys of life which start from the initial phase, and they are heading for eternity or moksa. The end of this journey to enlightenment or the sagacious knowledge does not mean death. The eternity or ‘*moksa*’ is a metaphorical way to say that the journey extends to the next layer of life, while simultaneously, still being correlated with the centre in the concentric pattern. The journey does not finish with the achievement of sagacity. If one achieves the sagacious knowledge, then one ought to articulate sagacity in daily activities. This is the “necessary duty” to proceed with the journey of life. The sagacious individual should realize “the depth of practice,” that is, the preservation as well as the articulation of the centre’s noble values and virtues in silence. The realization of the silence connotes an ability to “read” symbols or signs (*perlambang*) of life phenomena.²¹⁸

The sagacious individual should learn to be able to uncover the implicit meaning by reading such symbolical representations and natural signs. According to the Javanese mind, the symbolical representations are comprised of animals, plants, as well as etymological and numerical symbolism.²¹⁹ Animal symbolism includes animals which live under (come out of) the water ([female] dragon), live on land (serpent, elephant, tiger), live on both land and water (water buffalo, turtle, amphibians, etc.), and fly in the air (eagle, *garuda*).²²⁰ Plant symbolism includes rice, palm trees, betel vines, coconuts, and some colorful flowers. Etymological symbolism is an effort to draw meaning from the denotation or connotation of a word. It more likely resembles language games. A word is divided into syllables in accordance with the Javanese (or Sundanese, or indigenous) alphabet. Each alphabet has a certain meaning. It is often the case that the meaning of the syllable can only be obtained by those with access to esoteric knowledge. As a result it is only the wise man who understands the meaning according to his/her “capability to read the nature.” (*maca alam*). The etymological symbolism is an arbitrary word riddle; yet an innovative articulation of the meaning of a word. A wise man often employs it in order to explain noble virtues and values of life. For instance, the Sundanese term “*nagara*”²²¹ can be translated literally into “state.” Yet this translation is a misunderstanding of the true denotative meaning of the word. The term

²¹⁸ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 104.

²¹⁹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 105.

²²⁰ Wessing 1988; 2006.

²²¹ See Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 105; Djunatan 2008.

“nagara” is a riddle and has etymological symbolism. It should be read from the back syllable to the front, from “raga” then to “na.” “Raga” denotes “body” or “selfhood,” whereas “na” is a suffix which identifies a definite article like “the” or a possessive pronoun like “it’s.” Then a wise man adds the preposition “dina” in order to make the syllables meaningful. So, the riddle is deciphered by composing a phrase: “dina raga na” or “within the body” or “within the selfhood.” Therefore, “Nagara” denotes “within the body” or “the selfhood.” The term “Nagara” connotatively is an invitation to deliberate or to discern the self.

The numerical symbolism needs an associative thought so that the sage can read it. The important numbers are 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 6, 8, 9.²²² 0 signifies perfection, the holistic perspective and the nothingness or *kasunyataan*, the centre or the source of everything. “1” is the signifier for the earth, the union mysticism with the centre or the source of life. “2” is the representation of the opposite (paradoxical) characters, properties, and qualities which make up the constitutive essence of life. “3” is the symbol for fire and the female. In the Sundanese mind, “3” represents the triadic structure of life (*Tritangtu*), “4” is for water and the compass directions, “5” is a combination of “4,” the direction of the compass, and “1,” the concentric centre, or “*mancapat kalima pancer*,” alternatively it signifies wind. “6” is used for naming taste and appetite. “7” signifies mountain and certain animals, like the horse. “8” represents animals like the serpent, crocodile, and elephant. “9” is for the gate of goddess.

One has to keep in mind that the meaning of the etymological and the numerological symbolism discussed above is not the standard interpretation. Every person can master the interpretation of words or numbers in accordance with his or her sensitivity to the natural phenomena. This is the reason why the capability to read the symbols is called “*ilmu*” or a practical prediction of the coming occurrence by employing “*petungan*” or the “art of counting” and a practical realization of an implication of the past happening (revealing the projected source). Geertz identifies that the ability to read has to do with magic, sorcery, and curing techniques. Alternatively, “*ilmu*” also signifies a supernatural ability for the purpose of good or evil. The master of this “*ilmu*” is called a *dukun* or a shaman. The *dukun* becomes a specialist in predicting future events in accordance with the circular movement of the succession of days²²³ (a kind of *I Ching* prediction). To master such interpretative reading, one has to learn from a guru. A guru can be a prominent figure from a palace or a village, who has the sagacious quality of life. Such a guru can be a ‘*dukun*’ or shaman as well; yet a guru must indicate the mastery of “the true knowledge,” which is something different from the practical and predictive knowledge like “*ilmu*.”²²⁴

²²² Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 101; cf. Geertz 1969: 30-34. In Javanese the knowledge of numerology is called *Petungan* (the counting); Djunatan 2007; Wessing 1979.

²²³ Geertz 1969: 86-88; cf. Wessing 1979: 103-107

²²⁴ Geertz 1969: 328..

Here one can indicate that, to some extent, this interpretative reading of symbolism is not only related to a predictive, but also to a prophetic and critical vision. In another extent, the ability “to read” articulates a critical mind so that the sage can evaluate the phenomena surrounding or to express his/her critical reasoning. According to the Javanese mind, the ability to interpret the symbolic presentation of nature and critical reasoning demonstrates a system of knowing. The prophetic and critical vision of a guru or a sage reveals the production of true knowledge (*ngelmu*). Thus, true knowledge is a necessary derivation of the sagacious disposition and the experience of enlightenment according to the Javanese account of the system of knowledge. Nevertheless, this distinction does not oppose practical and visionary knowledge. It also does not establish a hierarchy of knowledge, the supra-knowing and the lower one. The practical purpose of knowledge, in terms of predictive interpretations and the practical purpose of magic, sorcery or a curing technique, should be equipped with the visionary one. In other words, wisdom completes the practical purpose of knowledge. Unless one is pursuing wisdom and true knowledge, the one is not concerned with the use of practical knowledge. The Javanese mind is aware of the ambiguous use of practical knowledge. The visionary knowledge or wisdom can lead a person to use the predictive interpretation and practical knowledge for a good purpose. It also anticipates the deconstructive purpose of knowing and reasoning so that people can also learn the knowledge of how not to be harmful to others. Thus, wisdom connotes an awareness to conceive of the true identity of the self and things in themselves, and the ethical purpose of practical knowledge. To conclude this subsection, it is important to keep in mind that wisdom and the awareness of the complementary employment of visionary knowledge and practical knowledge are the relatively permanent elements in the Javanese knowledge system. Geertz and Wessing implicitly indicate that these models of knowledge still constitute the way people think on Java Island even in the modern era.²²⁵

2.2.3 The Islamic influence upon the sagacious knowledge

When Moslem Arabic and Indian traders came to the Southeast Asian region, they found relatively established kingdoms in the mainland and dynamic city-ports along the coastal regions. Lombard points out that these indigenous kingdoms did not reject outside influences but rather engaged in creative symbioses of the indigenous worldview with the ideology of Hinduism and Buddhism. Moreover, Lombard found that the dynamic characters of the coastal people also accommodated the assimilation of different tribes or races. This was due to the fact that the coastal people in Southeast Asia were an inherent part of the Asian networks of commerce since the 5th century CE. The result is that the coastal people had open and negotiable dispositions towards new

²²⁵ Cf. Geertz 1969; Wessing 1979.

comers like the Moslem traders and their religion. The spread of Islam was easily accepted by the coastal people.²²⁶ After the reconstruction of city-ports to be part of the new sultanate, the expansion of Islam touched the mainland kingdom. The dissemination of this monotheistic religion into the mainland used the economic and cultural means. Sometimes the sultan's army declared war against the mainland kingdoms and Islam was disseminated in this way. After the coastal sultanate conquered the mainland, the spread of Islam became accepted there. One should keep in mind that the assimilation of Islam in the area considered the creative development of Islam itself so that certain aspects of the religion are familiar to the mainland people, that is, the farmers.²²⁷

The influence of Islam affected the mainland and coastal regions in material and non-material ways. The non-material influences include of the ontological worldview about being, the ontological conception of selfhood, and the ethical and moral knowledge of the good. This thesis will focus on the ontological worldview of being and the ontological conception of selfhood. According to Lombard, Islam managed to develop the Javanese cultural worldview when it spread to the island. The function of interconnectivity between the macrocosm and microcosm carried out by an intermediary kingdom or *mandala* had been replaced to some extent with the geographical interconnection with *Ka'abah*, the centre of Islam in *Mekkah*. This replacement of the immanent centre with a transcendent one influenced the understanding of the sacredness of the local place and the agent who represents such centre. The local centre and the agent, or the king, were no longer the central axis of the world and they were no longer considered the official representative of divine Might here on earth. The king and his kingdom had to conform to the development of sacredness concerning the relation of his administration over his territory. In this respect, the king is simultaneously equal to his subjects insofar as he is a fellow human being in front of Allah, and yet he is more than his people to the extent that he has received the special mandate from Allah to rule his people. The king was no longer the reincarnation of Heavenly gods such as Vishnu or Shiva. Because of this reincarnation, the king at one time could claim himself as a God. This divine status disappeared when Islam's ontological worldview of being came to Java Island. The ontological worldview then changes from hierarchical beings into equal ones. Humans, animals as well as plants are all considered creations of Allah. They do not reincarnate in the form of gods or goddess. The result is the replacement of the symbolic animals and plants, which were always considered as reincarnations of certain divine creatures, with the complicated ornaments of plants and some vague drawing of animals or calligraphic sayings. I do not intend to discuss in detail here the changes in architectural and decorative patterns. Suffice it to mention, the idea of equality that was introduced by Moslems almost eliminated the symbolization of the

²²⁶ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 28, 79.

²²⁷ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 125ff.

deities. The idea of equality has improved the ontological conception of selfhood. The king and his subjects are equal in front of Allah. This consciousness has brought the idea that everyone has similar opportunities to pursue the ultimate purpose of life. According to Sufi Islam, this ultimate purpose is union mysticism (*makirfat*). In this respect the wisdom is equated to the achievement of such a mystical union. In other words, everyone is invited to follow the pathway of sagacity.

To reinforce such a conception, Islamic literati replaced the deified figures in folk narratives with a human figure. The narratives of sagacity were no longer limited to a performance of the shadow puppet (*wayang*) or in fables, myths of gods and goddess. Such pious lessons place a prominent figure as the leading actor and they have to do with the journey of the heroic and pious character (*orang saleh*). Such figures can be fictive characters or historical ones. The human figures appear as the leading actor of the story of a journey of life. One needs to take note here that such narratives have nothing to do with a biography of such historical figures.²²⁸ Some of these human figures are for instance, *Abu Nawas*, *si Kabayan*, *Pak Pandir*, and *Pak Belalang*. By writing this model of narratives, Islam enhances the spirit of learning in order to have knowledge of nature and of religiosity (of faith) and of noble virtues and the value of humanity in general. The result is that such narratives become pious lessons. This kind of narrative is written in some literary genres such as *Taj* (an explication of a model), *Hikayat* (a teaching or didactic semi-biography or historical occurrence), and *syair* (a poetical narrative). Some of them are *Tajul Salatin*, *Hikayat Bayan Budiman*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain (Alexander the Great)*, *Hikayat Patani*, *syair perang Mengkasar*, *Syair Yatim Nestapa*, *Syair Bidasari*, and *Syair Ken Tambuhan*.²²⁹

The pious lessons of union mysticism tell the journeys of a man who intends to reveal interconnectivity between an individual and the doctrines of the religion. The idea of interconnectivity between a person and the centre, in this respect Allah, recurs in these stories in order to replace the individual interactivity between microcosm and microcosm. Such harmonization would retain the idea of the sacred locality and the tie with the king or the palace as the *axis mundi*. Consequently, it connotes the hierarchy of mankind and the dependency of the self to the centre. As I have depicted above, the self does not have its intrinsic value of existence unless it conforms to the existence of the extrinsic power of the centre. Meanwhile the doctrine of Islam advocates an egalitarian conception of society. Such a conception suggests an inclusive disposition toward all type of mankind and its characters especially if these men show their respective intention to pursue union mysticism. This inclusion of the others regardless of their cultural or religious hierarchy shows that each individual has his or her intrinsic value of existence. He or she should not be absolutely dependent on the sacred centre. In this respect, the self has intrinsic value in itself because of the creation of Allah; yet its

²²⁸ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 201.

²²⁹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 200, 201, 203, 209, 229-237.

existence does not negate the extrinsic determination of the transcendental centre, Allah. This intrinsic value becomes more valuable because of the determination of the transcendental centre. By asserting this existential property, neither the king nor the noble man can claim to occupy a special privileged position in front of the others. All mankind is considered equal to each other. In supporting this equal position Islam promotes the realization of compassion, charity, self-perseverance, fasting, and other egalitarian virtues and values. According to the Sufic perspective, here sagacity reveals sagacious knowledge, and enlightenment, or salvation is meant for every human being.

Yet, if sagacious knowledge, enlightenment or salvation is for all human beings, then how did Moslems or Islam take into account the existing wisdom which was an intrinsic element of the indigenous cultural orientation? Lombard and some other cultural anthropologists identify at least two categories of Moslem people in the Southeast Asian context, especially in the Javanese one. These categories attempt to answer such a question. The first category is the orthodox Moslems. Included in this category are those who went to the Middle East (*Mekkah*) to have Hajj pilgrimage or to Egypt (Cairo, the University of Al-Azhar) to study Islamic religion.²³⁰ Those who attended the Hajj and the other Islamic intellectuals wanted to reform Islam on Java Island and to purify the religion from any superstitious and pagan elements remaining from the traditional cultural orientation. Such elements are clearly against the *Syari'ah* and *fiqh* or the doctrines and the law. These orthodox Moslems believed that a Moslem must rely only on Islamic Law and doctrine. The way of salvation is only by remaining faithful to following and articulating the law and the doctrine. The orthodox groups are the schools of *Syafii*, *Hanafi*, *Hambali* and *Maliki*; and the ideological school of *Wahabism*. These orthodox groups always exhort a Moslem to reject and to eliminate any kind of paganism from his/her neighborhood. Nevertheless, the reformation of Islam on Java Island also invited criticism from others. They composed their respective narratives of the sagacious wanderers, for example, *Serat Centhini* (the *Centhini's* Letter), *Suluk Gatoloco*, *Serat Dermagandul*. Employing these genres of the narrative, these intellectuals were critical of the reformist groups because they only applied Arabic cultural elements to the island. Moreover, they considered the model as a pure representation of Islamic doctrine and law. The critics referred to this as the "Arabicization" of Islam.²³¹

Some literati might belong to the Islamic traditionalists. The second group is referred to as Islamic traditionalists or the *Islam Abangan* and *priyayi*, according to Clifford Geertz's classification in his *Religion of Java*. In other classifications the group consists in the school of *Syafi'i* and of *Tareqat* or of Sufism. This group always insists on the maintenance of local tradition when they articulate the rituals and put into practice of Islamic doctrine and law. They consider the indigenous noble virtues and

²³⁰ Lombard 1995/2000 vol. 2: 340, 346.

²³¹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 347.

values of life as significant as Islamic moral teaching. The traditionalist group also adopted the architectural model of the cosmic mountain of *Meru* – the sacred mountain of Javanese Hinduism – in a construction of a saint' tomb or a mosque. They also improved the cosmic blue print of the capital palace and its city. Side by side with the palace, a great mosque and a residence of Islamic religious men and officials (*kauman* and *penghulu*) were built. The Great Mosque at Cirebon Sultanate and the one near the Jogjakarta Palace (*kraton*) are some examples of many other constructions of the cosmic structure.²³² Another indispensable example of the tolerance of the existing Javanese cultural elements within Islam is the veneration of the queen of the south, *Nyi Roro Kidul*. Together with the king or sultan as the *axis mundi* (but not the incarnation of Allah on Earth), this female sacred figure and the sultan represent the sacred couple. Javanese people employ many ways to venerate the Queen of the South.²³³ The traditionalists also continue the employment of the predictive interpretation of numerical symbolism. This predictive interpretation appears as categories in the interpretation of dreams, of *ilmu firasat* or “the art of prophesying the future,” of *primbon* or the prophetic prediction of the future, and of the numerical systematization of the indigenous days. In the sense of the latter, the traditional “art of counting,” *petungan*, based on the system of numerical symbolism survived. Traditionalists still employed the “*mancapat kalima pancer*” the Hindu-Java *mandala* or the concentric movement of the four directions. This system conceives of the cycle of five days and of seven days; the thirty-seven weeks *wuku* and the twelve lunar months of the Moslem calendar, and the eight *windu* years. This calendar system then is associated with the four compass points.²³⁴ The result is a predictive interpretation for individual's plans of activity on a certain day. Meanwhile, in mysticism, some Islamic traditionalists adopt the idea of the mystical unification between mankind and God, though this idea of the mystical unification was declared heretic by other traditionalists. The case of *Syeh Siti Jenar* and *Sunan Panggung* are examples of this heretical judgement concerning the application of mystical unification in the practice of daily religiosity.²³⁵

In other words, these traditionalist schools elaborated further the local contextualization of religion. This contextualization appears in their account of sagacious knowledge as the Way or the pilgrimage (*ziarah*). The schools also advocate their followers visit some sacred places or pray at the tombs of certain sacred Moslem patrons, the *wali*'s. The purpose of this pilgrimage is a self-reflection on an individual's disposition and attitude in accordance with inspiration from the noble disposition of such patrons. In this respect, the patronage projects the noble virtue and values of life for individuals. This associates the pilgrimage with a way to learn about the

²³² Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 342.

²³³ See Wessing 1997, 2007.

²³⁴ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 197; cf. Geetz 1969: 31-33; Wessing 1979.

²³⁵ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 342-344.

achievement of human perfection (*insan al-kamil*). Such achievement is necessarily a gradual process. Lombard takes an example of *Wejangan Seh Bahri*, a text which explains the process for maintaining such perfection.²³⁶ The text identifies three stages of learning and knowing. The basic one is the knowledge of faith or *iman*; the second one is an understanding of Allah as The One or *tauhid*; and the last is the mystical knowledge or union mysticism between Allah and the individual or *makrifat*. Other example is *Tajul Salatin*²³⁷ which also describes some significant stages of life from childhood until adolescence. It is written that at six years old a boy must have a circumcision; at seven he should be capable of conducting a complete prayer (*sholat*), at thirteen the employment of service (*ibadah*), with marriage at the age of sixteen or seventeen. Considering these significant stages, it is the duty of parents to keep in mind this progress toward human perfection. The parents should select a good nanny, provide the child a good social environment, and become a proper patron for their child. This book also reminds the parents that their child will learn and know everything which is taught to him or her. The child becomes a mirror which reflects everything.

Tajul Salatin also depicts five phases of the life's journey. The first phase is the preparation of an unborn child. It starts with sexual intercourse between the parents. This first phase is called "the Father's waist" (*sulbi*). Then it continues with pregnancy, the second phase, or "the mother's womb." Next is the third phase when a child has grown up and where he or she faces "the contingent world" during his or her lifetime. The fourth is when the senior individual meets the end of his/her lifetime. It is called "the grave" (*kubur*). The fifth is a description of the afterlife, the final judgement. It is called "the light and (or the field of) the judgement day" (*padang kiamat*). The Javanese term "padang" can be defined in several ways in English.²³⁸ It can be "field," "bright" or "light." If this literature of sagacity mention this term, then the interpretation of the fifth phase seems to connote "the field where the judgement day takes place" or "the moment of the enlightenment," when "becoming a new person." The first depicts the story of the judgement day; a fictional-religious narrative which is familiar to monotheistic religion. Such narrative will invoke repentance from its reader. This will only happen after the person who pursues sagacity "buries" his or her "old" personality. If the first interpretation continues with the final phases, the eternal life in heaven or hell, these phases of life reveal a monotheistic conception of the linear conception of space and time. If one considers the latter interpretation, these phases of life indicate a creative conception of life which combines the monotheistic version of life's journey and the existing conception of *cosmic unity* or *mandala* and the *concentric circular movement* or *mancapat kalima pancer*." With this latter interpretation, the "dwelling in heaven or hell" is a metaphor for the expanding quality of life. The expanding life appears

²³⁶ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 200.

²³⁷ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 200.

²³⁸ See Djunatan 2008.

intensely complex and complicated so that to live such a life inevitably includes happiness and sorrow all at once. Which interpretations are suitable with the standard interpretation will be elaborated in a later part in this thesis. Lombard does not provide further interpretation of the literature. He only emphasizes that the *Tajul Salatin* proceeds with the reflection of life as the journey of life, as if it were a linear process of life. “Once a child was born, his or her journey of life is stretched out. Only in this world, the child can find out the prospective pathway and materials for his/her living (*bakal jalan*). Once the life starts, the chariot of life will run unstoppable even the person who ride on it is hardly anticipate what will happens next. Every time one takes a breath, one moves his/her step forward. A day means a further step in the pathway of life. A month equals to a mile; a year is the more.”²³⁹ In this respect, *Tajul Salatin* reveals an indispensable conception which explicates the journey of life in accordance with the Islamic conception of the linear progression of life. It also echoes the previously existing indigenous conception of the achievement of sagacity and enlightenment in “the way of pilgrimage” (*ziarah*). This understanding of the way of pilgrimage is a familiar theme of mysticism for the people on Java Island. Such models of narratives have survived for ages until modern society.

This will suffice to provide some indications to the effect that the sagacious knowledge in Islam also connotes a process for achieving human perfection or salvation. According to Islam, the process towards enlightenment denotes “the way” how pilgrims are to maintain sagacity or mystical union. The application of the stages to achieve sagacity or enlightenment or salvation is crucial for Sufism. Sufism advocates the *tareqat* as the collective way as a means to pursue such purpose of life. By following the way and associating with in a group of like-minded individuals who intend to follow the path step by step towards sagacity, an individual is invited to acknowledge selfhood (*diri*). It is like the Socratic saying, “Know thyself.” Knowledge of the self is an inevitable phase before the individual can continue on his or her journey. In this respect the selfhood or *diri* means “to stand upright.” It does not refer to self-introspection in order to learn the weaknesses or strengths of the self. Instead, the invitation to know the self connotes “to stand upright” in order to be aware of the contingent conditions of being human. Such awareness will lead the individual to continue the journey of life in order to maintain the eternal condition of life, or the perfection.²⁴⁰ By promoting this knowledge of selfhood, Islam, especially Sufism, has strengthened the idea of the achievement of a sagacious knowledge in Southeast Asia, especially in the Javanese context.

²³⁹ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 241.

²⁴⁰ Lombard 1990/2005 vol.2: 180.

2.3.4 Lesson learned: the sagacity of the creative awareness of cosmic unification

I need to discuss the external influence of the development of sagacious knowledge in the context of the dissemination of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam in the Southeast Asian region. The indigenous model of sagacious knowledge has been assimilated with the teaching of wisdom from these major religions. J.W.M Bakker SJ, a Dutch Jesuit priest, wrote a review of the indigenous religiosity of the people in the Indonesian Archipelago. This writer's Indonesian name was *Rachmat Subagya*, and he collected worldviews, moral teachings, and practices of rituals in his indispensable work *Agama dan Alam kerohanian Asli Indonesia* or *The indigenous religiosity and spirituality in Indonesia*.²⁴¹ I believe his writing can be categorized as ethnophilosophy. He argues that the indigenous people in the Archipelago have not been fully converted to the major religions. To some extent, they were keeping their respective religious beliefs while they accepted the tenets of these new major religions. Subagya confirms that the people creatively combined indigenous religious aspects with the major religions in such a way that they did not have to abolish the indigenous heritages nor did they reject the external influences from the major religions. At one level, the people dynamically conjoin both aspects so that they act according to the doctrines of the external religions and perform the rituals. However, they also embrace the formal teaching of the religious doctrine since it is influenced by the indigenous teaching about sagacious life.²⁴² To that extent, the indigenous people preserve their respective religiosity. By this process, the indigenous people also have adapted their religiosity to the major religions and simultaneously they adjust the major religions in accordance with their respective beliefs. In other words, the indigenous people in Southeast Asia, for example, the people on Java Island, indicate a creative approach both to their indigenous heritage and the disseminated major religions in their new context.

Hinduism and Buddhism in Java are the definite examples of how adaptation and adjustment occurs even in the spiritual or religious realms. In Western terminology this assimilation is referred to as syncretism. It is the process which assimilates other aspects of the major religions so that it is no longer "pure" and "original." Yet, again by means of osmosis and assimilation, the indigenous people in Java Island look at this in an alternative way. The people on Java refer to it as, "*the creative development of (religious) worldview*." To this extent, the indigenous people also preserve the constitutive aspects of the major religions. In Lombard's terms, the preservation of these constitutive aspects of the major religions, in Hinduism and Buddhism, is "a continuation of cultural orientations"²⁴³ between the Indian, the Chinese and the Southeast Asian.

²⁴¹ Published in 1979; see Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 353.

²⁴² Subagya 1979: 22-23.

²⁴³ Lombard 1990/2005 vol.2: 333.

According to Subagja, if Hinduism and Buddhism are creatively combined with indigenous religiosity and spirituality, the emergence of Islam, had somewhat less success in spreading monotheism in the Archipelago. Subagja found this lack of development depends on three factors. The first factor was the dissemination of Islam for a collective. If the leader converted to Islam, then this conversion of the king guaranteed that of his subjects. Moreover, the application of Islamic Law and doctrine is considered as a significant indication that a collectivity converted to Islam. The second factor is the nuance of Arab becomes stronger in the dissemination of Islam. The use of the Arabic language is one of the significant examples of the application of Arabic cultural elements to an indigenous culture. This “Arabization” became a stumbling block for the internalization of the Islamic values and virtues of life. The second factor becomes the dominant ideological issue in contemporary society in the Archipelago. For the third factor, why has Islam hardly assimilated in the Archipelago, Subagya mentions the lack of Islamic theological evaluation concerning the existence of other religions including the indigenous religiosity and spirituality. The radical Moslem group and the orthodox always perceive indigenous religiosity and spirituality as pagan (*kufur*). It is the task of Moslem to convert the pagan into Islam. These three factors are the main reason why indigenous people do not accept Islam fully, and they do not adapt it to their cultural orientations. However, some traditionalists have tried, to some extent, to adapt Sufism with the indigenous religiosity and spirituality. Nevertheless, those who try to assimilate Sufism and indigenous religiosity are in danger of being labeled heretics even though the nuance of Islam is still preserved within this assimilation. Meanwhile, other traditionalists have a more careful attitude towards such assimilation.

Regarding the assimilation between the indigenous cultural orientation and Islamic heritage, it is interesting to note how people on Java Island accommodate the different and somewhat contrasting elements within these cultural orientations. This effort demonstrates the improvisation of a model of relationship for the co-existence between contrasting types in a community. To this extent, Lombard mentions that the “spirit of collectivism” is the reason for such an improvisation. In other terms, this spirit of collectivism signifies “the model of familial relationship” (*kekeluargaan*). Unless one considers this spirit of collectivism or the familial relationship as constitutive in a collective relationship, one hardly understands the reason why there is a strong social cohesion and cooperation (*rukun, akur*) among any identities of cultural orientations, or religious convictions in a village.

Meanwhile, Geertz and Wessing give examples of this assimilation that is rather more interesting than Lombard’s account. Geertz suggests “the sense of inherited common culture”²⁴⁴ is an inevitable presupposition when one discusses the model of the collective relationship in a community on Java Island. “The sense of inherited common

²⁴⁴ Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3: 89; Geertz 1969: 356, 366ff.

culture” in Geertz’s account refers to the “theory” of harmonic relationship of the macrocosm and microcosm. A community like a village is the reflection of the macrocosm, whereas the different parties in such communities, including individuals, can be seen as the microcosms. This theory emphasizes the harmonic coherence between the community or village and the different settlements, or that among the various (sub-) cultural identities which inhabit a somewhat heterogeneous community. According to Geertz, the traditionalist groups in the Javanese community follow this theory. The traditionalist groups include the Javanese Abangan and Priyayi. These groups have often been involved in the development of several Javanese mystical sects²⁴⁵.

In the case of West Java, Wessing notes in his 1970-1 fieldwork in a village of *Pameuntasan* in the Bandung Regency in West Java that they tried to accommodate the assimilation of the settlement of Moslems and the preservation of indigenous religiosity. He mentions:

“This dual division of the settlements has certain interesting aspects. The dwellers speak of the path as if it ran from east to west, generally ignoring the curves to the north and the south. This path bifurcates each settlement into a northern half and a southern one. It is interesting to note that, with one exception, the northern half is consistently the place where Islamic matters are dealt with while the southern half is the place of government and adat (custom). The only exception to this was the house of the lurah (the head of village) and the lebe (head of Islamic official). Their houses, which almost faced each other, were located to the north and south of the road respectively.

The southern side of the road is also the place where the wet rice fields are located which makes this bifurcation even more interesting. Wet rice belongs in one category with things female and is usually seen as being ‘of the inside’ as opposed to male things which are ‘of the outside.’ The opposition north/south or religion/adat can thus be expressed as an opposition between the outside and the inside.”²⁴⁶

The *Adat* is a categorization of people of the community who insist on the preservation of the indigenous religiosity and cultural orientations. They have to do with the hamlet which is correlated with the sacred field of the founder of village. It is interesting that the community of the village divide themselves into two settlements, the Moslems and the Adats. In this case, Wessing employs the opposite terms for the settlements, the Moslems’ refer to the outside and the Adats’ refer to the inside. Nevertheless, one should not associate the opposite terms with the interpretation that there is a division of outsiders and insiders which are completely separated. Such “categorization” should be regarded from the viewpoint that a village is a *cosmic bound* or *cosmological centre* for any type of inhabitants, the settlements or hamlets.²⁴⁷ In my view, the cosmological centre here connotes *mandala* or the *cosmic unity*. It is a

²⁴⁵ Geertz 1969, chap. 20 & 21.

²⁴⁶ Wessing 1979: 101-102.

²⁴⁷ Wessing 2001: 36-37.

significant connotation between the cosmological centre and the cosmic unity since the centre in this context does not denote the inside group or the sacred field, the founder's grave or the sacred yet empty one,²⁴⁸ which provides proof of the antiquity and the embodiment of cosmic power. Thus, one should be careful not to identify the cosmic unity with the sacred centre or the inside. The sacred centre reveals its cosmic power to "develop" a *cosmic unity* or *mandala*. In other words, the centre is the intrinsic part of the *mandala*. In becoming the cosmic unity, the village includes comprehensively the inside, the sacred centre or the central grave and the surrounding hamlet, and the middle and the outside ones.

It is necessary to refer to the analytical descriptions of a Sundanese house by employing this "categorizations."²⁴⁹ According to Wessing, a Sundanese house is divided into two main spaces, the one for manhood and that for womanhood. The manhood occupies the outside part of the house: the guest and working room, the terrace and the front and dry yards. Meanwhile womanhood occupies a kitchen, the sacred storage of rice (*goah*) next to the kitchen, and the back and wet yards. Only woman can enter the storage insofar as rice has the same female gender. In this sense, manhood represents the outside, woman the inside. Man and woman can enter the common room either for daily activities or for a ritual ceremony or *slametan*. In this respect, the common room represents the middle where the different members of the family can interact in formal and informal interaction.²⁵⁰ One can perceive the common room as the centre. It can function as if it were the centre. The real centre is the inside, where the rice is stored sacredly and where only women deserve to enter. In this analogy, one should keep in mind that *the house* is the cosmic unity to which man and woman belong. The outside and the inside interdependently coexist and interact within this *mandala*.

Regarding this analogy of the house as the cosmic unity, one can infer that the Sundanese categorization of settlement refers only to a function of the settlements within the *mandala*. The categorizations have nothing to do with the separated and hierarchical status between such settlements. In this sense, it is understandable why Wessing mentioned the village as a *bounded unit* of the settlements or *hamlets*.²⁵¹ Within this cosmic unity, the female inside, the common middle and the male outside are correlated to each other insofar as *these triadic elements* simultaneously intrinsically belong to each other within the same boundary. Yet, they are still differentiated because of their respective functions.

To provide further explication of the inclusion of these triadic elements of the cosmic unity and their respective functions, one should refer to Sumardjo's account of

²⁴⁸ See Sumardjo 2003: 290.

²⁴⁹ See Sumardjo's explication of his theory in 2003: 269-275; cf. Wessing 1979: 103.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Sumardjo 2003: 273.

²⁵¹ Wessing 1979: 103.

the Sundanese triadic structure of life or *Tritangtu*. The triadic structure, according to Sumardjo, is a diachronic aspect of the Sundanese culture. The structure differentiates between three factions in the cosmic unity. These factions reveal a common pattern in the Sundanese mind. One can still find out the pattern in the triadic correlation of the Baduy people's villages, at *Kanekes*, in the Province of Banten, West Java. These villages are *Cikeusik*, *Cikertawana* and *Cibeo*.

The first faction is the inside group or the sacred centre. In the *Baduy* case, the village of *Cikeusik* represents this faction. This group has the duty to maintain indigenous religiosity and spirituality. These people are in charge of guaranteeing a succession of the constitutive elements of the Sundanese ancestral tradition, such as the indigenous worldview or the philosophical way of life, the noble virtues and values of life, and pious lessons of the sagacious knowledge (the enlightenment) from generation to generation. By doing this they also preserve the presence of traditional materials, agricultural techniques, and arts (like music or puppet performances). Meanwhile the second and the third factions can be perceived as the outside groups. The first outside group is the people who actualize the noble traditional value and virtue in daily activities. This group is also called the middle which becomes the intermediation and the bind between the inside and the second outside group. In *Baduy* structure, the village of *Cikertawana* represents this first outside group. The second outside faction is the real outside. The duty of this group is the guardian and the keeper of justice for the inside one. The last *Baduy* village of *Cibeo* is the representation of the "real" outside. One can identify this constellation of triadic structure in the village of *Pameuntasan*, where Wessing conducted his fieldwork. According to Sumardjo, this village is also comprised of an inside group, the *Kampong Gajah*, where the *adat* is preserved. *Kampong Pameuntasan* which is the middle group has its duty to mediate between the inside and the outside. This *Kampong* is also the place where the head of village runs the official governance. The outside group, *Kampong Ciseah* is the Moslem hamlet. The people of this *kampong* have their duty to actualize the Islamic doctrine and law in daily life.²⁵²

Thus, the assimilation of different or somewhat contrasting cultural orientations can occur due to the cosmic unity for all family members in a house, *kampongs* within a village, or among villages in a district. The cosmic unity and the correlative triadic structure indicate a more profound worldview, than only an account to assert this thinking paradigm as the diachronic pattern of assimilation on Java Island. Moreover, this worldview produces toleration, the spirit of collectivism, or advocates cooperation (*rukun*, *akur*) as social mechanisms so that the communities can accommodate differences and by doing this offer opportunities for conflict resolution. One has to keep in mind also that this worldview does not eliminate the latent possibility of social

²⁵² Sumardjo 2003: 309-311.

conflict between different identities. Conflict is an intrinsic part of the social cohesion in communities on Java Island. According to Geertz's account, the application of tolerance can even be perceived as a "contextual relativism." This perception is the appropriation of certain values to a context of identity. This appropriation in turn sublimes an aggressive and deconstructive attitude into a minimal cooperative disposition. As a result, Geertz notes:

*"The higher concern for status formality; the emphasis on rigid politeness and on dissimulation of emotion and avoidance of intense external stimuli; inwardness; a view of religion as a phenomenological "science" and of fasting as "applied science"; the idea that resolution and fixity of will are the most important elements in living an effective life; the conviction that people (particularly if they are neighbours ought to rukun, that is, cooperate and help one another (almost no one completely avoids giving slametans),"*²⁵³

Geertz wants to emphasize the suppression of the negative effects of aggressive and conflictual attitudes, and as a consequence their negative effects. Yet one may perceive that such dissimulation as having to do with the incapacity to handle conflicts as if the people in the Java Island were expert pretenders in showing "*everything is under control.*" It may be true that one can conceive of the Javanese people as "pretenders" insofar as this "false" attitude seems to be *the only social mechanism* to anticipate or even to ignore intentional conflict. It is inevitable to conceive of the categorization of "pretender" for a Javanese people insofar as this "false" attitude seems to be *the only social mechanism* to anticipate even to ignore conflicting intension. Rather, I have a different interpretation of people's cooperation, *rukun* and for toleration between various people on the island. The capacity of *rukun* and tolerance cannot be fully associated with such "false" behaviour. One can conceive of the affirmative side of these capacities. Moreover, one should consider the cosmic unity which conjoins the juxtaposition between such dissimulation conceived of as false behaviour and the affirmative side of toleration and cooperation as the capacity to anticipate that in a situation of unrest these values are necessary to prevent the situation from turning violent. It is precisely the necessary turn to silence. The affirmative side influences one's mind to realize the destructive intention of violent action as the negative impact of situations of unrest. It is the awareness not to choose destructive violence as the only way out of the conflict; but to decide that *there are still other ways* to resolve conflict thereby avoiding violent action. In other word, the cosmic unity which is the presupposition of the spirit of collectivism – and it is the inherited common culture – requires creative mind to develop a comprehensive viewpoint concerning the dynamic manifestations of cultural orientations even in a relatively homogeneous community. This creative mind is a kind of dynamic and comprehensive conception of the fact that such diverse representations in a social reality are constitutive expressions of shareable human nature. In this respect, each man regardless of his or her unique setting has a task

²⁵³ Geertz 1969: 367.

to offer mediation to other humans and non-humans alike. The intermediary is intended to help one another achieve basic truth or the purpose of life. The Javanese term is *slamet* which refers to the completion of the end of life for the human body and soul. However, this term does not merely denote spiritual salvation. This is the reason why Geertz in the citation above asserts that no Javanese people can deny participating in a *slametan*, a ritual ceremony to invoke the task to help other people to achieve the end of life or *slamet*.²⁵⁴

If the indigenous worldview of religiosity is juxtaposed with the external religions, then one can think of selecting one of these contrasting positions; alternatively, one can consider a dynamic unity which comprises both. The first inference emphasizes an existence of the one side and ignores the other. Both sides are perceived in an opposition even in a contradictory relationship. Each side should be independent of the other. Yet both can be seen to complement each other instead. If one regards a relation between these sides, one should think of a paradoxical relationship. Meanwhile, the second inference suggests that the idea of becoming one between both sides is more significant than one which takes only the prevailing side over the other. Both sides are correlative and the existence of one is as indispensable as the other. This idea connotes the cosmic interconnectivity of the contrasted sides of life. The cosmic interconnectivity dynamically represents a comprehensive view of interacting yet opposite sides.

In this respect, Wessing implicitly suggests the dynamic improvisation between the need of preserving Sundanese tradition such as in the case of the *Pameuntasan* village and the accommodation and realization of Islamic doctrine and law. He writes:

*“Such a process of recombination need not be a uniform one, of course, and may well be influence by a group dynamic in which local opinion leaders set the tone by what is and is not integrated into the local knowledge. Similar things have probably been taking place for many years, as wayang and other stories were presented in these areas, and their tales became part of the local repertoire. It is the regional tales that tend to come to be replaced by other ones, also far removed from the kampong, as the area beyond the kampong’s boundary shifts into another focus.”*²⁵⁵

Such improvisation develops a “recombination” so that the villagers via its “cultural” leaders “sort and select” the significant aspects from the profound foundation of Islam and from the indigenous one. In making this selection, this group dynamically incorporates both elements into what I will argue represents an account of “an interacting model for an integration of different cultural orientations.” An interactive model to expand the integration of different cultural orientations or “the process of recombination” echoes the notion of the suffix “-scape” in the ethnoscares,

²⁵⁴ Cf. Geertz 1969: 14 & 368 for the denotations of *slamet*: “nothing is going to happen to anyone” or “there is not anything.”

²⁵⁵ Wessing 2001: 51.

technoscapes, mediascapes, and finanscapes according to Arjun Appadurai's terms. Learning from the fact that ideas can spread to all over the world along with immigrations and refugee movements, Appadurai develops an understanding of "Scapes" which conceive of "perspectival landscapes which are fluid, irregular shapes." By this conception Appadurai explains "scape" as the flows of social/cultural elements from one to the other.²⁵⁶ These flows of flexible elements of cultural orientations develop an exchange and transform into such an interactive model. Yet Botz-Bornstein notes that the application of scapes as flexible elements of thought is limited if one thinks of the term from the philosophical viewpoint." According to Botz-Bornstein, philosophy is more tied to a cultural orientation as a pattern of abstract thought than a flexible knowledge production about a metaphysical knowledge. Therefore, Botz Bornstein suggests the idea of mindscapes not philosophy as a further development of the idea of "scapes." The mindscapes represent "an abstract configuration" of a philosophical way of thinking, which is a constitutive part of culture. Moreover, this abstract configuration reflects "imagined worlds" or "multiple worlds constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups around the world."²⁵⁷

This employment of the idea of "scapes," as it is implicitly inferred by Wessing enhances the capacity of the indigenous mind to produce a cognitive model of interacted multiple worlds, not just the perception of such multiplicity²⁵⁸. This capacity represents a constitutive awareness to conceive of an ongoing development for such interaction between the cultural orientation and the religion, or among cultural orientations. This ongoing development suggests a perspective that the villagers appear in a way to maintain as an acceptable model of a cultural orientation. This kind of awareness reminds me of a Sundanese proverb, "*cangkang reujeung eusina kudu sarua lobana*" which is interpreted philosophically as "both the substance and the essence should be in the same amount."²⁵⁹ The indigenous cultural elements and the Islamic doctrine and law can be either the substance or the essence. In this phrase, it is significant to conceive of both as indispensable imagined worlds; they might exist side by side in an equal position, yet one cannot prevail over the other. To this extent, in my viewpoint, if it is possible that the indigenous people of *Pameuntasan* village, or if it can be inferred for Java Island and for the Southeast Asian people in general, then they are capable of maintaining the model of the mindscapes of correlative cultural orientations. This model puts cosmic unification as its profound presupposition.

Thus one cannot say that Islam is only an outward realization of religiosity, whereas inwardly their dispositions were to actualize the indigenous tradition. Nor can one claim a notion of "the Islamized tradition" for the contemporary way of life of the

²⁵⁶ See Botz-Bornstein 2006:162.

²⁵⁷ Botz-Bornstein 2006: 162-163.

²⁵⁸ Wessing 2001:50.

²⁵⁹ Jakob Sumardjo 2006: 331; cf. Djunatan 2008.

villagers. Even though, the dissemination of Islamic doctrine and law did not completely change the Sundanese cultural orientations and their way of life, Islam, and other major religions, managed to initiate such creative improvisation for the existence of the imagined worlds and their respective cultural orientations. In other words, one can still analyze the basic elements of Islam and the other religions and they subsist along with the indigenous elements of the (Sundanese) indigenous cultural elements. To this extent, one can no longer analyze each party in the contrasting sides of cultural diversity. One should focus on the creative development of cosmic unification for these parties involved. Unless one is aware of such creative development, then one might misinterpret the process of assimilation or the process of osmosis between the indigenous cultural orientation and the foreign influences.

To conclude this subsection, I would like to insert the influence of the indigenous sagacious knowledge for generating such creative development of the cosmic unification. The creative development is the sagacity of the people which produce this kind of awareness. In my view, this sagacity reflects a systematic model of thought. It is not only an arbitrary intuition which selects the preferred cultural elements and ignores the undesired ones. This sagacity has put the people, individually and collectively in the way of pursuing the completing expansion of the web of life (*slamet*). Therefore, sagacity itself, in this respect, is the creative awareness of moving towards the destination of completing life. In the next chapter, I offer my philosophical observations of the Sundanese Sufic Shrine *Nagara Padang* in order to identify this model of sagacity.

2.3 The discourse of ethnophilosophy in an Asian context, and the 'third approach'

I would like to conclude this chapter by going back to the debates on ethnophilosophy. A critical approach towards ethnophilosophy has also been adopted in the Asian context. Botz-Bornstein points out the effort to categorize some elaborations of Asian philosophy as ethnophilosophy. Based on his critical commentary about this effort, I acknowledge that most of the cultural and historical approach in the anthropological works of a local worldview, of religiosity or spirituality, for example, in the case of Indonesian Archipelago during the colonialism era and after, which I elaborated on previously above, can be classified as ethnophilosophy. Yet even though such elaborations provide detailed depictions of local religiosity, spirituality, cosmology, cosmogony, belief system, or ethical and moral virtues and values of life, the subject matter of these works can still be considered as "philosophical." One should consider ethnophilosophy as a study of *Weltanschauung*, an exploration into the ethnic (collective) mind and (popular) wisdom, or in more harsh terms, a chauvinist approach to a cultural ideology. One also has to be remind that these ethnographical works of the philosophy of ethnicity are inherent parts of political and missionary agendas: for sake

of the expansion of colonialism, for purpose of the dissemination of Christianity and Catholicism in the non-Western regions; alternatively in the post-colonial era, these are now used to help the government proceed with modern development projects.²⁶⁰

These ethnophilosophies have invoked much criticism, sceptical reviews, and rejection that such works do not deserve to be called “philosophy.” Moreover, even if an elaboration of a local “philosophy” is the production of local or indigenous thinkers, such works are only considered if they employ the Western model of philosophical analysis or if they adopt the Western philosophical methodology over the local worldview. Botz-Borstein points out the irony of using ethnophilosophy as a critical response to the hegemonic system of Western philosophy. There is also scepticism that these elaborations of the system of philosophy can be considered to provide an alternative system of philosophy besides the Western philosophy.²⁶¹ The main reason is that these ethnophilosophies applies Western methodology of (field) observation or the Western theories of the justification or verification of the empirical explorations. By employing such Western models of knowledge systems, it is clear that such non-western philosophical system seem devoid of “critical thinking” and “passionate vision.” Nevertheless, these are the necessary conditions for philosophical investigation. Moreover, these are the necessary conditions for the existence of philosophy. If the study of *weltanschauung* is not capable of showing these necessary conditions, such elaborations should be classified as knowledge production of the new age movement. Yet this kind of knowledge production is ideological and lacks critical review and the sceptical approach, and it is only employed as “a spiritual therapy for psychological disorders” or “spiritual consolation for a despairing person.”²⁶²

Like with the African context, the classification of “ethnophilosophy” is contested by Asian thinkers or philosophers. As I have discussed previously, Odera Oruka together with Gail Presbey and O’chieng-Odiambo still consider ethnophilosophy as worthy of mention because these local thinkers have tried to show that critical thought is attached to the contextuality. Defoort explains how, since the beginning of 20th century, Asian thinkers have tried to convince philosophers in the West that the Chinese classics belong to the genre of philosophy. Later, this discussion proceeds with a suggestion that both Western and Chinese philosophers *can* agree with “a proper name” for any local philosophies such as Chinese classics.²⁶³ In this respect, Defoort suggests that ethnic property like with the phrase “Chinese philosophy” indicates a member in a familial bond. It is a kind of relationship between a species and

²⁶⁰ Subagya 1979; Boelaars 1984; see Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 1 & 2; In the case of the status of Chinese philosophy, see polemics between Rein Raud and Carine Defoort. Cf. Raud 2006; Defoort 2001, 2006.

²⁶¹ Botz-Bornstein 2006: 155.

²⁶² See Solomon 2001: 100; cf. Defoort 2006: 625.

²⁶³ Defoort 2006: 639.

its genera. It is to say “Chinese philosophy” is a member of the genus family “philosophy.” This perception is implied in “philosophy” as the universal model of *a priori* thought. The so-called universal philosophy is understood to apply to European scholars’ detailed explorations, intense investigations and dialectics, or ongoing critiques into Greek philosophy. Yet here one can hardly infer the fact that *there is the philosophy*. Even Greek philosophy is a branch of philosophy representing human ability to express the model of *a priori* thought. In this case, philosophy is imagined as the family tree which generates members in their respective articulation of the model of thought in accordance with the cultural context (worldview, ideology, tradition, etc.). By suggesting this familial relationship, Defoort advocates further dialogue between the non-Western philosophy and Western philosophy. Meanwhile in other expressions, Solomon reminds us of the danger of the rich varieties of local cultures disappearing, as well as their respective models of knowledge systems or intellectual heritage including their philosophical worldview. He also emphasizes that Western scholars (philosophers) tend to be trapped and suffocated by their own history and by doing that they treat philosophy as a constricted, oppressive and ethnocentric knowledge system.²⁶⁴

Both Solomon and Defoort belong to a group of scholars who promote the elaboration of non-Western philosophies and the ‘right’ to declare whether such proper-named philosophies deserve to be considered philosophy. Meanwhile, scholars who still consider the implication of ethnocentrism or chauvinist orientation hidden in the proper name, like Chinese philosophy, African philosophy, or Sundanese philosophy, argue that such identification will confine philosophy and lead to a situation of radical relativism where there is no longer commensurability among the varieties of *a priori* thought across cultural orientations. This incommensurability suffocates communicability which is an intrinsic element within each model of *a priori* thought as if each model were a self-evident and bounded system thus no need to be engaged in a relationship. Radical relativism also denies the possibility of arriving at correlative interaction between the unique philosophical standpoints. This is neither to suppose a supra-structure philosophy, nor to insist in the existence of universal philosophy. These identifications only impose any varieties of philosophy to be appropriated with “The Philosophy”; as if these models of *a priori* thought had to coincide completely with the standard of The Philosophy in order that they deserve the entitlement of philosophy.²⁶⁵

If Solomon’s and Defoort’s standpoints are correct that a philosophy is intrinsic elements of a culture; and if a culture is in itself marked by multiplicity and not by a monolithic representation, meaning that a culture is neither tied nor bounded to a native place as the original parentage, then one can infer that even a philosophy as with inner cultural experience is not a bounded and self-evident knowledge system and it is

²⁶⁴ Solomon 2001: 100-101.

²⁶⁵ Cf. van Binsbergen 2005: 49.

articulated in “multiple orientations.”²⁶⁶ In other words, from the viewpoint of the individual presentation of philosophy, a philosophy is a crossroad for any other model of *a priori* or theoretical thought. Meanwhile from the perspective of comprehensive vision, philosophy in itself is an extension of multiple models of *a priori* thought. This is a way to theorize that philosophy extends itself to the multiplicity of philosophical minds as they are expressed from their respective cultural setting. By extending itself, philosophy expands a dynamic comprehensive vision of “mindscapes.” “Mindscapes” is a concept used to enhance the openness and fluidity or the capacity of conversation among any mindset, as well as a complete vision of the “perspectival landscape” of theoretical and empirical knowing, reasoning and thinking as cultural experiences.²⁶⁷

The idea of mindscapes which applies in order to identify philosophical thought in a plurality of cultural contexts is identified as the third approach for the debates in ethnophilosophy or the entitlement of “philosophy” for a model of *a priori* thought expressed in a cultural context. This third approach supports the idea of a complete vision which includes the correlation between multiple ways of thinking philosophically. It is to suggest philosophy as the dynamic complete vision that embodies Chinese philosophy as a perspective of *a priori* thought and Western philosophy as another perspective in the thought landscape. In other words, this complete vision conceives of correlative thinking between local philosophies. To elaborate on African philosophy, for instance, is to acknowledge the ongoing dialogue with other models of philosophical thought including for example with Javanese philosophical thought. This inclusive perspective, places all philosophical thought in conversation with the other ways of thinking.

To summarize, this third approach adopts an affirmative perspective in thinking and this implies a presupposition of an affirmative worldview. This presupposition applies to an epistemological foundation which appears as the constitutive parts in our mind so that one can articulate their capacity for knowing, reasoning and thinking. The epistemological foundations inevitably affect any philosophical paradigm. In turn, due to this thinking foundation, this affirmative worldview pulls philosophers or thinkers from any cultural orientation out of a one-sided perspective which contains ethnocentrism and radical relativism with a sensitive apology of the dignity of their respective philosophical knowledge system.²⁶⁸ In turn, the affirmative worldview draws them into the consideration of the mindscapes as the dynamic comprehensive vision of correlative philosophical minds.

This affirmative worldview reminds us of what Nietzsche emphasizes about using creative deliberation to overcome our tendency of taking sides whether the

²⁶⁶ Cf. Botz-Borstein 2006: 158; van Binsbergen 2005: 51.

²⁶⁷ See Botz-Borstein 2006: 162.

²⁶⁸ Defoort 2006: 633.

perspective of the arrogant nobility, or that of the rebellious slave morality.²⁶⁹ In this context, it is important for us to avoid being imprisoned in the diametrical contradiction: either being arrogant with the super-structure of philosophical knowledge systems, or being rebellious as the inferior knowledge system, considered merely as a tradition of thought. The affirmative worldview, then, takes a standpoint to extend openness to any kind of thinking traditions. This is not about an enhancement of mutual understanding between North Atlantic philosophers and the non-North Atlantic ones. The mutual understanding between them still presupposes that one should take a side in a diametrical relationship. To some extent, it is true that any side is irreducible. Nevertheless, this irreducibility is a reconstructed theory of the self-identity tradition of thought as if it maintained its self-evidence. The fact is that both sides presuppose interconnectivity or reciprocity in order to preserve the claim of self-sufficient understanding of its self-identity. Such reciprocity appears more significant than the insistence that each model of thinking tradition must preserve their respective self-evidence. Here, one can propose a further inference, that by being involved in this reciprocity the presence of a thinking tradition is clarified.

²⁶⁹ Nietzsche 1887/1990: 187-188; cf. Deleuze 1962/2002: xii & xiv; Defoort 2006: 637.

Chapter 3: The Sundanese sagacious disposition in the Sufic shrine of Nagara Padang

This chapter will discuss a form of sagacity that uses creative awareness to develop a model of the completion of life as sagacious knowledge in the Sundanese context. The model I observed at the Sundanese Sufic shrine *Nagara Padang* is a creative improvisation or *bricolage* combining the *tareqat*²⁷⁰ of Sufism with indigenous spirituality. I will start with a geographical description of the shrine. I will proceed with an elaboration of some of the associative connotations between the shrine and ancient narratives concerning the name of the shrine. Such associative connotations indicate the shrine's "cultic continuity"; and this continuity will inform the next elaboration, the explication and the deeper interpretation of the sagacious knowledge.

3.1 The geographical setting

The Sufic Shrine *Nagara Padang* is located at *Gunung* (Mount) *Padang* or *Pasir Pamipiran* in the southern region of the Bandung Area in West Java. The meditative site is surrounded by dry paddy fields with crops planted side by side with the government-owned coffee and pine plantations, with deeper down the mountain slope human settlements surrounded by wet paddy fields.²⁷¹ Some of the human settlements or *kampongs* around the shrine are under the administration of the *Rawabogo* village. This village is within the district of *Ciwidey*, Regency of Bandung. My observations focus mainly on this village because it is here where the informant-guardians of the shrine live. The village was settled in the 19th century CE,²⁷² i.e. in the Dutch Colonial era, by people who originated from the Regency of *Sukapura* which is known today as the Regency of *Tasikmalaya* and *Ciamis*. *Rawabogo* village is an agricultural community

²⁷⁰ A *Tareqat* is associated with the Islamic mysticism in Java. This Javanese mysticism belongs to the banner of Sufism. *Tareqat* cannot be separated from the existence of esoteric fraternities which are exclusive group in the middle of the *santri* or the Javanese devoted Moslem group. *Tareqat* can be also considered as the special mystical techniques which are the second out of the four stages of theory of mystical advancement if one wants to become a member of the esoteric fraternities. The first is *sare'at*, the third *hakekat*, then the last one *makrifat*. See Geertz 1969:182-183.

²⁷¹ The government owned pine forest has been managed and controlled by The Department of Forestry (*Perum Perhutani*) since 1970.

²⁷² According to the village chief of *Rawabogo*, Cecep NA Prawira, 19 and 30 January 2008, the first inhabitants were Islamic mystics or Sufism. The spread of Islam in West Java, especially in the regency of *Sakapura*, now *Tasikmalaya* cf. the historical record of the migration of the people in Iip D. Yahya 2006; cf. Denys Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2: 55, 125-128.

where most people work in the rice fields in addition to poultry breeding and animal husbandry.

The shrine is a part of the southern mountainous range in the highland belt surrounding Bandung area. According to geological data, these mountains emerged in the Miocene Epoch, 23 to 5 million years Before Present.²⁷³ Some of these mountains are supposed to be inner-erupted volcanoes, whereas others have actually erupted with external deposits. The mountain where the shrine is located is an inner-erupted mountain. Climatic erosion over the volcano has occurred for ages exposing many huge igneous rocks. The igneous rocks are naturally formed in such a way that they look like terraces. One can see at least seven naturally formed terraces. A terrace is comprised of a compound of several igneous rocks. Some of the rocky compounds form a passage through which pilgrims should pass as part of the pilgrimage rites. Some of them form a cave within which pilgrims can pray or meditate. There has been no human effort to modify the igneous rocks. These rocks are still largely in their natural form, although in a few places steps and other features have been carved out. Only at the entrance gate to the shrine has the natural rock been artificially modified. The shrine's mountainous area has two peaks. The first peak is 1375 meters above sea level and the second is 1425 meters. From these peaks one can see to the north the landscape of the southwestern part of the Bandung area.

Like most other shrines in the Archipelago, this sacred place is enveloped by periodic natural springs. The output of these springs combines and flow as a stream to the main river of *Citarum*. The river *Citarum* is one of the largest rivers in West Java. One of the springs is important for the rituals of pilgrimage. This natural spring has a relatively constant flow; whereas the others are occasional and depend on the rainy season. These springs are dry in the summer. Water and a fountain appear as significant symbolism in the articulation of spirituality as well as in the realization of daily activities.

Figure 1 displays a map of the Sufic Shrine *Nagara Padang*. This spring is not only used to irrigate the rice fields but it is also used as water supply for the *kampongs* (hamlets) and the surrounding *desas* (villages).

²⁷³ I owe the geographical information in this section to the geographer T. Bachtiar, a member of the Indonesian Society of Geography, and a lecturer in physical geography at Nusantara Islamic University (UNINUS), who kindly agreed to visit the shrine with me and explain its features to me on the spot.

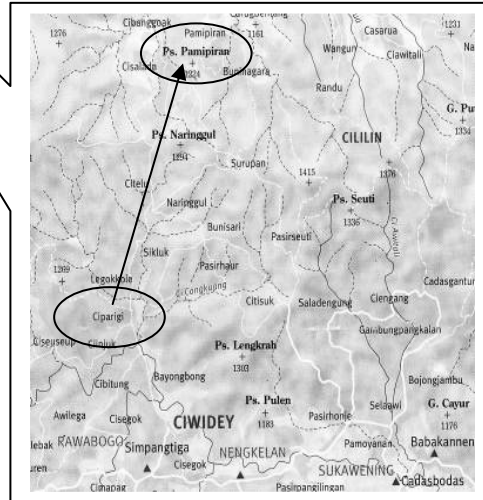


Figure 1: The map of Rawabogo Village, District Ciwidey. The cycle is the location of the Sufic Shrine Nagara Padang. The arrow points out the general direction of the pilgrimage route (which in the next figure will be shown in more detail). It starts from the house of the guardian at Kampong Ciparigi.

Based on the natural formations of the igneous rocks into terraces, the guardians of the shrine have demarcated three phases of the life cycle and seventeen prayers and meditative stages associated with specific points on the path along the rocks. These identifications are meant to impose meaning upon these natural rock formations. Such meaning provides the guardians with edifying materials which they employ in order to assist the pilgrims while performing their pilgrimage, including prayer and meditative sessions at the site. Figures 2 and 3 provide a description of the pilgrimage route and the terraces, phases, and stages at the shrine.

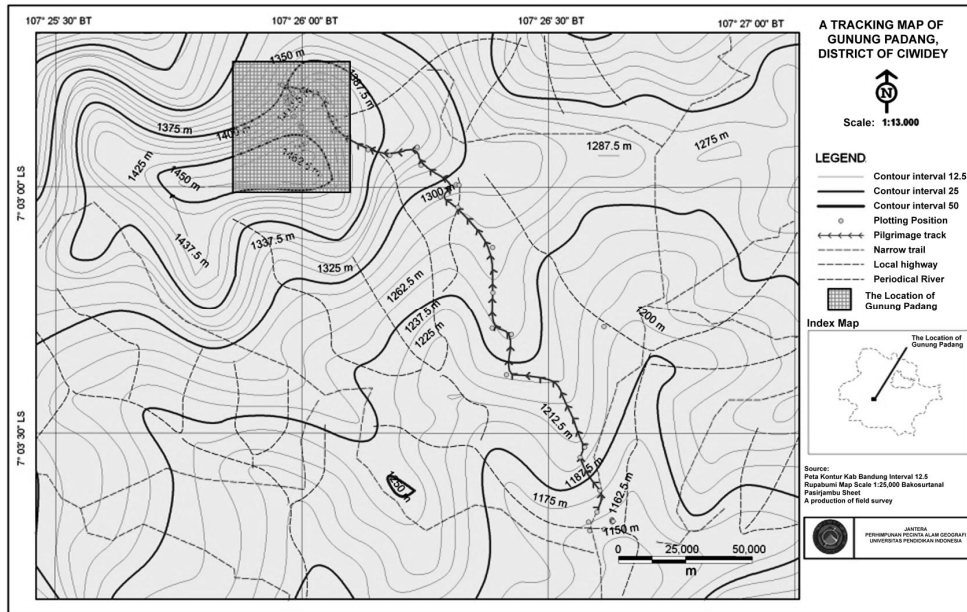


Figure 2: The route of pilgrimage, starting from the guardian house at Kampong Ciparigi.

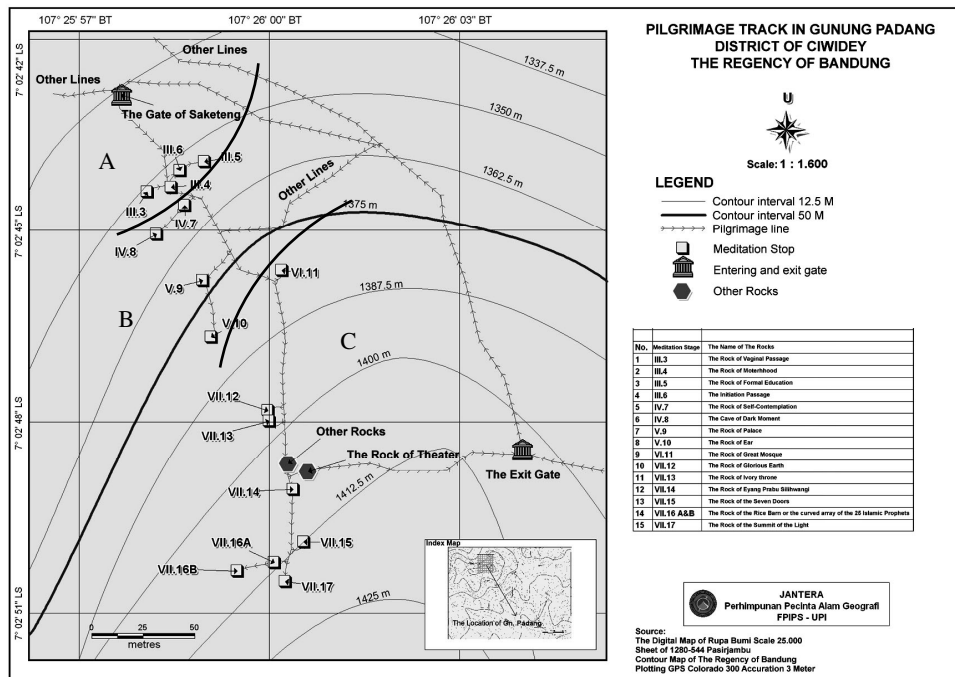


Figure 3: The terraces, phases and stages of the pilgrimage

One can see on this figure 2 a pilgrim needs to walk for approximately 2 hours in order to arrive at the shrine. The journey is through dry rice-fields and coffee and pine plantations. The route of the pilgrimage is an ascending track. The track will be finished at the height of 1462 meters above sea level. It takes almost two hours by foot from the guardian's house to the entrance gate of the shrine. The guardian can accompany the pilgrim along the route. In modern times, one can rent a motorcycle taxi used for public transport and arrive at the shrine's entrance in fifteen minutes, after which the devotional journey is limited to inside the extensive shrine area. Some pilgrims depart from the house in the morning or afternoon; others prefer to go in the evening, around 8 p.m. A pilgrim can stay in a temporary camp at the shrine, or in the guardian's house.

In Figure 3, we see the three levels of the pilgrimage after a pilgrim cleans him/herself in the fountain *Cikahuripan* and has a ritual session at the entrance gate (1333 m). These levels are located at natural terraces. The first level (A) is on the third and fourth terraces which are between 1333 - 1350 meters above sea level. This level symbolizes the first phase in a life cycle, that is, the birth and the period of childhood. The first phase is a formation of four igneous rocks and each rock signifies a stage of pilgrimage. The formation consists of *Batu Palawangan ibu* (The Vaginal Passage), *Batu Paibuan* (The Rock of Motherhood), *Batu Panyipuhan* (The Rock of Formal Education), and *Batu Poponcoran* (The Initiation Passage). Together they represent of birth, the memory of maternal nurturing, the reflection of formal education, and the moment of initiation from childhood to adulthood. These names indicate that at the emic level there is a projection of the functions of the human body (especially the female body) onto the rocky landscape; on the one hand we seems to be close here to the widespread pre- and protohistorical imagery of Mother Earth, on the other hand the emphasis on the human body might be taken (at a level of etic interpretation) as a reminder of the fact that it is the body that constitutes one of the principal bases of equality among humans – albeit that then still there is a significant gender difference.

The second level (B) is on the fourth until the sixth terraces which are at an elevation between 1350 until 1375 meters. This second level symbolizes the period of adulthood. The level consists of *Batu Kaca Saadeg* (The Rock of Self Contemplation), *Batu Gedong Peteng* (The Rock of the Dark Moment), *Batu Karaton* (The Rock of the Palace), and *Batu Kutarungu* (The Rock of the Ear). These igneous rocks symbolize the capability to perform daily work, to maintain material belongings, and to show one's competence and skills. These competences and skills are marked with a capacity to live under the guidance of one's conscience and awareness. Such a capacity is necessary in the process of emerging as a wise man. The wise man should internalize and then actualize the noble virtues and values of life. Thus, the second phase is the preparation that leads a pilgrim to enter the higher level of the pilgrimage.

The highest level could be characterized as 'The contemplation of the Sage' [C] is on the fifth to seventh terraces and their heights range from 1375 until 1412 meters

above sea level. These levels consist of *Batu Masjid Agung* (The Rock of the Great Mosque), *Batu Bumi Agung* (The Rock of the Glorious Earth), *Batu Kursi Gading* (The Rock of the Ivory Throne), *Batu Pakuwon Eyang Prabu Silihwangi* (The Rock of Eyang Prabu Silihwangi),²⁷⁴ *Batu Lawang Tujuh* (The Rock of the Seven Doors), *Batu Padaringan* (The Rock of the Rice Barn) or *Salawe Jajar* (The array of the Twenty five [Islamic Prophets],²⁷⁵ a curved linear rock section), and *Puncak Manik* (The Rock of the Summit of the Light). The formation called The Rock of the Great Mosque is interpreted, by the shrine guardian who has been our principal informant, as the emergence, in the pilgrim as being transformed, by the process of process, as a Sage; this emergence is marked by the acknowledgement that the glorious Almighty is the proprietor of the universe. This reveals the pilgrim's growth to self-awareness of the presence of the universe and of the Almighty. At the etic level, I submit that such understanding indicates the triadic structure of life (see below), comprising (a) the self (the human being), (b) the universe and (c) the Almighty (where b and c may be taken as representing the others). This ternary structure of life is, as we shall see, an implication of central Sunda virtues: "*silihwangi*" (intersubjective 'dignification'; cf. the name of the king mentioned above), *welas asih* (compassion); and the cardinal principle of life: "*silih asuh, silih asih, silih asah*" (to love, to care and to teach each other), *sapajajaran* (equality), *nuhunkeun* (gratefulness), and *kaadilan* (justice).

One can infer from the geographical description that the shrine consists of the natural formation of igneous rocks upon which humans have projected their specific interpretation. This combination generates lessons about how the pilgrim by the very process of pilgrimage may transform into a sage. This "Way of the sage" reflects a profound knowledge system concerning sagacity, as well as philosophical conceptions of ontology even epistemology. This implication of the knowledge system will be analyzed when, in the next section, we consider the antiquity of the shrine.

3.2 The antiquity of the shrine

The question of the antiquity of the shrine arises when one searches for the source of the shrine. The shrine reflects not only the indigenous elements of Sundanese cultural orientations, but it also touches the crossroads of the major Asian civilizations, i.e. Indian, Chinese and Middle Eastern, or that of major Asian religions, i.e. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.²⁷⁶ Based on what I have observed in the previous chapter, it might be possible to show the local influence of these Asian civilizations and religions. The influences of Asian civilizations and religions which can be found at the shrine are

²⁷⁴ As we shall see below, Eyang Prabu Silihwangi is the king who features prominently in early Sunda history.

²⁷⁵ According to a common belief in Islam, and also mentioned in Quran and Hadits, there have been 25 prophets from Adam to Muhammad.

²⁷⁶ Landon & Briggs 1951; Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 2 & 3.

the rituals of cleansing water, of motherhood, of parental ancestry, of the employment of the natural rocks as a place for a meditation, a prayer or a veneration of the parental ancestry, and the pilgrimage to the shrine, and the communal feast of slametan. In this connection it becomes important to consider the question of the antiquity of the shrine as a complex human interpretation cast as a semantic net upon the natural features of the local landscape.

3.2.1 “To read the nature and to contemplate the selfhood”

The policy of decentralization policy has split the regency of Bandung into two administration units in 2006. Gunung Padang is nowadays part of the Regency of West Bandung. Yet the guardians from Rawabogo village still maintain the site.

According to the Lurah, or the head of Rawabogo village, *Cecep N.A. Prawira*, several peripheral kampongs under the Rawabogo administration are still maintaining their original Sundanese cultural heritage.²⁷⁷ These peripheral kampongs are close to the contemplative site. The kampongs preserve Sundanese traditional music and dance, the traditional tilling techniques used in the paddy fields, and the regular performance of ritual ceremonies based on the Sundanese and Islamic calendars.²⁷⁸ These cultural practices are conducted by the elders or the shrine guardians either for the sake of interested individuals or that of the village community as a whole. They are also practicing divination (similar to *I Ching* in the Chinese context or the *Sangoma's Hakata oracle* in the Southern African context) in order to assist individuals or a community; such divination is based on *paririmon*²⁷⁹ or *ilmu buhun*, i.e. a collection of divinatory or prophetic sayings.

I was informed by *Cecep NA Prawira* that there are at least six consultative elders and guardians of the contemplative shrine whose cultural authority is acknowledged by him. The reverend elders are *Abah Iro* and his son *Pak Karta*, *Abah Karmo* and his son *Bapak Undang*, *Abah Tarma*, *Bapak Danu*, *Bapak Apit* and *Bapak Enjang*.²⁸⁰ People who live near the elders often seek advice or consultation about their respective daily problems. Thus, the elders and the guardians serve a socio-cultural role in preserving the community's heritage. Their consultation and advice are indispensable for any government official in order to be able to communicate with the people in the communities. Also local officers will not be able to communicate with the community unless they include the elders and the guardians in local deliberations or a neighbourhood meeting. They will fail to govern the people and make the right political and economic decisions for the community if ignoring the consultative authority of the

²⁷⁷ Cf. the audio recorded interview with Lurah, the head of village, *Cecep NA Prawira* 19 January 2008.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Geertz 1969; Wessing 1979.

²⁷⁹ Wessing 1979.

²⁸⁰ The names are mentioned by the Lurah, see my research report 31 January 2008.

elders and the guardians. These traditional patrons are “the real” administrators. They exercise control of the local political and economic interests within their communities.

Let us return to a discussion of the role of the elders in guiding pilgrimages. It is interesting to note that every guardian develops his own version of the explanatory text of the pilgrimage and theorizes the reason for life, the sagacious disposition, and the experience of enlightenment. These explanations and theories are articulated in the form of educating and edifying pious lessons. In other words, elders or guardians develop their respective pious lessons for the sake of a pilgrimage even though there is “the formal version of the pious lessons.” These explanations are then passed on by the guardians to their apprentices. Every prospective guardian has to take an apprenticeship with of a prominent guardian by a revered elder, which is most often the father. In this case, the transmission follows the Asian (Hindu or Buddhist) model of the formation of sagacious individuals. Apprenticeship consists in a personal relationship between a *guru* (wise teacher) and his disciples. The inheritance of the pious lessons also serves the creative development and maintenance of local cultural orientations.²⁸¹

Yet, at Gunung Padang such an apprenticeship as a guardian is not formal but remains informal. A revered elder like Abah Karmo (70 years old at the time of writing, 2010) has several disciples and among them is his son Pak Undang (50). The apprentice is usually the guru’s first born son or his first son-in-law, if he does not have a son. The guru trains his disciples not in a formal school, but by doing daily activities. Although this preparation uses informal ways, there are some phases in the apprenticeship. At the beginning a guardian-to-be has to internalize the pious lessons. The duration of the process depends on how intense an apprentice contemplates the pious lessons in his life and actualizes the noble virtues and values of life by doing daily activities. Bapak Undang refers to this method of apprenticeship as “*maca alam*,”²⁸² which means “*to read the nature*.” It can also apply to the contemplative self which is an inherent part of the universe. The method of “reading” and producing meaning has to do with the one “*ngaji badan (diri)*”²⁸³ or “the contemplation of selfhood.” These indigenous ways of learning and of contemplating the self refer to the Buddhist and Sufic methods of generating knowledge of the self. In performing this method, guardians create coherent meaning between current events and their effort to draw meaning out of their cultural heritage.

At a certain moment in “reading the nature,” the elder or guru will determine how a guardian-to-be accomplishes the apprenticeship step by step. The first step is to assist a pilgrim conducting a pilgrimage to the shrine. After some time this apprentice

²⁸¹ Barth 1990.

²⁸² See my interview with Pak Undang, in Djunatan 2008; cf. Lombard 1990/2005 vol. 3.

²⁸³ See also Forum Discussion Group with some apprenticeship as Sunda elders and elders such as Abah Ajat Poerba Sasaka or Ki Laras Maya in Djunatan 2008. Another reference is Straathof 1971: 262-264, 345-350.

will also assist other pilgrims and the elder will celebrate an inauguration of the apprentice to be a guardian. The inauguration is held in a ritual ceremony which takes the common regional cultural form of the “*slametan*” (sacrificial meal) and to this solemn celebration all members of the family are invited. In the case of the family of Abah Karmo, Bapak Undang has started gradually taking over his father’s role as an active guardian. Bapak Undang was only able to begin taking over his father’s role after he contemplated the pious lessons and his life; after he had taken lessons on actualizing the noble virtue and values of life for over 30 years; and after an inauguration ceremony was held to establish his authority as a guardian. Now that Abah Karmo is beginning to retire, he is accompanying fewer pilgrims to the site. Instead, he has taken on the role of the authoritative advisor of the pious lessons and resolves practical matters which have to do with the actualization of the pilgrimage at the shrine. Occasionally Pak Undang still seeks Abah Karmo’s advice and confirmation on the details of the pious lessons. Moreover, Abah Karmo is an intermediary for the spiritual and mystical realm; mediating between the unseen world and the villagers he almost appears as the *axis mundi* – the place where heaven and earth meet, like the mountain shrine itself. He is often asked, even by Pak Undang, to confer his spiritual authority upon a ritual ceremony conducted by a pilgrim when he or she wants to begin or to end his or her pilgrimage.

The fact that there are several kinds of pious lessons of *Nagara Padang* demonstrates the various *emic* approaches realized by the various revered elders of the shrine. An observer has to discover for themselves which guardians possess the deepest insight into life and which ones provide most coherence and illumination in relating the physical details of the site to the meanings employed in edifying pilgrimage narrative. For example, Abah Karmo and Pak Undang have very specific and detailed understanding of the name of the shrine. They both believe that the name of mountain where the shrine is located, *Gunung Padang*, is a pun on words. The term “*Gunung*” or “mountain” connotes “head” or widely interpreted, “physical and spiritual body” or “selfhood.” The term “*Padang*” denotes “bright,” “light” or “illumination.” Alternatively, “*Padang*” also connotes “illuminating heart.”²⁸⁴ One can also perceive “the illuminating heart” as “a careful discernment or deliberation,” or “a visionary contemplation.” In short the guardians’ interpretation of the proper name “*Gunung Padang*” is to conceive it as a conundrum whose solution is “illuminating selfhood.”

This is an example of the specific way in Abah Karmo and Pak Undang as elder and shrine guardian shape their pious lessons. Their authority is obtained from acknowledgements from the surrounding communities and others outside the village concerning the “originality” of the narratives and their competences. A formal

²⁸⁴ Pak Undang said in the first interview: “*ari gunung luhur, padang nyatana hate urang... Ieu gunung teh luhur, ari padang teh hate nu caang.*” (My translation: “a mountain is our head, the light is in our illuminating heart.”) see Djunatan 2008: 105.

Part I

certificate signed by the village chief of Rawabogo certifies this acknowledgement of the antiquity of the pious lessons and the guardian's authority (see fig.4). Because of these authoritative competences, I started by observing the pious lessons of Abah Karmo and Pak Undang, since these clearly were prominent and sagacious figures. They are indispensable figures in the village because their advice is sought, not only by the village people and pilgrims, but even by other elders and guardians of the shrine.



Figure 4. The formal certificate of Guardianship in the shrine Nagara Padang (signed by the head of village)

The description of the Rawabogo village and the role of the main guardian discussed above show how, at the *emic* level, meaning is constructed at the site *Nagara Padang*. Such as *emic* interpretation reconstructs an indigenous conception of life which includes not only the cultural heritage embodied by the inhabitants, but also an explanation of the origin and the purpose of life. The latter implies an ontological worldview in which the existence of human beings and non-human figures, the universe and the Almighty, are perceived in the indigenous intelligence. This *emic* interpretation, to some extent, reveals the indigenous connotation concerning the shrine. This indigenous interpretation, however does not consider the purity or originality of the educative narrative. One has to remember Java's and the Indonesian Archipelago's situation at the crossroads between Indian, Chinese, and Middle Eastern cultural orientations, including the major religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Apparently, as we will see later in the explanation of the pious lessons of the shrine Nagara Padang, assimilation between the indigenous and the foreign aspect of cultures has led to the creative development of the pious lessons.

In this respect, one needs to reveal the cultural heritages which these inhabitants embody. These heritages comprise the three main cultural settings: the primordial Sunda legacy, the Hindu-Buddhist and the Sufic influences. One should not be too quick to judge the assimilation of these cultural and religious heritages as syncretistic. Although for academic students of comparative religion the concept of 'syncretism' may be neutral and purely descriptive, in the politics of competing world religions in Western Java today a rather different situation obtains. Here, both Islam and Christianity (especially Roman Catholicism) put themselves on the standpoint that their view of

religion and their doctrine is the only, pure form of divine truth, and that any deviation, or any combination of religious forms and doctrines from a variety of sources necessarily lack purity and truth, and therefore has to be rejected as heretic or pagan. This puts forms of peripheral, popular religion like that of Nagara Padang (and such popular local adaptations are more the rule than the exception within Islam²⁸⁵), in a very difficult position: while their adherents implicitly assume that they are in continuity with the dominant, formal variety of their world religion (in this case, Islam), the specialist representatives of that formal variety reject the popular form as syncretistic, i.e. heretic or even pagan. Against the peasants' affirmative, tacit assumption of continuity with the world of Islam in which however there is also plenty of room for elements from a Hinduist, Buddhist and local spiritual origin, stands the conflictive, rejective attitude of the formal religious specialists, the Ulama. Locally, according to the principle of affirmation, these heritages merge to produce an assimilative representation, which while being local is constitutive of their life world and therefore appears to them as inescapable truth. Thus, one can claim a syncretistic representation only at the *etic* level of interpretation by observing a gesture of rituals, a displayed symbol, a praying act or any religious object or ceremony.²⁸⁶ One should however be critical of the *etic* level of interpretation unless it is complemented by an *emic* interpretation as well.²⁸⁷ The *emic* approach of interpretation takes into account how religious heritage is locally assimilated and integrated. The assimilation implies a particular way of thinking that allows both the distinction and the assimilation of the three religious elements.

It is not as if the shrine guardians are not aware of the accusation of syncretism that is leveled against their practices by the *ulama*. It is in anticipation of such accusations that Abah Karmo and Pak Undang always explicitly declare that the practices of the time honored Sundanese tradition are 'cultural' or 'customary' (*budaya*), while asserting that their own religious belief is purely Islamic:

*Mun agama urang mah Islam keneh' our religion is still Islam*²⁸⁸

In the same light one can understand why these guardians insist on opening their prayers with Islamic formulae, and spicing them with (often garbled) Arabic Islamic expressions. One can compare their statements with Sundanese elders living in Bandung city. Thus *Ki Laras Maya* and *Abah Badra Santana* confirm this distinction of the Sundanese *culture* and Islamic *belief*. These elders assert the preservation of culture has

²⁸⁵ cf. Geertz 1968.

²⁸⁶ For this *etic* approach see Clifford Geertz 1969: 5; cf with van Binsbergen 2003: 237, 349 and Straathof 1970: 345-350 concerning his association of "*ngaji badan*" with the Catholic teaching of charity and sociality.

²⁸⁷ On another *etic* approach to Sunda cosmology see Straathof 1970: 260; Wessing 1979; 1988: 43; 2006: 206-207; cf. for a similar *etic* approach of local cosmology, for instance on sangomahood in Africa, see van Binsbergen 2003: 237, 244.

²⁸⁸ This was said during the daily conversation with these elders at 5 – 11 September 2007.

to do with an improvement of sagacious characteristics. The Sundanese people should express the characteristics of the Sage in their respective daily chores. This is the duty of life. Moreover, this is a task of the guardians and the elders to invite the Sundanese, whether individually or collectively, to articulate this duty in life. Meanwhile, religious belief is a means to enhance a self-awareness of the interconnectivity of the other two features of the triadic structure of life, the universe and the Almighty – the triadic structure is the substantive indigenous worldview. Interconnectivity is also a substantive existential role for any human being, especially the sagacious individuality.²⁸⁹

It is interesting to note how the elders articulate the prescriptions for Sundanese individual and community life. According to them, there are two Sundanese terms for the word “human.” These terms separate the classification of human beings into two categories.²⁹⁰ In the first category, human beings are described by the term “*jalma*” or “creature.” In this sense, a creature represents “animal and vegetal characteristics.” A human is like other creatures all embody basic properties like “animal” and “vegetation.” In this respect, humans appear as a body that has the conception of the natural intentionality or the instinct to move and to grow. For this purpose, humans are equipped with five physical senses. It is the task of every human being to transform the animal and vegetal properties into the second category. The second classification is associated with the Sundanese term “*manusa*.”²⁹¹ This category refers to “the properties of human being as the man.” Human beings should be characterized by improving their mental and spiritual capabilities. The first includes cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of mental development. The latter connotes the soul, the inner capacities such as conscience and belief. Psychologically, one can perceive that the development of the ability to use the physical senses takes place during the period of childhood. Transformation to the level of “the man” is already initiated in childhood. Meanwhile the full transformation from the level of animal and vegetation into the level of the man is occurs in the period of adulthood. Mental and spiritual development is shown by an adult. The development of the senses, mental, and spiritual capabilities has nothing to do with an increase in age. The development of these human capabilities in the Sundanese conception also includes an expression of human virtues and values in daily activities. Thus, “*manusa*” or “the man” represents a complete improvement of individuality. In this sense, the complete improvement refers to an achievement of the sagacious personality. In short, the “*manusa*” is “the Sage.”

The development of human capabilities and sagacious individuality can be observed in Pak Undang’s explanation of the teaching narrative at the stage of *Kutarungu* or The Rock of the Ear at the *Nagara Padang* site.

²⁸⁹ See Ki Laras Maya 2008 and my transcription of an interview with Abah Badra Santana on 22 January 2008.

²⁹⁰ See the transcription of an interview with Abah Badra Santana. Cf. Ki Laras Maya 2008: 26-27.

²⁹¹ See Sunda Lexicon by R.Danadibrata.

“Ayeuna kutarungu. Tah ieu budak téh, carita budak téh, geus wibawana geus unggul, usahana geus maju, geus kajayaanana geus cukup. Ai kuta téh tempat. Rungu téh kuping, sipir. ...Kuta téh tempat atawa patokan, kuta téh. Patokan rereungeuan, ulah loba dédéngan anu matak nyilakakeun batur. Kudu pas. Sambungunana kudu **pasagi**. Ceuk carita mah naon nu **pasagi**. Pas ucapanana pas lampahna”.

*My translation: “Now the rock of the ear. The story of the grown up child is going on. The child now has a successful occupation. Everyone praises him, and he has enough to support himself. The “kuta” is a place, “rungu” denotes “ear” and our listening capability. The rock reminds us about the conscience we should hear. It is time to listen. Don’t waste your life by listening to what ought not to be done, otherwise you can harm people. You should be integrated. You should express self-integrity (which is interpreted from the Sundanese term **pasagi**, or ‘squareness’). What is self-integrity? It is correlation of your speech and behaviour”.*

“Tapi éta kudu hiji kayakinan, yakin ka nu nyiptakeun urang, ka Dat nu Mahakawasa, sabab tadi tea. Entong ngarérénguan anu sejen éta mah di kuta runggu. Ai di kuta runggu téh ieu, ceupil (kuping), tah ieu (menunjuk hati) téh kutana. Kari ngareret nu tadi tea, reret ka kenca tah baraya belaaneun, kakatuhu tah tulunganeun. Paling ngareret kadinya. Dadasaran ku welas asih”.²⁹²

“Moreover, one should represent a belief to The One who creates us, to the Almighty. Don’t listen to anything else here. If you can listen to the Almighty’s voice inside your conscience, you will be able to see to the left, there are fellow people under your protection; then turn your eyes to the right, there are brother, sister, and family to be supported. Compassion should underlie your service to others”.

The first paragraph in the citation above explains the development of sagacious individuality as a part of the cultural preservation. The guardian employs the Sundanese words, “pas” and “*pasagi*.” The term “pas” literally means “perfectly fit”; while “*pasagi*” denotes “square.” It has been argued, notably why the Javanese cultural historian Jakob Sumardjo, that these words articulate the primordial Sundanese legacy and the traces of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islamic mysticism. He writes that “*pasagi*,” “the square,” and the “*pas*,” or “the perfectly fit,” are associated with the idea of “*mandala*” or the perfect universe in the Hindu-Buddhist belief of the macrocosm.²⁹³ Still according to Sumardjo, the perfect universe is projected into the human being as the microcosm thus presenting a model of micro-macro connectivity that has come up time and again in the history of religion and philosophy (Stoa, Neo-Platonism, Leibniz, etc.). The condition of universal order is ascribed to human beings. The cosmic order is embodied into the self-disciplined and self-persevering character. These cosmic characteristics of individuality identify self-integrity, which is simply explained as the correlation between speech and daily conduct. This correlation, the guardian associates with the notion of “a self-integrity.” In other words, both terms are intuitively defined as “the self-integrity,” and both are represented in the primordial Sundanese education for sagacious individuality.

²⁹² See Djunatan 2008: 37.

²⁹³ See Sumardjo 2003, 2006.

By referring to the terms “*pas*” and “*pasagi*” the second paragraph might address to the external influences on the time honored Sundanese heritage which could reverberated the Hindu-Buddhist and Sufic heritages.. These heritages improve the idea of self-integrity for the Sage. The Buddhist heritage advocates self-integrity as a significant derivation from the doctrine of the “eight paths,” within which the right word and the right behaviour are consequently related to each other.²⁹⁴

In Islamic mysticism, the idea of self-integrity is related to an individual’s ability to commit to the words of the Almighty in their conscience. *Al Ghazali*, a prominent interpreter and sympathetic defender of Sufism, emphasizes the conscience or “*qalbu*” (Arab: ‘heart’) as a coachman who drives a horse cart (a metaphor for managing natural desires and lust which one can find out also in the Greek Philosophy, such as Plato, Neo-platonism, and Stoicism). According to the Islamic doctrine, the human conscience expresses a divine quality of the Almighty.²⁹⁵ When one grows up to be an adult as it is destined according to the way or the “*sarékat*,” one will be able to provide service to others and the universe. The ability to serve others is regarded as an essential quality for performing the “*hakékat*.” Islamic mysticism teaches that a mature person has to follow their own destined life path, “the *sarékat*” and to perform service for others and the universe or “the *hakékat*.” By fulfilling these ultimate life duties, the mature person manifests the virtuous life and sagacious individuality.

One may also find a trace of antiquity in the conception of death from the pious lessons at the shrine which puts “death” as the implicit conclusion in the phase of sagacious individuality. In the narrative, which I will elaborate more on in the next section, one experiences death as a moment of union in mysticism: the becoming one between the sage and the universe as well as the Almighty. The moment of unification is described in a Sundanese phrase:

“*mulang ka jati, mulih ka asal*”²⁹⁶.

“*Going back to the essence (is) returning to the source (or origin)*”.

This phrase connotes “a homeward journey,” or going back to the unity with the other two features in the triadic figures of life. Nevertheless, “the journey home” initiates an extension in the cyclic process which elevates an individual to a human being of higher quality. This extending continuation symbolizes a journey into teleological perfection as the Sage. A Sundanese word describes this moment of “the becoming-one” as “*ngahiang*.”²⁹⁷ The word literally means “disappearing.” Thus, the

²⁹⁴ William 2006: 338.

²⁹⁵ The originated Sunda teaching of self-management and self-restraint see. Ki Laras Maya 2008: 26, 31-32; cf. teaching of self-restraint in Al Ghazali’s account of self-control at Simuh 1996: 88-89 or Chittick, 2002: 24.

²⁹⁶ This phrase is quoted in FGD in Djunatan 2008.

²⁹⁷ This term was articulated by Ki Laras Maya and confirmed by other elders in my interview sessions.

Sage will “disappear” when he or she achieves the end of life. This connotation is associated with the doctrine of *Moksa* in Buddhism. The doctrine theorizes a leap into eternity or nothingness from the cycle of life. The leap or *moksa* or the disappearance signifies actual death in the Sundanese mind. The death is an experience of the inclusion of body. The inclusion connotes the completeness of body and soul; both are unified with the universe and the Almighty.

In other connotation, the death or the *moksa* then also refers to the wheel of life or the *mandala* in the Hindu and Buddhist senses. The “wheel of life” depicts a cycle journey of life from birth to sagacious individuality. Buddhist Tibet describes this cyclical journey of life from birth to death as “the twelve deeds” or the “continuous connection.” The life is a causal chain of becoming (*bhavacakra*) in accordance with these phrases.²⁹⁸ Thus, death is not a termination of life even for individuals. This means reincarnation to the next quality of life. One does not predict what kind of quality that will be. Considering the unpredictable side of the next quality of life, Buddhist doctrine emphasizes that life’s present existence is precious. It is so important that no one can ignore a duty of life to improve the quality of the present life, here and now. The assertion that the present life is precious and inalterable is called “*karma*.” To this extent, death as “disappearance” symbolizes the disposition to detach from previous ways of life and to embrace an extending quality of selfhood which is sealed by the sagacious knowledge, or enlightenment. This clearly echoes the life of *Sakyamuni* Buddha who fulfills a duty to invite others in order to follow the way of sagacity.

Meanwhile, the connotation of death in the pious lessons can also be seen from the viewpoint of Sufic union mysticism. According to the pious lessons of Nagara Padang as it is told by Pak Undang, death or the homeward journey or the disappearance may be associated with an achievement of the level of “*makrifat*”²⁹⁹ or the level of becoming-one between selfhood and the Almighty. This unification is equivalent with the achievement of sagacious individuality by a committed pilgrim. The connotation of death appears meaningful if one also considers its correlation with birth. Birth and death are two constitutive elements in the Islamic conception of time. Time represents linear movement according to Islamic doctrine and it is not cyclical. The life of creatures, including mankind is to follow this linear track separately. It means that to follow the path of life is a matter of individual responsibility. This is another significant element in the Islamic doctrine that salvation is personal, not collective. The focus on individual responsibility and the emphasis of personal salvation appear as the substantive message in the narrative of the individual hero who sails the oceans of life. Life is a journey to the death, yet again death is not a negation of life. It is a moment of becoming-one between man and God. This unification or becoming-one conveys an expanding quality

²⁹⁸ Williams 2006: 83, 399-402.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Simuh 1996: 92; Nurbakhsh 2002: 2; Chittick 2002: 71. The standard Islamic expression is *maʿrifat*.

of life so that one experiences an extended degree of sagacious disposition. To the extent that death metaphorically is a continuation of the extended journey of life, the linear progress of human existent no longer conceives of two limited movements from the beginning or birth to the end or death. *Makrifat*, in this sense, is the continuum of “the homeward journey.”

One can also suggest how the elders and guardians of the shrine conceive of the idea of enlightenment or illumination. At the Sufic Shrine Nagara Padang, the experience of illumination is constructed in pious lessons. The narration is provided along with the pilgrimage which one has to follow at the site. While a pilgrim seeks illumination for the sake of his/her life, he or she will contemplate his/her own life according to the pious lessons. In other words, the search for illumination associates itself with the realization of sagacious individuality. About the idea of illumination itself, One of the guardians of the *Nagara Padang* site, Pak Undang, once said regarding the idea of illumination that:

“Ari panerangan ceuk sakaol panerangan téh nyaangan atawa ngabejaan. Anu teu apal supaya apaleun jadi panerangan. Atawa anu poekeun dicaangan, supaya caang padang. Jadi hartina Nagara Padang téh nagara nyaangan. Jalma poekkeun haté munajat di Nagara Padang supaya caang padang deui, sing caang beurangna, caang peutingna, caang padang narawanganna. Atawa ngabejaan anu teu nyaho, nu teu apaleun dibejaan atawa nu poekeun dicaangan”.³⁰⁰

My translation: “People say illumination is to be aware or to realize. If a person is lost, he will be brought back into the bright paths. If it is dark, it is time to illuminate the person so that the mind is clarified. Thus, the meaning of Nagara Padang is the enlightened individual. A person with a dark heart, prays at this site so that he is illuminated. His days will be bright, as well as his nights. His mind will be bright, clear and distinct. Tell the story of illumination for those who do not yet realize and for those who forget and live in dark so that they can be enlightened”.

Pak Undang’s discussion above explains what the experience of illumination has to do with the capabilities of the human mind. As far as the human mind is concerned, one perceives that the capability to experience illumination does not exclusively address the human cognitive capacity. The human mind in the Sundanese sense includes the human senses and the metaphorical human heart,³⁰¹ the latter always refers to the affective and the volitional aspects of human beings. Therefore, the indigenous conception of the human mind uncovers a holistic presentation of human beings. For the purpose of this thesis, I take the holistic experience of illumination as self-enlightened awareness.

Another inspiration from the citation above has to do with the main function of sagacity. Sagacity offers illumination to people who do not realize the origin and the purpose of life. These people live in darkness. It is the task of the sagacious individual to tell those who are unaware of the story of enlightened selfhood. These people can go to *Nagara Padang* to have a serial meditation in order to contemplate their own lives.

³⁰⁰ See Djunatan 2008: 28.

³⁰¹ Cf. Ki Laras Maya 2008: 38-40.

This is why the site is called the contemplative one. The purpose of a pilgrimage here is to realize the meaning of life. By realizing the meaning of life, a pilgrim can contemplate the pathway of life which he or she will take.

Human beings' desire for illumination is an inevitable theme in many religions. The story of the self-enlightened awareness and the enlightened selfhood is not exclusively a Sundanese invention. The lessons of sagacity at *Nagara Padang* site can be found out in the formulation of pious lessons by the guardians (in this case, Abah Karmo and Pak Undang). The guardians declare that their religion is Islam. Islamic prayer formulae, although sometimes garbled, form frequent intrusions in the prayers which they recite in front of pilgrims, in the Sundanese language. Moreover, Islamic mysticism influences the pious lessons which they communicate to the pilgrims. Nevertheless, their beliefs implicitly show the tendency to refer to the Sundanese pre-Islamic heritage and manifest Hindu-Buddhist cultural influences.

The assimilation of such distant influences contributes to the image of the pilgrim's journey to achieve sagacious individuality. Incidentally, one of the striking features of the pious lessons at *Nagara Padang* is that they are explicitly geared to the individual salvation / self-realization of the pilgrim as individual, and that merely lip service is being paid to the individual's obligations towards others (others who, moreover, often appear not as human beings of flesh and blood, but as spiritual elements of nature, 'Parents'). Here we detect the influence of the world religions Islam and Buddhism, both of which (just like Christianity) concentrate on individual rather than on communal enlightenment and salvation. In that respect, the pious lessons of *Negara Padang* can hardly be older than the influence of their world religions in the area, i.e. date from after the beginning of the Common Era.

The assimilated elements cannot be perceived as a blend for the sake of the dissemination of a major religion. Each heritage in this sense has its respective conception of the Sage. Nevertheless, one should consider that these heritages combined together produce a comprehensive approach to the depiction of the sagacious disposition. One could find this comprehensive explanation in the pious lessons. By reflecting on the self-image of the sagacious disposition represented in the pious lessons, a pilgrim strengthens his/her will to become a Sage. Hence, pursuing the qualities of a Sage becomes the purpose for self improvement.

In other words, the pious lessons of the Sage place in the position of a child the pilgrim whose intention is to contemplate his journey of life. This child is a heroic figure who eventually becomes the Sage. Thus, the hero is not only *Prabu Silihwangi*, the prominent Sundanese Sage King who is closely connected to the shrine. Metaphorically said, it is the pilgrim himself who seeks to be the Sage King. Moreover, if one follows the pious lessons of the future sage-child the story of the future sage conveys the idealization of either an individual or a communal life. Such idealization has to do with the indigenous belief about the origin and the cosmological structure of

life.³⁰² The narrative is considered sacred because of this belief. It is not merely the narrative of an individual, but the sacred one of the Sage. Therefore, the educating materials which the guardians communicate are coherent elements of the sacred narrative of the Sage.

3.2.2 Ancient Sundanese poetical narratives about Gunung Padang

Oral tradition claims some high, albeit unspecified, antiquity for the shrine of Nagara Padang, but can we arrive at more precise historical data? Here we are fortunate to possess some historical records in the form of a poetic narrative and in the Sundanese narrative poem (*Pantun*). These records are transliterations from the ancient manuscripts and transcripts of traditional story telling. There have been many transliterations produced from old manuscripts written in Sundanese characters of *Ha Na Ca Ra Ka*, or in Sanskrit. These old manuscripts were written around the 16th century CE. Meanwhile, traditional storytelling is a standard way of the communities in West Java to produce their own account of the origin and the purpose of life -- thus articulating their knowledge of what ought to be done and what not. These narratives depict the indigenous ontological and epistemological account of life.

With regard to the Sufic Shrine *Nagara Padang* at Gunung Padang, we have available one transcript and two transliterations. These texts mention Gunung Padang as the name of a place where heroic figures have meditated or died; the use of this name in these texts also throws light, as we shall see, on the indigenous ontological and epistemological conceptions. The narratives mentioning Gunung Padang are:

- a. *Carita Ciung Wanara*
- b. *Carita Parahyangan* (16th century CE), and
- c. *Wawacan Sajarah Galuh* (19th century CE).

Carita Ciung Wanara

In the first place we have the Sundanese legend of the historical figure *Ciung Wanara* (*Sang Manarah*), a transcript of which became available in 1973. The story was sung by storyteller Ki Subarma. The transcript of this ritual performance was made by Ajip Rosidi, a contemporary prominent Sundanese elder.³⁰³ Gunung Padang, according to the story, was the meditation place for *Prabu Sang Premana Dikusumah*, the King of Galuh (*Galih Pakuan*) around 703 CE. Because of conflict during his administration,³⁰⁴ the King decided to delegate his throne to his prime minister *Mantri Anom Aria Kebonan*

³⁰² See Barnard & Spencer 1996: 386, the entry of "Myth and Mythology."

³⁰³ This transcription was made at 1973. This famous legend is one of the oral tradition of telling stories in the Sundanese culture.

³⁰⁴ This conflict of power occurred because the kingdom of Galuh was a vassal kingdom under the rule of the kingdom of Mataram in the Central Java see, Atja & Danasasmita 1981: 25ff; Danasasmita 1984: 94ff; Iskandar 1997: 140-141.

Kideng Agung. The King then left the palace and started to mediate at *Gunung Padang*, on the mountain Padang. He became a Pandita (a Reverend Monk) known as *Pandita Ajar Sidik*.

The prime minister, however, betrayed him. He took over the throne and then claimed that he was actually the real Prabu Premana Dikusumah. He also took the real King's wives as his own wives. Meanwhile, Pandita Ajar Sidik came to his wife *Dewi Naga Ningrum* in a dream. In the dream, Prabu Premana Dikusumah prophesied that she would bear a son, and the son would rule the Kingdom of Galuh. This prophecy upset the usurper King Premana Dikusumah. The King then called Pandita Ajar Sidik and challenged the monk to prophesy whether his wives would bear sons. In order to make them look pregnant, the usurper king hid, the night before, a wide-mouthed clay pot on Dewi Naga Ningrum belly, and he used a wide-rimmed golden bowl for the other wife *Dewi Pangreyep*. As soon the monk Pandita Ajar Sidik prophesied, both wives actually became pregnant.

The usurper King became very upset and ordered his subjects to kill Pandita. Yet they failed. The Pandita was invincible because of his supernatural power. In order to prevent more bloodshed, the Pandita offered to die. After the Pandita passed away, he metamorphosed into the meditating dragon of Wiru. The dragon stayed at the *Nagara Gunung Padang*. The event of his death is described in the following verses:³⁰⁵

*Lungkruk Pandita Sidik
Sukma tinggal di kurungan
Biur ngapung ka mega malang
Ku malayang di mega malang
....
Banusan Ajar Sidik
Mulih ka jati mulang ka asal
Kebo mulih pakandangan
Clik ragrag di Nagara Gunung Padang*

*Salin jisim
Salin jinis
Pandita saparantosna ka Gunung Padang
Salin jisim, jalin jisim
Ngajadi Naga Wiru keur tapa*

My simplified translation:

“The Pandita Ajar Sidik let himself die. His spirit and body disappeared. He became one with (went back to) the origin (source) of life (The Home). After this, he stayed in Nagara Gunung Padang, where he metamorphosed into the meditating Dragon of Wiru”.

The fragment of the death of Prabu Premana Di Kusuma above represents ancient Sunda beliefs as well as Buddhist influences. Death as the disappearance of human physical and spiritual features is found in the Buddhist doctrine of *moksa*. The dead man, if given his deeds (*karma*) he has completed the cycle of his appointed incarnations will enter *nirvana*, the eternity. The doctrine of Buddhist *moksa* to some extent (for the notion of *Boddhisattva* is not elaborated here, because of the tantric influence which is acknowledge to be dominant in West Java) corresponds with the

³⁰⁵ See Ajip Rosidi 1973: 52-53.

indigenous conception of the death of the Sage. Contemporary Sundanese elders actually believe the Sage predict his appointed time of death. When that time arrives, the Sage will go to a nearby wood and he/she disappears – where the spirit and the body just vanish. The local cultural conception of death appears in the story. Death is a gate where the Sage is becoming one with the origin of life. By becoming-one with nature, the Sage will metamorphose into something or someone because he or she still has the duty to accompany living descendants. This metamorphosis not only initiates the repetition of the life journey considered to be spiral. An event of physical transformation (notably, the transformation from king to dragon) also emphasizes the correlation between the spirit and the body. According to the Sundanese conception, the body is a frame, a substance, a designation or metaphorically a wardrobe for the spirit or the essence. The body is as significant as the spirit. On the one hand, both represent distinct functions. On the other hand, both embody a similar quality as the presentation of life. The Sundanese describe these equal qualities in the proverb: “*cangkang reujeung eusina kudu sarua lobana.*”³⁰⁶

Thus, the primordial Sundanese conception of human existence testifies to a comprehensive worldview of the presentation of mankind. The worldview indicates nuances of the affirmative equivalence of body and spirit.

The episode of *Prabu Premana Di Kusumah* also brings out the theme of self-discipline through the practice of meditation in a remote sacred place like a mountain. The discipline of meditation and the sacred mountain are essential elements of sagacity, also among the Hindu-Buddhist heritage. Moreover, a sacred mountain represents the *axis mundi*. It is the sacred place for mediation between human beings, the ancestral spirit, as well as the Almighty.³⁰⁷

Carita Parahyangan (1579)

Another relevant historical narrative is that of the *Carita Parahyangan*, which was transliterated into Bahasa Indonesia from an ancient manuscript written anonymously in 1579. The final transliteration was compiled in 1981.³⁰⁸ The manuscript is a genealogical description of the history of West Java before the spread of Islam over the region. Part of this historical reconstruction of West Java is the story of the death of Prabu Premana Dikusumah. He received another title in this version, *Pendeta Sakti Bagawat Sajalajala* (the Sacred Monk Bagawat Sajalajala). It was told that the Sacred Monk was killed at *Gunung Padang* by mercenaries who had been sent by *Sang Tamperan* (the prime minister who had taken over the throne).

³⁰⁶ See my interpretation in page 103 n 255. My literal translation of this proverb is “*a peel (or shell) together with its seed should be of equivalent amount.*”cf. Sumardjo 2006: 331.

³⁰⁷ Wessing 2006.

³⁰⁸ See Atja & Danasmita 1981: iii.

According to the manuscript (but in accordance with academic history) Sang Tamperan was a nephew of *King Sanjaya*, the prominent ruler of the *Sunda Pakuan Kingdom*, and later the ruler of the first *Mataram Kingdom* in Central Java.³⁰⁹ The nephew was Sanjaya's caretaker for the vassal kingdom Galuh. The death of the sacred monk had to do with the birth of *Ciung Wanara* or *Sang Manarah*, and his stepbrother *Aria Banga*. These historical figures are indispensable in the history of Java. The conflict between them was the origin of the separation of the Sundanese kingdom. The Sundanese kingdom was split into *Negeri Sunda* (Sunda Kingdom) which is west of *Citarum River* and *Negeri Galuh* (Galuh Kingdom) that lies to the east of the river. Both were separate from the rest of Java where prominent Javanese kingdoms were established.³¹⁰

In this manuscript one does not find the episode of the metamorphosis of *Prabu Premana di Kusumah*. Neither does it relate the disappearance of the King's body and soul. Many magical elements are reduced in this semi-historical text for the purpose of a genealogical description of the Sundanese kingdoms and kings before the spread of Islam in West Java. It is clearly declared at the end of the narrative.³¹¹

The kings successively held the authority in the region. The list of them also is the reason for the fall of these kings and kingdoms. The moral of this genealogical record is that the lack of ethics and sagacious practices caused the collapse of the Sundanese kings and their kingdoms.³¹² Sundanese ancient beliefs should not be ignored any more than the Hindu-Buddhist heritage or the Islamic doctrine of moral life. In one of the interviews which I had with the Sage Abah Badra Santana, he said that if one ignores the practices of sagacity, then one will fall into animal and vegetative instincts.³¹³ It does not matter when precisely Islam succeeded the Hindu-Buddhist religion in the history of West Java. The essential point is that everyone should maintain the characteristics of the Sage in order to manage the self and the universe and to bring peace and prosperity to the motherland.

Wawacan Sajarah Galuh (19th century CE)

Wawacan Sajarah Galuh, which were written anonymously in the middle of 19th century CE and was transliterated into Latin alphabet and transcribed into Bahasa in 1981 by the prominent Sundanese historian Edi S. Ekadjati, is a poetic narrative, which

³⁰⁹ See Yoseph Iskandar 1997: 141.

³¹⁰ See Saleh Danasmita 1984 on part IV: 112, cf. Yoseph Iskandar 1997: 155; Jakob Sumardjo 2003: 112.

³¹¹ See Carita Parahyangan fragment XXV, in Bahasa Indonesia p. 38. This story is the reconstruction of a Sundanese history of kingdoms and kings, and the beginning of the influence of Islam in the regions in 16th c. CE (the fall of the Pajajaran Kingdom was 1579, the same year when this text was written.)

³¹² Cf. Carita Parahyangan fragment XXIV.

³¹³ See the transcript of my interview with Abah Badra Santana.

presents the cultural history of the Kingdom of Galuh. The narrative mentions *Gunung Padang* several times. The influence of Islam associates the name with the chronicle of the prophet Noah and the Flood Myth.³¹⁴ *Ratu Pusaka*, the ruler of Java, did not obey Noah's prophecy. Before the flood came, the King built *Gunung Padang* and *Gunung Galunggung*, which were not covered by the water when the flood came. During the flood, the ruler and his subjects escaped to Gunung Padang, and survived there until the flood subsided.

The story returns again to Gunung Padang when it describes the killing of the Monk (Pandita) of Gunung Padang. However, it does not mention the name of Pandita. It was told that the king of the *Bojong Galuh* kingdom—founded by *Ratu Pusaka*—objected to the monk helping a village called *Cibungur*, curing an epidemic disease that had spread over the region after the flood subsided. The King was also upset with the monk because this wise man had also prophesied that the future son would be born from the King's wife *Nyai Ujung Sekarjingga*. Whereas actually the king had put a wide-mouth clay pot over this woman so that she would only look pregnant but was not. The future son was Ciung Wanara who is a prominent figure in the history of Sundanese kings and kingdoms.

Thus, the story revolves on the birth of *Ciung Wanara*, and the conflict of Ciung Wanara with his step brother Aria Banga. The conflict ended in the division of the Sundanese Galuh Kingdom ruled by Ciung Wanara (*Sang Manarah*, *Sang Surotama*) and his descendants and Negeri Sunda ruled by Aria Banga and his successors. One of *Ciung Wanara*'s successors was the semi-mythical King of Sunda, *Prabu Siliwangi*, who ruled the Kingdom of *Pajajaran*.

This poetic narrative does not mention the name of the monk. Nevertheless, it still relates the supernatural power of the monk, as a divine quality of the Sage. The retelling of these narratives with sagacious characters cannot be separated from the life of Sundanese people. Such repetition has importance even regardless of any commitment to religious belief. The story becomes a reminder for the Sundanese people so that they cannot ignore the invitation, or rather the duty, to emulate the sagacious characters in their speech and daily behaviour.

Having explored the related ethnohistorical narratives, I want to raise several points concerning the cultural history setting of the pious lessons at the *Nagara Padang* site.

Gunung Padang as a name applies to more locations than the one featuring in the present study. A forum group discussion of Sundanese elders³¹⁵ described three different locations for Gunung Padang. A Sundanese journal of literature reported that

³¹⁴ See Edi S. Ekadjati 1981.

³¹⁵ A FGD took place at the house of Abah Karmo in November 2007. The participants are Abah Adjat Poerbasasaka or Ki Laras Maya, Abah Atmajawijaya, Abah Badra Santana, besides the hosts. Transcript of the FGD in Djunatan 2008.

one of the locations of *Gunung Padang* was at *Cianjur* Regency (west of Bandung).³¹⁶ The second location is the one I analyze in the present study. And the third allegedly lies in the *Ciamis* Regency (east of Bandung). According to this forum, the first *Gunung Padang* which is in the *Cianjur* Regency is the sacred place where the Sundanese king (probably the King *Premana Dikusumah*, or the latter king of Sunda, *Prabu Silihwangi*) seek an astronomical guidance and prediction. The second *Gunung Padang* which is in the *Ciwidey* District is the meditating place where a prince or a young king can learn from the pious lessons the nature and the duty of kingship. The third *Gunung Padang* which is in the *Ciamis* Regency is the praying site for a king (probably of the kingdom of Galuh). The elders in this forum insist that these significant three mountains postulate the principal Sundanese philosophical conception of the Sage.³¹⁷ According to the indigenous account, the Sage embodies the virtues and the values of life and the philosophical way of life. These philosophical conceptions offer substantive materials for the further philosophical analysis of the indigenous ontological, ethical, as well as epistemological conceptions, such as the comprehensive worldview of the triadic structure of life.

A Mountain is a major symbol in the local worldview. It symbolizes the “*axis mundi*,” a mediator between on the one hand human beings and the other creatures, and the Almighty on the other hand.³¹⁸ Therefore, a mountain is considered a sacred place where human beings and non-human features correlate. *Gunung Padang* serves as a meditation mountain where all human beings can experience a mystical union with the universe and the Almighty.

The name “*Nagara Padang*” is a riddle which is associated with *Gunung Padang*. One needs to solve the name in order to understand a meaning of the pilgrimage at the shrine. The “real” location of *Gunung Padang* is not the point here. The word “*Nagara*” should be read reversely. It becomes “*Ra Ga Na*”, which in Sundanese term “*ragana*” signifies one’s body. A body in Sundanese understanding also signifies an individual, or a person. While the word “*Padang*” denotes “bright,” “light” or “illumination.” Alternatively, “*Padang*” also connotes an “illuminating heart.”³¹⁹ The illuminating heart can be used for “a careful discernment,” or “a visionary contemplation.” In short, as an *emic* explanation of the name *Nagara Padang*, the solution to the riddle of the name of *Gunung Padang* is the “illuminated body.” Or “the illuminated person” One of the capabilities of illuminated individuality is to perceive a comprehensive vision of life which is the manifestation of the affirmative worldview.

³¹⁶ See T. Bachtiar 2006: 33-35.

³¹⁷ See Forum Group Discussion with Ki Laras Maya, Abah Badra Santana, and Abah Atmajawijaya 27 November 2007.

³¹⁸ Wessing 1988: 43; 2006: 225-226; Jakob Sumardjo 2003: 22.

³¹⁹ Pak Undang said in the first interview: “*ari gunung luhur, padang nyatana hate urang... Ieu gunung teh luhur, ari padang teh hate nu caang.*” (My translation: “A mount means our head, while brightness signifies an illuminated heart.”) See Djunatan 2008: 105.

3.3 The pious lessons: An affirmative journey to sagacity

After explaining the old narratives of the shrine by describing the oral tradition surrounding the shrine and providing the literal records, it is now time to focus the discussion on the pious lessons that circulate in the context of pious lessons the site. This section will consider these lessons as the creative exposition of the journey towards the achievement of sagacious individuality. These lessons conceive of a development of sagacious selfhood and the moment of enlightenment for a learning pilgrim while doing one's journey to the sagacity. In this case the lessons project a conception of an extended life, i.e. life as an open possibility for all kinds of manifestations and occurrences. It does not discuss the unpredictability of life or an insecure future, but it offers an affirmative viewpoint that precedes cognitive judgement of what is "good and bad." This viewpoint refers to an open mind, an awareness to view life comprehensively before judgement is passed. It is the task of the sage to reveal such possible manifestations by clarifying his/her awareness to others so that they may correct their own way of life accordingly.

Before one explores the pious lessons, two points need to be clarified. They are

1. the *emic* approach of explanation of sagacious knowledge performed by the guardian, and
2. the *etic* approach or dynamic interpretation to the *emic* explanation.

For the second point, this chapter tries to provide a semiotic categorization of the meaning of the teaching narratives.

In the first place, an interpretation of the guardians at the shrine should be analyzed based on the religious and cultural heritage of Java, especially West Java. As I have mentioned above, there are three components of this heritage: the ancient Sundanese legacy, the Hindu-Buddhist heritage and the influence of Sufism. These legacies have influenced the guardians' production of the pious lessons of the Sage and also the guardians' interpretation of the natural formations of the rocky stages. In other words, the natural rock formations at the shrine emerge as the signifier for the guardians so that they can produce the coherent signified of the rocky stages in the form of the teaching narratives.

In the second place the pilgrim or the observer who carries out contemplative acts at the site conceives his own interpretation of the stages in accordance with the pious lessons told by the guardians. In other words, the pilgrim or the observer also conceives the meaning of the stages by trying to interpret the natural formation of the stage thence to correlate it with the pious lessons and his own intense prayer and meditation during the pilgrimage.

Combining the *emic* and the *etic* approach, my explanation applies a semiotic method, namely the triadic model of the sign.³²⁰ The triadic models of the sign according to the semiotic interpretation consist of three analytical terms which articulate the sign:

- the sign vehicle,
- the referent, and
- the sense or “the mind to whom the sign stands for the object.”³²¹

These analytical terms will convey the meaning or the signified of the sign.

A *sign vehicle* is a container for the sign, alternatively it conceives of a representative appearance of the sign. For Pierce’s semiotics, the sign vehicle is called *representamen* of a sign. Meanwhile, according to de Saussure’s account of semiotics, is the systems of sign, comprises of two sides of sign, they are the signifier (sound-image) and the signified (concept). The signifier in this respect serves as a sign vehicle from which one draws meaning.. A sign vehicle can be in the form of concrete things, or perceived object which can be idea or thought³²². The sign vehicle can be symbols, icons, indexes, metaphors, etc. The sign vehicle for the shrine refers to the combination of the material objects and the abstract entities, or the physical formations or the features of the igneous rocks and the name of the rocks.

A *referent* is one of the two sides in the realm of meaning. It is the “*aliquo*” side which has a relation with the sign vehicle or the “*aliquid*.” Pierce’s account of this relationship between them is that a referent “stands for” a sign vehicle. Such relation appears as a designation or denotative interpretation for a meaning. The relation between them can be *arbitrary* due to the fact that the sign vehicles are symbolic representative appearances of the sign or can be *motivated* because the sign vehicles are iconic or indexical ones.³²³ The formations of igneous rocks appear as something meaningful in the perception of the guardians. Based on this meaningfulness the guardians gave a name to each formation, Later they appropriate the formation into the name and the pious lessons which are correlated with the name of each formation. Thus, the name becomes the symbolic representation of the igneous rocks. Yet the process of giving the name and of appropriating the name, the formation of the rocks into the scheme of pious lessons is somewhat arbitrary. Yet, the names are denotatively interpreted for each stage in a sequential story of obtaining sagacious knowledge. Thus, the referent is denotatively articulated in the pious lessons. On the journey of pilgrimage, the pious lessons are told by the guardian to the pilgrim. The pious lessons in turn signify another process of interpretation, which is made by the pilgrim.

³²⁰ Correlation of the signifier, the signified and the view of interpreter please see triadic models of the sign interpretation in semiotics, see Winfried Nöth 1995: 89-90.

³²¹ Nöth 1995: 85.

³²² Nöth 1995: 80.

³²³ Nöth 1995: 86, 96.

The last analytical element in the triadic models of the sign is *the sense*. The term refers to the interpretation of the relation between the sign vehicle and the referent. For instance, Husserl, following the Platonic tradition, argues that *the sense* as meaning belongs to the realm of *a priori* thought. His argument of meaning as a priori thought has to do with the intentional act of thought which is directed at an object outside knowing subject. Sense (idea) demonstrates this intentionality to seek an explanation of object (a thing or an occurrence) not in the form of object but such explanation is generated in the mind of the producer of expression (through the meaning-endowing act) and that of the interpreter (through meaning-fulfilling act). The intention of producer and of the interpretant to generate meaningful explanation should be correspondent in order to reveal meaning from their acts of seeking explanation. That is the reason that Husserl mentions that meaning is *ideal*. That is to say that human being has a tendency to articulate meaning as the further phase of reasoning after one perceives a material object or an occurrence.³²⁴ This theory of meaning may be applied to the production of meaning made by the guardian as the producer and the pilgrim or the observer as the interpreter concerning the natural formations of the igneous rocks and their names in their respective “standing for” or relation with to the pious lessons. The meaning of the name of the stage is associated with the pious lessons, as the something meaningful endowed by the guardian to the pilgrim who fulfils the lessons in accordance with his or her interpretation of the meaning of the lessons. In this sense, the meaning of pilgrimage is not tied with the object seen in the pilgrimage, that is, the natural formation of the rocks. The guardians also employ their respective interpretative approaches to the pious lessons. They create “*the sense*” for the purpose of further explanation of the pious lessons. The interpretations of each stage are intended to generate a coherent meaning in accordance with the pious lessons of sagacious individuality; by using these names or the special formation of the stages.³²⁵

Based on the semiotic account of the triadic models of the sign, I will now explain the pious lessons for each phase and its stages.

The opening ritual ceremonies

The sign vehicles: The fountain of Gunung Padang, Cikahuripan and the entry gate, *Lawang Saketeng*.

The referent: The purification of the self, and the awareness that the self belongs to the universe and the Almighty.

The sense: A spring usually represents a mother’s breast milk or *cai nyusu* in the Sundanese conception. In this sense, water is associated with the idea that a human foetus lives in the liquid of the mother’s womb. “The living in the liquid of the womb” symbolizes that human beings live in a sterile or a pure condition. By accepting the pure

³²⁴ Nöth 1995: 98-99.

³²⁵ Nöth 1995: 89.

beginning of life, every human being should cleanse his/her body (“*diri*”) by taking a bath in the fountain. The water of the fountain cleanses the designation and the essence, the body and the soul.

This entry gate or *Gapura* signifies the awareness that an individual has a role³²⁶ in the triadic structure of life, the human being, the universe and the Almighty. Human beings cannot exclusively live by themselves. This awareness of relationships is revealed in the guardian’s opening prayer. It shows that human beings subsist in a close correlation with the spirits of the ancestors and the keepers of the universe and the Almighty. These non-human figures are the parents. A pilgrim should ask “the parents” permission and blessing to participate in the pilgrimage.

It is important to correlate the entry gate with the exit gate. These gates represent a pair of the existential moments in human life, birth and death. Both moments project the source of life. Abah Karmo describes this unification with this metaphorical proposition:

“*Dunya sakitu legana, heurinna ngan ku dua* “Our vast earth is suitably comprised of man
jalma, lalaki jeung awewe.”³²⁷ and woman.”

This metaphor of “man and woman” conveys the unification of the significant elements of life. The unification is described by the term “*dunya*” or “earth.” Birth and death are natural events and they reveal the source of life which becomes the beginning and the end of life. Hence, entering or leaving the shrine refers back to the beginning and to the end of life. Both gates conceive of the unification with the source of life. The meditation of union mysticism begins from this initial phase of the pilgrimage.

The phase of the Childhood

The sign vehicles: *Batu Palawangan Ibu*, The Rock of the Vaginal Passage; *Batu Paibuan*, The Rock of the Motherhood; *Batu Panyipuan*, The Rock of the Formal Education; and *Batu Poponcoran* The Passage of Initiation to Adulthood.

The referent: A description of the birth phase of every child. This phase includes the story of a parental upbringing and nurturing of the child, an early education and a formal one. The initiation of the child into adulthood concludes the childhood phase.

The sense: Birth for every human being is the reason for human existence in this world. Consequently, each individual has something to be revealed during his own life journey. This life duty is “to follow the Way of life until its final destination.” By fulfilling the way of life, one perfects life in all its kinds of manifestations. In the Sundanese tradition, this duty of achieving one’s destiny is called “*kasampurnaan*”³²⁸ or “perfection.” The perfection then is to be articulated by maintaining the correlation with “the others.” The others are described in the following phrase.

³²⁶ Whitt et al. 2001: 4-8.

³²⁷ My interview with Abah Karmo in September 2007.

³²⁸ Ki Laras Maya 2008: 13.

"Patalina Diri ka Gusti, Patalina diri ka sasama, Patalina diri ka Alam" 329. My translation: "Relationship to the Almighty, relationship to others, relationship to the nature".

This poetic phrase relates how each individual is called to a constant relationship with the Almighty, their fellow human beings and the universe. To fulfill this duty is both to glorify the Almighty and to affirm the existences of all creatures. In the state of nature, every individual is in charge of maintaining such a relationship. This shall be the ultimate vision and the mission of life for every human being.

The Rock of Motherhood represents for each individual parental upbringing and nurturing. How parents bring up their children contributes to their growth, helping to improve both their physical and mental aspects including the application of the five human senses and the use of cognitive, affective and volitional capabilities. These physical and mental capabilities are the necessary requirements for a mature individual. The child also learns about the virtues in this parental upbringing. This rock also symbolizes the female figure as the centre of life. I have explained the significance of the idea of the centre in the previous chapter. The Sundanese people always identify the centre as the inside element of their cultural orientation.³³⁰ It can be said that the inside element is an intimate aspect in the life of the Sundanese. In this sense, the centre signifies the role of the source as the intermediary middle. The source does not function only as the beginning for it echoes the fundamental and principal worldview of life. It also becomes the reference of the noble values and virtues of life. In other words, the source generates the ontological, epistemological, as well as ethical conception for the Sundanese. All individuals should redirect their respective consciousness, as well as conscience, towards the source.

This rock also reveals the parental education of the sensitivity and the affirmation of life. The Sundanese believe that a father should be in charge of improving his child's cognitive and technical skills. Thus, the fatherhood connotes the mind and knowledge of a sagacious individuality (*"elmu pangaji panalar diri, pikeun darajatna"*). A mother will nurture the affective and volitional aspects of her children. Motherhood, therefore, has to do with affection and volition (*"elmu pangaji pangulas rasa pikeun martabatna"*). The early education of these mental and psychological aspects is the task of motherhood. These cognitive, affective and volitional aspects are basic to sagacious individuality.³³¹

The rock of the formal education refers to a state school, an Islamic religious boarding school (*"pesantren"*³³²), or a Sundanese one (*padepokan*). The educational institutions are the places where children go through the process of the formation of the

³²⁹ Ki Laras Maya 2008: 16-17.

³³⁰ See Wessing 1979, 2001.

³³¹ Ki Laras Maya 2008: 30-31.

³³² On *Pesantren* or Islamic Seminary cf. Clifford Geertz 1969: 177-179.

self. The children can learn not only knowledge and skills and empathy and social sensitivities, but also self-discipline and self-determination to achieve their respective purpose of life. They learn to internalize and to practice virtue. In other words, children learn to express the basic characteristics of sagacious individuality. Teachers in the formal education can only persuade a child so that this young boy or girl is willing to apply what has been learned in school.

The passage of the initiation to adulthood concludes the childhood phase. If an individual can pass a final examination it means he/she is ready to enter the next phase, the adult one. This higher category connotes a readiness of each individual to express his own competence, skills and to learn more how to apply the virtues of life in daily activities.

The phase of the Adulthood

The sign vehicles: *Batu Kaca Saadeg* The Rocks of Self-awareness; *Batu Gedong Peteng* The Rocks of the Dark Cave; *Batu Karaton* The Rocks of the Palace; and *Batu Kuta rungu* The Rocks of the Ear.

The referent: A child growing up begins to show competence and skills in daily activities. A grown up individual someday will possess material belongings and achieve a career. He or she may exercise power to manage others. To have a career and to exercise power means that a grown-up individual learns more intensively the expression of the noble and principal virtues and the values of life, such as charity (*amal ibadah*), and reciprocal caring, loving, teaching (*silih asuh, silih asih, silih asah*). If a child when growing up realizes that the ability and the skills, material belongings, status and power are the duty and the expression of an affirmative life, then he or she should begin the phase contemplating one's future and self-perseverance in order to be able to express duty in one's daily chores.

The sense: The Rock of Self-awareness signifies the invitation of grown up children to have their respective specialized vision and mission of life. This self-awareness tries to answer the questions of life: "What is the purpose of my life?," "What do I want to do to accomplish my duty of the glorification and dignification of the Almighty, the universe, and other human beings?" and "How do I realize this duty in my daily chores?"

The answers to these questions are uncovered by contemplating one's current psychological and spiritual condition. This means that the demands of life should be responded to right then and there. This response reveals the Sundanese paradigm of the contextuality of the spatial and temporal dimension of existence. The contextuality brings a grown up child into the present experience. The result is the affirmation of daily life. Each particular event of life is an experience of the glorification and dignification of the "*Tritangtu*" features.

The rock of the dark cave symbolizes a hard or a difficult situation. The difficult situation occurs because the grown-up individual has nothing to support his or her life.

Part I

The grown-up individual should overcome this by working hard. He/she should apply for a job according to his/her competence and skills, and adopt a career otherwise nothing will offer support to his/her life. To have an occupation in this sense is to have a “bright” individual life.

Thus every young adult should fulfill his/her duty in accordance with his/her daily work in life. It is questionable how this duty will be accomplished without such an occupation then. To have an occupation (as a farmer, a trader, a teacher, or a government officer), however, is not only to support one’s own life, but also to assist others. Assisting others means the expression of the virtue of charity (*amal ibadah*) and the value of reciprocal nurturing, loving and teaching (*silih asuh, silih asih, silih asah*). In other words, to supply the necessities and to assist other people and other creatures is to fulfill the duty of pursuing an affirmative life.

The Rock of the Royal Palace characterizes the embodiment of power. In order to fulfill one’s duty, there is a presumption of human power that an individual can supply both his needs and others. In short, an individual gains authority from his own daily work. The embodiment of authority strengthens the individual to express the virtue of charity and reciprocal nurturing, loving and teaching. The Sundanese people reject that the abuse of authority for the subordination of others.

In order to prevent the negative application of authority, the child while growing should listen to his conscience. The Rock of the Ear connotes an individual’s firm conscience and the individual’s self-determination to follow the path of the duty of an affirmative life. The Sundanese people believe that it is through the conscience that the Almighty speaks. The child growing up should not be easily distracted from the pathway which she or he decides to take. A young adult should only listen to the advice of his/her conscience. He/she should not easily believe useless opinions, news, and gossip which lead one away from the duty of existence.

The Sundanese people also consider conscience metaphorically as the connecting middle inside. They refer to it as “*hate*,” “heart,” or “*batin*,” “inner self” or “*jiwa*” or “soul.” Pak Undang once said about the connecting middle that:

*“Pancerna, anu tara bohong tea di urang, atawa batin urang, hate urang..”*³³³ *“The core is the one which never lies inside us, or our conscience, our heart.”*

*“Ari tengah pancerna, ari pancer lamun disimbulkeun kana jiwa urang, anu tadi tea nu tara bohong tea, tengahna mah kitu..”*³³⁴ *“If the core is symbolized inside us, it is our soul which never lies; the middle is always like that.”*

The term, “*pancer*” in this context also symbolizes the capability of the human conscience, heart, or soul as the connecting middle. It is also refers to the reverberation

³³³ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 130.

³³⁴ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 136.

of the essence of the Almighty who conveys the truth.³³⁵ The Almighty gives considerations and directions about what it ought to or ought not to do. In this sense, the Almighty illuminates which pathways to choose if someone intends to have a meaningful life. The middle is the light in this interpretation. Therefore, according to the Sundanese belief, the Almighty is lighting the *mandala*, the four compass points so that it is the unification of human life with the metaphysical representation, of the universe and the Almighty. In this context, an *emic* approach postulates the idea of the Almighty as the intermediary macrocosm. If the human heart or conscience and the presentation of the Almighty are characterized by the comprehensive worldview, such a worldview conveys the meaning of human existence as interconnectedness.

Sundanese elders highly recommend listening to the advice of conscience, and acting accordingly. This ancestral sagacity coincides with Sufism. The idea that the Almighty speaks through human conscience corresponds with Islamic mysticism.³³⁶ Besides these sagacious characteristics, the Sundanese wisdom also encourages the individual to express the duty of the affirmative life through the human senses.³³⁷ The two important human senses in this case are sight and hearing. Both senses are the way in for our thought and consideration, of our affection and volition. What one sees and hears will influence one's responses. Thus, a careful discernment of external information helps us to manage our life. The Sundanese term for self-discernment is "eling" and "pepeling."³³⁸ The terms are an application of the capability of "budi," "awareness," and "akal," "mind," in order to prevent any negative effects from any external influences. As long as a pilgrim's *akal budi*, "mind and awareness" listens to the heart or the conscience and follows the pathway guided by the voice of the Almighty, that pilgrim can complete the duty of affirmative life. A development of this capability is the required preparation to enter the next step of sagacious individuality.

The phase of the Sage

The sign vehicles: *Batu Masjid Agung* The Rock of the Mosque of the Majesty; *Batu Bumi Agung* The Rock of Glorious Earth; *Batu Korsi Gading* The Rock of the Ivory throne; *Pakuwon Eyang Prabu Silihwangi* The Rock of Eyang Prabu Silihwangi; *Batu Lawang Tujuh* The Rock of the Seven Doors; *Batu Padaringan* The Rock of the Rice

³³⁵ The supernatural authority in Sunda tradition is called "Gusti." Such a term is less similar with "God" in Judaism since the Almighty does not represent any gender character. Because of this non-gender character, it is better to mention "It" in capital so that the term is close to the *emic* belief of the supernatural authority. The term "Gusti" is abbreviation of "Geus ti ditu na" or "As it is in itself." See Djunatan 2008: 41 cf. p. 130 concerning connotation "tengah" with "Dat MahaKawasa" or the Almighty.

³³⁶ See. Chittick 2002: 24-26.

³³⁷ See Ki Laras Maya 2008: 38-39

³³⁸ See Sunda lexicon entry of this word, *eling* or its derivation *pepeling* at R.A. Danadibrata 2006.

Barn or the Curved array of the 25 Prophets; and *Puncak Manik* The Rock of the Summit of the Light.

There is a hole on the leaning rock at this stage which resembles the *kopiah* (the Indonesian Moslem rimless cap) on a leaning rock slab. Here the guardians guide a pilgrim to perform a resignation prayer as a sign of entrusting oneself to the Almighty. At the monument of the Eyang Prabu Silihwangi, a pilgrim will find a monument (a small *lingga*) with a small hole in the size of a thumb on the top of it. The thumb is associated with the name Prabu Silihwangi. The name refers to the way in which one might show appreciation to someone. In the Sunda language, to give a thumb means to respect and to honor that person.

The referent: While growing up the child will realize the glory of the Almighty as he/she enters the phase of the sage. This realization leads him or her to acknowledge the idea that the Almighty is the proprietor of the universe. This is a self awareness that human beings are an inherent feature in the triadic structure of life, the *Tritangtu*. The journey afterwards is an internalization of the noble virtues of life which are compassion (*welas asih*), equality (*sapajajaran*), intersubjective dignification (*silihwangi*), justice (*kaadilan*), gratitude (*nuhunkeun*) and the ability to reveal the personal destiny (*takdir*). These are the main characteristics of the Sage in Sundanese belief. Moreover, the Sage is always associated with the name Prabu Silihwangi, the *moksa*-King of Pajajaran (12th c. CE). The wise man in this context should be able to perform some sort of outstanding physical and mental challenge. Some of them are to be able to stand on the top of the Rock of the Glorious Earth which is steep and slippery. Once at the top the wise man then has to move to the adjacent rock, that is, the Rock of the Ivory Stone. He/she has to be able to sit on the top of the Rock of the Ivory Stone the way down from the ivory throne is very risky. These rocks are not just metaphorical but actually occur as recognized stages towards the end of the path of the pilgrim through the shrine of Nagara Padang. In the final stages of the pilgrimage, the pilgrim learns how to actively reveal his/her own destiny, how to affirm the equality of mankind, the ability to prophesy like a prophet, and the experience of the union mysticism with the Light. The spiritual journey ends in the summit of the light. This is the realization of the enlightened human being or the sagacious individuality.

The sense: The mosque of the Majesty is located higher on the mountain Gunung Padang from which everyone can see the panorama of the South of Bandung. It signifies the glorification of the Almighty. This is the acknowledgement that the Almighty is the only authority and the proprietor of this universe. Human authority is merely a mandate from the Almighty.

Whatever their conscious ambitions, human beings do not occupy and conquer the universe in the Sunda conception of life. Moreover, human beings cannot claim that the arrangement and management of life are solely up to human competence and skills. Everybody is merely a mediator who leads the universe and the other creatures to the

Majesty. In other words, it is through human beings that the Almighty perfects the universe. This is the task of the affirmative life so that individuals are in charge of maintaining and developing all manifestations of life. If one knows his position as the keeper of the universe, one shall realize that human beings are an integrated part of the Almighty and the universe.

The Rock of Glorious Earth symbolizes a dignification of the motherland and an attitude of holding the nationhood in high esteem. Every grown-up individual is in charge of protecting the land and the nation. One can express one's duty by nurturing, caring and maintaining any manifestation of life inhabiting the area. Neither is aggressive violence, nor armed defense the primary strategies for protecting the motherland and the nationhood. The nurturing of and the care of the motherland are the ultimate strategies for protecting and maintaining life. To manage the earth is compatible with self-management. The Sundanese wisdom always recommends the care of the human body and the soul so that human beings can be a mediator for the Almighty to maintain life.

The Rock of the Ivory Throne signifies the dedication of the human authority to fulfill its duty of protecting the motherland and the nation as explained in the Rock of Glorious Earth. Along with to the Rock of Glorious Earth, this rock represents the contemplation of the divine authority as an expression of compassion or "*welas asih*," "*rohman-rohim*." This expression is the essential Sundanese virtue. The affirmative life is mainly characterized by this noble virtue.

The commemoration rock slab of Eyang Prabu Silihwangi symbolizes the virtue of gratitude, "*nuhunkeun*." Human beings should be able to express gratefulness toward any kind of experience and any given bread. By referring to the previous rocks, this stage also uncovers the other essential Sunda virtues of the affirmative life: the intersubjective dignification, *silihwangi*. Every grown up individual should be able to express this through a mutual, respectful interaction with the others, the universe and the Almighty.

The Rock of the Seven Doors connotes a personal destiny revealed by one's birthday. A birthday connotes a specific destiny for everyone. The grown-up individual should be able to follow his/her own path. This conception of destiny does not entail a passive response. Instead of the passivity, individuals should be proactive in realizing their destiny (*takdir*).³³⁹

The curved array of 25 rocks symbolizes not only the 25 acknowledged prophets in the Qur'an, but also a significant Sundanese virtue, that is, equality or egalitarianism (*sapajajaran*). Then the natural formation can be regarded as the 25 full rice barns, the

³³⁹ See Djunatan 2008: 40. The guardian confirms the active attitude toward the destiny as follows: *Ayeuna ngudag lawang tujuh, mun teu mah didinya ngudak hak warisna masing-masing, hak tujuanana masing-masing dina poe anu tujuh eta.* In English translation: "Now, following the seven doors, everyone has his respective pathways of life, respective destiny in accordance with their own birthday."

symbol of prosperity. The idea of prosperity has to do with the value of egalitarianism. Every human and non-human being deserves to have equal access to prosperity properly in front of the Almighty.

Thus, the duty of human beings is clearer in this context. By following the teaching narratives from the first stage until the previous one, every individual is called to bring prosperity for all. It is every human being's responsibility to distribute the natural resources so that the other creatures can enjoy life in a proper way. In this context, personal wealth is always dedicated to the prosperity of the land, the nationhood, and the universe. By fulfilling this life task, human beings, based on the mandate from the Almighty, express the dignification of themselves, the perfection of creation, and the glorification of the Almighty.

The Summit of Light is the final stage in the pilgrimage of life. The purpose of life is depicted in this final place, *the becoming-one* with the universe and the Almighty, which in terms of the world religions distantly resonating at Nagara Padang could be paralleled with the *moksa*; or alternatively, to experience union mysticism, according to the guardian, Pak Undang, the *makrifat*.³⁴⁰ The experience of "becoming one" is the final realization of the idea of the affirmative life. The *moksa* or the *makrifat*, the mystical union is the ultimate achievement of the Sage.

After the grown up individual ends their contemplation in the final stage, he or she is encouraged to actualize his/her own vision and mission as a Sage. The realization of sagacious individuality is done in accordance with one's occupation, competence, skills and his/her social, cultural and also religious context, as well as social roles. After passing the various stages, it is now time to go and performs one's destiny (*takdir*) as the manifestation of sagacious individuality. The guardian affirms, "*Tereh make salawasna*" or "Go and apply the values and virtues of the Sage as long as you live." It is time to dedicate oneself in the service of the affirmative life.

3.4 The affirmative worldview as the implication of the pious lessons

After this close-reading of the pious lessons, I will now continue with a further and wider interpretation of that corpus of pious texts. The purpose of examining such detailed interpretations is to explicate the philosophical foundations of the education narrative. In the process, I will touch on the metaphysics of reality and life in general, the conception of selfhood, and the ethical disposition of the sage.³⁴¹ The first includes ontological and cosmological viewpoints. The second focus explains the self based on the metaphysical viewpoint. The last is a derivation from the conception of the selfhood.

³⁴⁰ This unifying process, becoming-one with the Universe and The Almighty is also rephrased in Sufism as "*ma'rifat*." Thus this mysticism meets the Sunda primordial ontological paradigm. See Javad Nurbakhsh 2002: 2-3.

³⁴¹ This subsection is a revised version of Djunatan 2008a, 2008b.

This is an articulation of noble virtues and values. These virtues and values become the properties of sagacious individuality. Such properties in turn appear as principles of behaviour.

3.4.1 The metaphysical viewpoint of reality and life in general

The Sundanese cultural orientation has a very specific conception of reality. Elders and guardians of the Sufic Shrine refer to it as the *Tritangtu* or the triadic structure of life. This conception consists of three interconnecting features: the human being (the self), the earth (or Nature) and the heavens (or the Almighty). Each feature exists in a parallel position. These triadic features cannot be adequately illustrated in higher-lower ranks as they appear in the triangular and circular models of two dimensions. This two-dimensional structure depicts the heavens as the higher level, while the other two features occupy the similar lower one. Nor can it be pictured as a hierarchical structure which places the heavens at the ultimate, human beings in the middle, and the earth in the lowest place.³⁴² (See Figure 5 and 6 below).

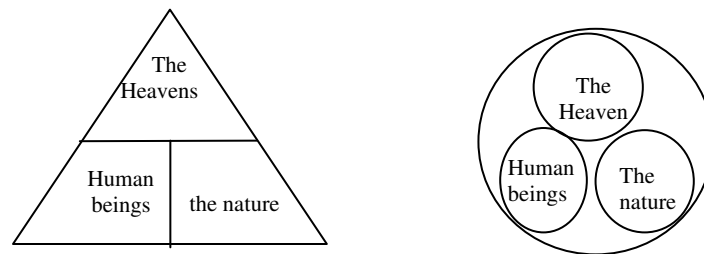


Figure 5: The triangular and circular models of two dimensional structure of the Tritangtu

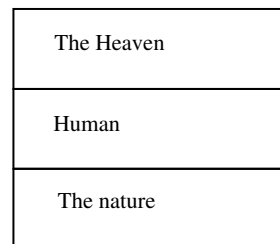


Figure 6:
the hierarchical structure of the
Tritangtu

³⁴² the triangular and circular models of two dimensional hierarchical structure see Sumardjo 2002, 2003: 307; 2006: 356-360; Wessing 1979: 102.

The problem with the two-dimensional triangular and circular diagram (Fig. 5) and the hierarchical structure of *Tritangtu* (Fig. 6) is that they reduce the triadic structure to a merely a higher–lower status. Though these diagrams put a triangle, a circle and a square as the holistic frame or the *mandala* for the triadic features, and presuppose the existence of a centre, these diagrams only convey the static position of each feature without explaining the dynamic interconnections among all the features. The diagrams also cannot properly convey the idea that each feature becomes the middle for the other two. Here, the middle should be preferred as an intermediary more than a concentric centre or a static middle position. In this sense, the middle is not associated with an established position of the centre in the *Tritangtu*. In this sense, the middle is not associated with an established position of the centre in the *Tritangtu*. The middle connotes a dynamic function of interconnectivity rather than an established status. It is the middle that correlates the other features in the triadic structure.

To illustrate the middle as the interconnecting agent in the *Tritangtu*, one should imagine the triadic structure in a three-dimensional dynamic cyclic spiral.³⁴³ The three dimensional illustration contains a parallelism of the three features. On the one hand, the parallelism describes an equal status of the three features; on the other hand, it conveys the dynamic interconnection among them. The equality of the features emphasizes the function of the middle as the interconnecting agent. Figure 7 illustrates the three-dimensional dynamic cyclic spiral.

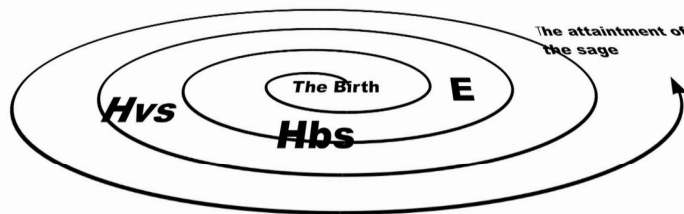


Figure 7: The three dimensional dynamic cyclic spiral.

³⁴³ This is an *etic* interpretation inferred from several intensive interviews with the guardians. The *emic* interpretation or the guardians' conception provides the idea that the three features in the triadic structure of life reciprocally sustain each other so that one feature clarifies the existences of the two others.

This three dimensional illustration of the dynamic cyclic spiral shows how the heavens (Hvs), human beings (HBs) and the earth (E) exist horizontally in parallel positions. It also describes the interconnectivity among these three features. The cyclic life spiral begins at the birth of every individual moving toward the manifestation of the life of the sage. Here the birth has its function as the centre which initiates the way of life. The circular arrows represent a process of life which presumes the interconnectivity among the three equal features for the purpose of the development of the sagacious selfhood. The sage does not reach a final attainment but the sage's attainment depends on the ongoing actualizations of the (Sundanese) principal virtues of life in the daily matters. Thus, becoming a sage, who requires continuous mutual interconnection with the heavens and the earth, is an inevitable process in the development of human character. The development of the sagacious character is impossible unless the awareness and the practice of interconnectivity are realized in daily attitudes.

The illustration of the dynamic cyclic life spiral corresponds to the Sundanese phrase: "*opat kalima pancer*."³⁴⁴ This metaphorical phrase denotes "the four directions" (*papat*), "the fifth point or the nucleus" (*kalima*) and "the light of the high noon" (*pancer*). "*Papat*," the four directions symbolize the universe or the *mandala*.³⁴⁵ "*Kalima*," "the nucleus" connotes "*tengah*" or the middle. I propose the use of the term "the middle" other than "the centre" or "*pusat*" in Bahasa.³⁴⁶ The connotation that is derived from the use of the term middle emphasizes the meaning of "the connecting agent" that conjoins the compass points, *Papat*, or the *mandala*. The meaning of "the middle" is supported by the last word in the phrase, *pancer* or the light of the high noon.

Another Sundanese metaphorical phrase explains the symbolical connotation between the light and the role of the middle as the interconnecting agent. Pak Undang explained such a role with the term "*tengah*" and the metaphorical one "*pancer*" which I have already discussed above.

"*Ari tengah pancerna, ari pancer lamun* My translation: "The middle (the core) *disimbulkeun kana jiwa urang, anu tadi tea nu* illuminates. "If the light of the high noon is *tara bohong tea, tengahna mah kitu.*"³⁴⁷ *symbolized inside our soul, it is our heart which never lies; the middle is always like that.*"

³⁴⁴ This phrase becomes one of the meditative keywords on the contemplative site *Nagara Padang* for a pilgrim. Meditating on this phrase will lead to a pilgrim's awareness to honor and to dignify the universe and the Almighty. Dignification of both features in the triadic structure of life is equivalent to dignifying human beings. See Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 130.

³⁴⁵ The Hindu-Tantric and Buddhist *mandala* as the complete structure of the universe is a significant idea of the cosmic existence in the Archipelago. See Jakob Sumardjo 2003: 77; Lombard 1995 vol. 3.

³⁴⁶ In Javanese, the term "*tengah*" could be translated into "*pusat*" in Bahasa or the centre. Such a translation will reduce the deepest connotation of the word. For the translation of "*tengah*" into "*pusat*" see Jakob Sumardjo 2003, 2006. Geertz 1969; cf. with my research report Djunatan 2008.

³⁴⁷ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 136.

Independently, “*Pancer*” or “the sun reaching the zenith”³⁴⁸ reveals the moment when light shines on all compass points without casting any shadow. One can clearly see everything during the high noon. One can also perceive a harmonious composition of a landscape. If one associates the middle, “*tengah*” with the light of the high noon, “*pancer*” one will uncover once again the interpretation about the role of the heavens or the Almighty, human beings and the earth or the universe as the interconnecting agents. This interpretation is necessary if one wants to reveal the Sundanese way of thinking, that is, the affirmative worldview. In other words, the Sundanese affirmative worldview is a presumption which explains why Sundanese people conceive a correlation of the opposite. In this sense, the *mandala* or the compass points are comprehensive because they are woven by the connecting agent, the middle.

3.4.2 The conception of the selfhood: the intermediary

In the previous subsection, I explained the metaphysical perspective of the triadic figures. It is clear that the guardian of the shrine employs the meaning of human beings as the interconnecting agents, as inferred from the phrase “*papat kalmia pancer*,” to solve the constitutive conundrum of *Nagara Padang*. The name *Nagara Padang* consists of the word “*Nagara*” and “*Padang*.”³⁴⁹ The term “*nagara*” does not denote “*Negara*” in Bahasa Indonesia. If so, then one will consider a legal institution or a political organization of human collectivity. This is a misinterpretation of the shrine. The shrine has nothing to do with the organizational management of the state.

The riddle word *Nagara* should be read starting from the last syllable to the first one. It becomes “*ra ga na*.” “*Ra*” and “*Ga*” are combined so that one can read them as “*Raga*” or “the (human) body.” These three syllables are accompanied with the preposition “*dina*” or “*in/into*.” Together the word should be read as “*Dina Raga Na*,” or “*in the body*.” The riddle is answered by disclosing the essence of the body. Within the body, there is the self (“*Diri*”). This riddle reminds us of the phrase “*cangkang rejeung eusina kudu sarua lobana*”. In this interpretation, “*eusi*” or the seed is associated with the self or the essence of human beings, whereas ‘*cangkang*’ or the shell with the body or the substance³⁵⁰.

These metaphors of *cangkang* and *eusi* describe the interactivity between these ontological conceptions, the substance and the essence. One cannot focus on the first without considering the other. Without the self as the essence, the human body as designation has no reason for existence. Nevertheless, the body cannot exist unless the self subsists. The self necessarily realizes its capability through the body. In other

³⁴⁸ See R.A. Danadibrata Sunda Lexicon for this entry.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Transcription of my interview with Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 104.

³⁵⁰ Please refer to the interpretation of the metaphors *cangkang* and *eusi*, for substance and essence. See my philosophical interpretation on page 103 footnotes no. 255, and literal translation on page 128 footnotes no. 302.

words, the body becomes the substantial manifestation of the self. The body and the self correlate symbiotically. In this sense, the body does not imprison the self. The equality and interactivity of both completes human life. Therefore, it can be inferred that the self necessarily presupposes the human body and vice versa. One, however, should not think that these aspects of human beings intermingle or blend without clear distinctions of respective identity.

Meanwhile, the term “*Padang*” denotes “light,” “brightness,” or “illumination.” In the riddle, this term represents an event of illumination, or enlightenment. This refers either to the “cleared mind and awareness” (*akal budi*), or to the “enlightened conscience or the heart (*haté*).” Both the clear mind and awareness and the heart once again assert the role of the connecting middle. In this respect, the moment of enlightenment does not only elevate the individual to a higher development of personality. But the illumination is also a capacity to extend oneself to support the life of the surrounding other human fellows and the creatures. Thus in this sense, illumination is not for the sake of individual salvation. It is for the purpose of the development of the quality of life of other creatures and nature. Here Sufic sagacity agrees with the ancient Sunda one, and there is co-adaptation from both sides. That the emphasis on individual salvation should go hand in hand with the development of the quality of life for the community. It is the task of the sagacious individual to realize this ontological viewpoint.

Thus, the riddle of “*Nagara Padang*” connotes the conception of selfhood. It means either “there is the light in the human body” or “The human body itself is the representation of the Light or the Almighty.” Both solutions of the riddle emphasize the following ontological formulations about the presentation of human beings.

1. Any human being intends to experience enlightenment.
2. By this enlightenment, every human being appears as ‘the intermediary’. This term connotes an affirmative selfhood which interweaves itself with the Universe and the Almighty. By becoming such an agent, human beings are interconnected with the heavens and with the earth.

Both conceptions characterize the human existence as an experience of self-enlightenment. In every individual’s inner life, there is an intentionality to experience self-illumination in order to answer the quests for life (formulation 1). In answering such quests for life, an individual should have a sensibility to listen to his/her conscience. Under the influence of the conscience, an individual should be able to deliberate and to discern any kinds of impulses and reactions. In doing this, the individual will work it through in their own mind which path in life to take. In order to determine their individual pathway of life, the individual should be able to practice self-perseverance and self-discipline so that he or she is consistent in realizing his or her own destiny of life. By being aware of the purpose of life, each individual is aiming for the realization of the Sage through their daily attitudes. This is the experience of the

illumination of the inner self. In short, the experience of self-enlightenment implies the interconnectivity of the physical and the mental aspects, the body and the soul.

Outwardly, human beings will be interconnected with others in accordance with the second meaning (formulation 2). This interconnectivity defines precisely the role of every human being. Such role can be described with the question: “*How do I as an individual realize my presentation for others?*” or “*What can I do for others?*” Such questions are indispensable for individuals rather than asking “*What is it?*” or “*Who are you?*” In other words, life is defined by an individual’s role not only to themselves but also their function in communal life. From this standpoint, the role of human beings is to interconnect between the individual and other human beings, and between human beings and other creatures which are the manifestations of life. The status of an individual is not an established position to define identity.

3.4.3 The ethical duty of the sage

Thus the shrine *Nagara Padang* proposes the idea that human beings exist in a mutual interconnectivity. Human beings exist *for* the earth and the heavens and likewise the heavens and the earth exist for human beings. The ontological role is the reason for existence; it is more than a definitive establishment of the self-identity. In other words, the indigenous ontological conception of human beings is that every human being is always interconnected with others. Human existence is an expression of this correlation especially within the triadic structure of life, the “*Tritangtu*.”

On the basis of an *etic* interpretative approach, I would formulate this ontological standpoint as the *affirmative life*. The word “affirmative” is essential because it reflects the Sundanese virtues of life that have already been discussed above. An affirmative individual expresses intersubjective dignification (*silihwangi*), reciprocal nurturing, loving and teaching (*silih asuh, silih asah, silih asih*), equality or egalitarianism (*sapajajaran*), gratitude (*nuhunkuen*), compassion (*welas asih*), and justice (*adil*). These virtues explain that life embodies affirmative qualities in its essence and substance.

One can refer to the ethical duty of the affirmative life in the pious lessons of sagacity according to the guardian’s statements. Pak Undang mentions:

“... *didinya memang éta jalan hadé jeung goréng. Ngan hadé nu mana goréng nu mana. Ulah gorengna goréng teuing. Hadé ge ulah hadé teuing. Sabab goréng teuing kacida, hadé teuing pare ogé loba teuing bera mah euweuh eusian, hapa. Euweuh araheun, hadé teuing. Siger tengah. (Handap) teuing bisi jongklok, tukang teuing bisi jongklok. Geura panggihan, geura tepungan anu aya dina wujud. Geura tepungan anu aya dina raga, geura wincik anu aya dina diri, geura papay anu aya dina* My translation: “... *there is good and bad. Yet one has to carefully understand both. It is better if it is not too bad or not too good, because that means excess. If there are too many grains of rice, they are empty. Too good is aimless. Be comprehensive. Too low one can fall; too high one can also fall. Find this out within. Discover this inside the body, perform self-management. Be aware of your conscience.*”

rasa.”³⁵¹

The guardian employs the logical operation of the affirmative life when he perceives of existence in the pair of correlative opposites like good/bad (*hade/goreng*), male/female (*lalaki/awewe*), etc. The pair of correlative opposites produces the comprehensive vision that the good is in apposition to the bad. This comprehensiveness does not amount to a theory of balance between opposites. Rather, one should be able to conceive of both sides at once, and the opposites are simultaneously interconnected. In turn, this is affirmative self-awareness. Affirmative self-awareness is signified by the Sundanese compound expression: “*Siger tengah*” or in my translation “be comprehensive.” This compound expression is associated with the idea of the interconnecting middle. The middle functions as the inclusive connectivity of the paradox. This is not a third way which exclusively exists alongside the opposites. The opposites are correlating in so far as one side implies each other’s existence. According to another interpretation, “*Siger*” means “crown”, “corona.”, or the sign of dignity. Metaphorically, the crown or the corona symbolizes the circle of light for someone who is honored and perfect.³⁵² The circle posits the comprehensive worldview so that every presentation is irreplaceable. The circle clarifies the idea that the “man” explains the presentation of the “woman,” and vice versa. In short the circle embodies the connecting middle position, which is the apposition of distinct subjects.

The logical operation of the affirmative disposition above enhances the quality of the affirmative life in the disposition of the sage. The idea clarifies that the Sage embodies inclusive individuality. This quality enriches human recognition of the plurality as well as the unique presentations of individuals. The inclusive individuality of the Sage is described with the following citation.

*“Keur nangtungkeun hiji diri pribadi, dua lamun geus kaudag urang kaunggulan keur tulung tumulungan tea, mun teu mah kudu sanggup munajatna didieu boga jangji. Mun geus kapanggih dina kaunggulan dina kamajuan, kudu sanggup nulung ka nu butuh nalang ka nu susah, nganteur ka nu keueung, mere ka nu daek. Nyaangkeun (nu keur poek)”.*³⁵³

My translation: “[To do the pilgrimage is] firstly to satisfy one’s need Secondly, if one becomes sagacious in life, this sagacity is applied for the sake of supporting each others’ life. If one prays in his/her pilgrimage here, one has a promise. It is when someone is successful, victorious, prosperous, one commits to be able to support others’ lives, to be able to resolve other’s burdens, to be able to accompany others who are afraid of facing life, to be able to satisfy other’s who are in need, to be the light for those who are in dark.

This affirmative disposition of the sage articulates inclusive behaviour. The sage naturally expresses this ethical intention towards others. This intentionality is depicted in the following imperative phrase:

³⁵¹ Transcription of my interview with Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 120.

³⁵² See Jamaludin Wiartakusumah 2008.

³⁵³ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 36.

*“reret ka tuhu tuh sadulur tulunganeun, reret ka kenca tuh baraya belaneun.”*³⁵⁴ My translation: “Look at the right, there are brothers and sisters to support, look at the left, there are people to be defended”.

Thus, the sage’s ethical intentionality towards others signifies the role of the sage as the connecting middle. This role in turn does not only explicate a principle of conduct. This principle is a derivation of the ontological conception of the self and the metaphysical idea of the existence of the triadic structure of life.

3.5. A formulation of the principle of affirmation

In this sense, one can discover the implications of a philosophical mind set within the pious lessons of *Nagara Padang*. This principle of thought conceives of ‘the creative development of the interconnecting cosmos’. It is derived from the affirmative worldview. This principle of thought constitutes an extended inclusion of any interacting features. This quality puts any individual feature into interactivity. This is the reason one cannot detach individual features from the frame of interconnectivity. This is the way to understand that the existence of things is not perceived by individual’s only. The existence of things is acknowledged when things are interconnected. This understanding emphasizes the quality of interdependency. The affirmative worldview is not equivalent to the idea of collectivism. If one refers to collectivism, one will fail to understand why the sage can extend his or her ethical intentionality to any kind of subject regardless of their respective settings. In other words, the subsisting correlation is as significant as the existence of the individual subject. One cannot ignore the subsisting correlation among the subject if one intends to acknowledge the existence of one’s selfhood.

Thus, the idea of cosmic unity above refers to this subsisting correlation or the reciprocal relations. The unification of any individual features does not generate a new representation of a super-structure feature. Such a new super-structure feature will blend the particularity of the correlating subjects; then it subsumes them under a hierarchical order of existence. The affirmative worldview avoids the disappearance of the unique subjects by maintaining the reciprocity. This understanding then appears as the source of the idea of equality and parallelism in the Sundanese ontological conception of selfhood. Equality and parallelism both constitute the supportive correlation among the subjects. The acknowledgment of reciprocity also becomes the constitutive viewpoint in the conception of the *mandala*. It is the *mandala* which enables the Sundanese people to equally accommodate the indigenous and the foreign (the Hindu-Buddhist and the Islamic) didactical tradition of the sage as we have elaborated in this chapter. By doing this, these religious and spiritual heritages can be involved in an interactive exchange.

In sum, the formulation of the principle of affirmation becomes inescapable once one has discovered the affirmative worldview. This principle of thought equips subjects

³⁵⁴ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008: 72.

with a capacity to maintain interconnectivity and interactivity. This capacity is a non-verbal interactivity, and is brought out by the idea of silence. Silence emphasizes the necessity of interactivity, as an alternative to establishing juxtaposed, antagonistic positions of individual subjects, such as is implied in the act of definition. In this respect, one can understand that the noble virtues and values of life as they are transmitted by the pious lessons of Nagara Padang stipulate non-verbal interaction. The central lessons of *Nagara Padang*: compassion (*welas asih*), equality (*sapajajaran*), intersubjective dignification (*silihwangi*), justice (*kaadilan*), gratitude (*nuhunkeun*) and ability to recognize one's personal destiny (*takdir*) – is not so much the literal lexical meaning of these terms, but the fact that they imply an exhortation to non-verbal interactivity in daily life.

Chapter 4: Toward a theory of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview

This chapter reviews the previous chapters in the Part I. These chapters deal with several significant terms for further elaboration in the next part. These terms are

- the principle of affirmation and
- the attending affirmative worldview.

The first term denotes an epistemological foundation of sagacious knowledge. Upon such foundation, one will attend to a comprehensive viewpoint of life-forms which is the second term. Thus, this chapter serves as a summary and is not another exploration or further analysis concerning the main theme I am discussing in this thesis.

4.1 Characteristics of sagacious knowledge

The elaboration of the sagacious knowledge in several non-Western contexts has shown the dynamic use of philosophical concepts in the accounts of local sagacity. The use of these philosophical ideas demonstrates that local wisdom not only consists of *phronesis*, practical knowledge, but also *sophia*, the more theoretical account of life. Practical knowledge ranges from the technical to the physical, including treatments, medication, or psychological assistance, as well as the practice of magic or numerical predictions. Meanwhile, the theoretical account of sagacity is made up of several of the following characters, such as:

1. The capacity to explain in detail metaphysical, ontological, epistemic or ethical concepts. This corresponds to Rein Raud's definition of Western philosophy, in which explanatory power is used to clarify natural things and which thinks things at a certain level of abstraction.³⁵⁵
2. The individual account of the theory of life. The local sages have made an individual effort to digest as well as to explicate their individual or social realities surrounding them. They make adequate interpretations of the phenomena of life. To some extent, one can refer to the independence of the local thinker. Meanwhile, there is also the tendency performed by these local thinkers to be interdependent with each other in order to clarify the natural things, or to explain an abstract thought. To this extent, it can also be compared with Raud's explanation of the character of social tolerance in Western philosophy.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁵ Raud 2006: 621.

³⁵⁶ Raud 2006: 622.

3. These theoretical accounts are not only gathered from others' thoughts, but also they are passed down from one generation to the others. These accounts have been improved and even developed in accordance with the process of osmosis between the indigenous and the foreign cultural orientations.
4. There is an intuitive reasoning found out in the non-Western tradition of the sagacious knowledge the intuitive type of reasoning is usually attached to the spiritual belief. The involvement of spiritual belief in this character is inevitable due to the capacity of the sage to express his or her predictive and prophetic vision. This vision reveals the mystical side of this theoretical account of sagacious knowledge. The experience of union mysticism with the supernatural subject(s) enables the sage to deliver spiritual lessons, to judge people's behaviour based on such spiritual lessons, to prophesy what the spiritual subjects wants to the people, or to visualize a future event in a certain occasion. These capacities are associated with *practical thought to solve problematical matters*. This solution of a problem may include magic or sorcery. In fact, the external analyses which mentions that such practice is merely superstition activities fails to understand the implications of intuitive reasoning within the experience of union mysticism revealed by these types of practical and theoretical sagacity. Moreover, the experience of union mysticism symbolizes the interconnectivity between the sage and the universe, and the Almighty or between the sage and his or her followers.

I do not intend to suggest an appropriation of these characters of practical and theoretical sagacity in accordance with that of Western philosophy. I am also not going to insist on a comparison between the non-Western sagacious knowledge and Western philosophy. The reference to the character of Western philosophy here is to indicate that thinking and reasoning belongs to *human's natural capacity*, about which Odera Oruka has argued. It is clear that the philosophical content of the sagacious knowledge is not only an implication of our capacity of thinking and reasoning, it is the adequate expression of *doing a philosophy*.

4.2. Is ethnophilosophy a philosophy?

Is Ethnophilosophy a philosophy? This question can be looked at from two perspectives. The first one is that of the external approach to a model of local (sagacious) knowledge. I do not disagree with Mudimbe's point when he argues against the appropriation of ethnophilosophy for the sake of the establishment of colonialism and the dissemination of Christianity in Africa and Asia. In this context, ethnophilosophy is an appropriated exploration of the local model of knowledge in accordance with the standard categorization of justified and verified knowledge or *episteme*. This exploration has managed to shift the level of local knowledge from an esoteric one to one of an *episteme*, the public and contested version of (individual)

knowledge.³⁵⁷ In this sense, one can agree with the view that ethnophilosophy is an exploration of the ideological thinking and reasoning of a local model of knowledge.

Nevertheless, if one considers ethnophilosophy from an internal approach and interpretation, the question is answered differently. It is inconceivable to consider that a local knowledge system or even a local philosophy should follow the categorization of standardized knowledge or the philosophy of the West. Such localized philosophy does not need to pass the same contesting criteria set by Western scientists, thinkers or philosophers. For example, the contesting criteria made by the essentialist definitions of the 6 characters of philosophy: (1) that philosophy recognize individuality of thought, (2) that philosophy has its explanatory power to define the nature of things in the most abstract level of thought, (3) that philosophy is dialogical so that philosophy is a thought addresses to others or it is addressed by the others. (4) That philosophy is cumulative to the sense that a philosophical work belongs to the corpus of philosophy. (5) That philosophy is independent from any form of political power and form of superiority that is to be part of a cultural orientation. (6) Philosophy is socially tolerant; meaning that a philosopher can claim his or her theory of truth as a variance without any prohibition or condemnation from any institution (the label of heresy in the case of religion, for example).³⁵⁸ Furthermore, it is not necessary to analyze a local philosophy in accordance with the categorization of metaphysics, ontology, epistemology and ethics which are the categories used in Western philosophy. In other words, a local knowledge or philosophy deserves to have its own criteria including its evaluative methodology. In this sense, the local philosophy and knowledge should be independent from any intervention of the super-structure model of knowledge or philosophy. The appropriation of the hegemonic representation of knowledge and philosophical systems should be avoided for the sake of the unique expression of each model of knowledge system. Based on this internal approach, one cannot simply ignore the local tradition of thought or consider it “irrational” based on the Western criteria of justified true philosophy.³⁵⁹

The ambiguity performed by Odera Oruka in his distinction between the ordinary sage and the philosophic sage reveals the need to recognize the local knowledge and philosophical system as independent from the employment of the super-structure criteria. This is the reason why O’chieng-Odhiambo includes the exploration of local philosophy or ethnophilosophy as a constitutive part in the tripartite structures in African philosophy. Presbey implicitly acknowledges the influence of ethnophilosophy as the contextual root of African philosophers or the philosophic sage. One should also consider this unique expression of other local philosophies. Chinese philosophy,

³⁵⁷ Mudimbe 1989; Odera Oruka 1990; van Binsbergen 2003, 2008; Botz-Bornstein 2006; Raud 2006; and Defoort 2006.

³⁵⁸ Raud 2006: 619, 621-622.

³⁵⁹ See van Binsbergen 2005.

Japanese philosophy, Javanese philosophy and Sundanese philosophy exist uniquely in their respective philosophical systems. They do not belong to the family genus of philosophy, as Defoort suggested. The structure of the family genus of philosophy presupposes “the father” of the family of philosophy, which is considered Western philosophy.³⁶⁰

Thus to some extent, ethnophilosophy deserves to be a philosophy under the condition of the contextualization of a tradition of philosophical thought. The tradition of thought articulates a philosophical system implicitly or explicitly inasmuch as it expresses practical thought as well as the theoretical abstraction of life in general. The existing explorations in the area of cultural anthropology have shown various external approaches to the internal expressions of a tradition of thought. Such intensive explorations of numerical predictions and the symbolical knowledge system, such as the Chinese *I Ching*, African *sangomahood*, Javanese *parimbon* or Sundanese *elmu buhun*, have demonstrated the expression of philosophical thought.³⁶¹ My close observation of the sagacious knowledge at the Sufic Shrine *Nagara Padang* also indicates the same thing. I found out that the sagacity is not merely the moral advocate for a pilgrim during his or her pilgrimage. The pious lessons imply metaphysical thoughts of the existence of human beings, the Almighty and the universe. It also articulates the conception of selfhood. Both the metaphysical perception of life and the ontological conception of selfhood, convey the employment of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview. These belong to the philosophical system of thought in the Sundanese context.

4.3. The human mind is never bounded

Ethnophilosophy still leaves another problematic issue. One should be aware that one’s thinking is not confined to ethnocentric sentiments or imprisoned by radical relativism.³⁶² Both perspectives believe in the incommensurability of local traditions of philosophical thought. Here ethnophilosophy contains the chauvinistic representation of the local knowledge system. Both also insist on the idea that a knowledge system is bounded and self-evident, just as culture is considered to have these same qualities. The proponents of ethnocentric sentiments suggest that a super-structural philosophical system will liberate philosophy from the confinement of culture or traditions of thought. If the ethnocentric sentiments are retained, one will fail to recognize which

³⁶⁰ Raud 2006: 621.

³⁶¹ See the influential works of such scholars as Geertz (1969), Wessing (1979), Douglas (1975), and van Binsbergen (2003).

³⁶² Defoort 2006: 640; Solomon 100; cf. Raud 2006. For radical relativism see van Binsbergen 2003a: 464. He dismisses the latter as “... a license to reduce contemporary society to an immovable stalemate of positions between which, on theoretical grounds, no open communication, identification, community or reconciliation is possible any longer; and violence remains as the only way out..” Cf. van Niekerk 1998: 59; Tianji 1991: 161-163.

philosophical system is truly justified or which philosophical systems constitute the expression of a theoretical tradition of thought. The relativists retain the idea of the uniqueness and independence of each tradition of thought. These positions have to do with the belief in the impenetrable boundaries of any local system of (philosophical) thought and that of the impossibility of any trans-cultural exchange among the local traditions.

Historical records have shown that such claims cannot be sustained. Van Binsbergen in his recent articles discusses the transcontinental elements in African philosophies.³⁶³ Here he identifies the transcontinental exchange in the body of African philosophies. These external influences and exchanges, as well as the internal development due to adaptation and adjustment, have affected the formation of African philosophies. Learning from the intercultural exchange in the formation of African philosophy, one can suggest that the development of Asian philosophies imply the similar process of intercultural encounters. In his *le Carrefour Javanais* volumes, Denys Lombard argues that one should never ignore the role of the Asian networks of trade. These trade networks helped the dissemination not only of the Indian, Chinese and the Middle Eastern civilizations and religions, but also the Southeast Asian cultural orientation, aspects of which thus expanded over much of Oceania, the Indian Ocean region, and significant parts of Africa. The networks of trade appear conducive to enhancing the cultural exchange among the Asian cultural orientations, and between the Asian ones with other civilizations on other continents.

The trans-continental crossroad of civilizations and religions include the tradition of philosophical thought. The development of traditions of philosophical thought occurred against the background of intercultural encounters. Humans learn from others by engaging in dialogue. This learning process arranges the interactive formations of knowledge system, so that the “new” self-identity appears *hybrid*, a mixture of several different and somewhat overlapping elements of several cultural orientations. Even if there is a pattern of thought, such pattern does not appear as a self-evident and limited structure. In this understanding One can consider Appadurai’s suggestion about the suffix “-scape”, which employed by analogy to the word *landscape* (so: ethnoscaples, townscapes, etc. Appadurai suggest that the suffix ‘-scape’ is more applicable to depict the fluidity or the quality of flexibility of human thought). As Botz-Bornstein suggests, the idea of the mindscape or “ideoscape” is to accommodate such qualities of human thought.³⁶⁴ In this interchangeability, rationality is an articulation of thinking and reasoning in various ways. He continues that the suffix “-scape” proposed by Appadurai can be employed to also underline the essential role of a model of thought. In other words, a model of thought has a tendency to be involved in interactivity with the other model of thought. The interactivity between models of thought, contributes to a

³⁶³ Van Binsbergen 2008a.

³⁶⁴ Botz-Bornstein 2006.

development of the intrinsic value of a theoretical and practical sagacity. This intrinsic value in this case refers to an epistemological and ontological foundation of model of thought which includes the sagacious knowledges. The emphasis on the interactivity of model of thought is different from the idea of “in-between.” The idea of “in-between” places the *position* of a subject (which can be a model of thought) in the middle of the other subjects in a network of connectivity. This idea misses the existence of interconnectivity itself as the profound ontology.

4.4 The affirmative worldview and the principle of affirmation

Inasmuch as the word and the concept of ‘philosophy’ derived from the Greek tradition of thought, what is considered philosophy is *a priori*, critical, and analytical knowledge system. Otherwise, philosophy will appear only as a tradition of critical and analytical thought among other traditions of thought. Raud argues that one should retain philosophy in the line of the Greek heritage of critical and analytical thought. He also reminds us that if one preserves the exclusivity of philosophy in the hands of Western philosophers, then one will impose the Western standard of philosophy onto the non-Western philosophy³⁶⁵. Van Binsbergen has reminded us

*‘...of the dangers attached to any attempt to think interculturality along lines of conceptualization and epistemology exclusively set by North Atlantic intellectual traditions.’*³⁶⁶

By permitting the hegemonic representation to appear, one retains “the ethnocentric sentiments” or “the ethnocentric illusion”³⁶⁷ (to employ van Binsbergen’s terms) of the Western tradition of thought. Hence, one must overcome the threats of the hegemonic representation, as well as that of the incommunicability between traditions of thought.

We have no option but to try and avoid this pitfall, for the simple reason that there are other traditions of thought, which challenges the North Atlantic tradition of philosophy. Chinese, Indian and Japanese philosophies are all examples of the presence of other models of critical and analytical thought. The other challenge comes from Western thinkers and philosophers.³⁶⁸ Both Raud and Defoort seem to agree with Deleuze and Guattari’s attempt to define philosophy³⁶⁹. These French thinkers consider philosophy the creative exploration to form, to invent and to fabricate concepts. These concepts in their account appear as virtual wide spaces or “planes of immanence” which unboundedly interact with each other. They become crossroads of different kinds of

³⁶⁵ Raud 2006: 624; cf. Defoort 2006; Solomon 2002. It is an illusory assumption if one considers Greek culture as the cradle of the modern civilization. See van Binsbergen 2003a: 37.

³⁶⁶ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 26.

³⁶⁷ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 39.

³⁶⁸ This includes Wittgenstein, as well as Heideggerian, Pragmatist and analytical thinkers, see Raud 2006: 623.

³⁶⁹ Deleuze & Guattari 1990

traditions of thought or heterogeneous streams of thought. It is a way to suggest that a concept is necessarily interconnected with other such concepts in order to construct a comprehensive understanding concerning a subject depicted by such a concept. In this sense, any language can be a medium of expression for these interconnecting traditions of thought, and that of reciprocity between the concepts and realities which are explained by such concepts.³⁷⁰ This shows what is meant by the quality of explanatory power embodied in philosophy.

If language is a significant medium of expression, then our thought cannot be detached from it in order to provide an explanation of a comprehensive conception of abstracted reality.³⁷¹ Our mind presupposes an epistemic foundation. This is a kind of virtual wide space, a thinking landscape in which a preferred viewpoint is constructed. This epistemic foundation can serve as the basis to search for an intercultural epistemology.³⁷² Van Binsbergen suggests such an effort to reformulate epistemology so that we have a proper foundation of understanding the intercultural encounter of the models of thought. He writes:

“... all human knowledge production is interconnected and therefore subjected to a converging epistemology.”³⁷³

Hence, we are in:

“... [T]he need for particular kinds of dynamic, alternative logic – capable of acknowledging difference without entrenching itself in difference. In the world today, the practical logic underlying such actual intercultural encounters as make up the reality of our globalised social world, is characterized by kaleidoscopic fragmentation, inconsistency, pluriformity. Here – whatever their theoretical claims to universality – logical connections based on concepts and their relations have in practice only a limited, local validity, beyond which other such connections, of rather different relational content between rather different concepts, hold sway.”³⁷⁴

I would like to propose an inquiry into epistemic foundations as the best strategy in the quest of intercultural epistemology for the traditions of thought. This inquiry is to elaborate on theoretical and practical thought, the *sophia* and the *phronesis*, in order to explain the implications of “the dynamic alternative logic” used for this purpose. In other words, this epistemic foundation is an implication of the wisdom of theoretical and practical knowledge.³⁷⁵ I would like to define this epistemic foundation as “the principle of affirmation.” This epistemic foundation is a kind of a creative comprehensiveness of the virtual mind. The epistemic foundation is virtual mindscape

³⁷⁰ Raud 2006: 623.

³⁷¹ Cf. R. Mall citation in van Binsbergen 2008b: 79. Mall writes, ‘no language can claim to be the mother-tongue of Being.’

³⁷² Van Binsbergen 2003a, 2008a: 80ff.

³⁷³ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 30.

³⁷⁴ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 38.

³⁷⁵ Van Binsbergen 2008b: 51.

insofar as that a model of thought is not fixed within a definite sphere of thought which is to a cultural boundary. Nevertheless, it extends to the more complex interconnectivity and interactivity among the models of thought. Given this interconnectivity, a model of thought should be regarded as a dynamic embodiment between the idea of distinct position as the model of thought which included in a cultural orientation (such as the Sundanese sagacious thought) and the idea of multiple elements are piled up and interacted to each other within the body of such distinct model of thought (the Sundanese sagacious thought reverberated the time honored Sunda, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islamic elements of the lessons of sagacity). Another property this epistemological foundation is the acknowledgement of any models of thought. Moreover, one can explore the principle of affirmation from any cultural context or any tradition of thought. One cannot infer that this epistemological foundation exclusively belongs to the non-Western traditions of thought (I will more explain these two last arguments above in the following part, especially in the chapter 7).

One must avoid jumping to the conclusion that this foundation constitutes a common foundation of human thought, or this is the universal property of knowledge. Such a conclusion would be unwarranted because it refers to the conception of the super-structure foundation of thinking. The principle of affirmation is not that kind of epistemic foundation. If one understands the principle of affirmation in accordance with the conception of the super-structure thinking foundation, one will consider the principle of affirmation as the affirmative, one side in the diametrical contradiction: affirmative and negative. This pair of affirmative and negative necessarily applies one-sided approach in order to obtain a prevailing side—by means of applying the negative function—the negated side should be subsumed. This kind of operation one can find in Aristotelian logic.³⁷⁶ The principle of Affirmation as the epistemological foundation suggested here offer an alternative approach to conceive the contradictory elements not in the diametrical contradiction but in the comprehensive viewpoint which profoundly focuses on the idea of interconnectivity. Such comprehensive viewpoint in this sense addresses to an affirmative worldview.

The principle of affirmation presupposes an affirmative worldview so that one can have a specific standpoint in perceiving and conceiving things and reality. The principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview, appear as inherent parts of the human capabilities of thinking and reasoning. They are not derivations of a super-structure tradition of thought. These capabilities support mankind to reformulate reality in accordance with human interests to develop and to maintain life. In this thesis, I try to indicate that these thinking capabilities, together with the presupposition of

³⁷⁶ Cf. the denial of interconnectivity between subjective-objective reality, and between subjectivities, is necessary in order to establish the objective representation of reality and being. This denial represents the negative in logical operation cf. Nishida 1970: 245; on the Aristotelian principle of the logic of the excluded third and that of the logical consistency see van Binsbergen 2008b: 71-72.

affirmation as the epistemic foundation, belong to any traditions of thought. One can find them in an indigenous sagacious knowledge system, like the Sundanese pious lessons of the sage, or in other Asian sagacious knowledge, like with the *Daodejing*, or in a complex philosophical account, like with Ricoeur's and Deleuze's account of affirmation. This exploration is not meant to be a mere comparison between these thinking and reasoning capacities, in order to identify which one deserves to be the articulated as an epistemic foundation.³⁷⁷ The exploration into the contextual settings or the traditions of thought is indispensable for defining a foundation for intercultural dialogue among various traditions of thought.

³⁷⁷ Cf. the illusory assumption of the comparative studies between different traditions of thought in van Binsbergen 2003a: 37. Here he contests the comparative studies of philosophy because this comparison of philosophies only explores the perennial theme in philosophy such as the nature of the world, the person, the morality, the conception of time and space, the nature of reason, etc. Yet, the comparative approach of philosophies does not consider the conditions and the distortion of intercultural encounters as such. For an example of the comparative studies of Western and Eastern philosophies see Bahm 1995.

Part II: An account of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview

In Part I, I developed my contextual elaboration of the epistemological foundations, affirmation, the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview. The contextual settings of these epistemic conceptions originate from several non-European cultural orientations. This exploration has revealed that these conceptions generate specific approach which could be considered as offering an alternative. I suggest this alternative approach as a comprehensive ontological vision. The approach is ontological insofar as the conceptions explored are concerned mainly with the conceptual framework of thought about existence. It is comprehensive insofar as these conceptions necessarily include a conception of humanity, nature, the universe and the existence of the Almighty. These conceptions to some extent also appear as a virtual paradigm of existence.

This part II aims at a formulation of the ontological vision of dynamic comprehensiveness. Given this aim, the formulation will start with a review of metaphysical and ontological vision of the world. This review will consider the constitutive aspects of such a vision of the world insofar as this vision will generate an understanding of how an individual or a collectivity perceives and experiences the world. This review introduces the following explorations in a detailed formulation. The introduction is in the current chapter. The subsequent chapters offer contextual interpretations of this comprehensive ontological vision. The first context is Chinese comprehensive thought which is essentially a means for expressing the approach of dynamic vision within Chinese Philosophy. This chapter will analyze how comprehensive thought is articulated in the *Daodejing* so that one can formulate an epistemic foundation. This kind of thought presupposes the vision of dynamic comprehensiveness. Unless this comprehensiveness is considered, one will hardly conceive of the constitutive meaning of the text. The second context is the Sundanese ontological structure of the triadic features: human beings, the universe and the Almighty, referred to in Sundanese with the concept of *Tritangtu* and with the sagacious term, '*pancer*.' These conceptions implied in the indigenous narrative of sagacity explore the comprehensive ontological vision in the triadic structure and the term '*pancer*.'

Part II will end with a chapter on the exploration of affirmation, the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview in the philosophical accounts of some prominent French philosophers Paul Ricoeur and Gilles Deleuze. The exploration

of the account of affirmation by these French philosophers does not mean to offer a comparative study of the epistemological foundation in the West and the rest. Thus it is not about presenting a version of these epistemic conceptions, but rather the exploration of both is intended to examine the context of North Atlantic philosophers and the contexts of some Asian philosophies in order to formulate an account of affirmation as an alternative approach to our contemporary understanding of the nature of our existence individually and collectively. Hence, the formulation of these epistemic conceptions in the context of intercultural encounters signifies the intention of *noesis* in order to understand the *noema* of our existence.

Chapter 5: A review of ontological vision

This chapter starts with some epistemological questions concerning an explanation of ontological vision.

1. What is an ontological vision?
2. How does one perceive an ontological vision?
3. What is the tool and method to provide such a review of an ontological vision?

By an ontological vision, I have in mind a dynamic paradigm, either individual or collective, which understands the existence of human being and other manifestations of life. Subsequently, the paradigm itself is regarded as an epistemic foundation on which individual as well as collective thought is reconstructed. From an epistemological point of view, an ontological vision not only determines the temporal and spatial contextualization of reality; but it also an inherent part of reconstructing a framework of meaning in which one tries to understand reality. An ontological vision which appears as a virtual paradigm or framework is also a worldview.

The second question above is related with the third question, insofar as both have to do with a faculty of mind or a thinking process which includes a method to conceive such an ontological vision. This faculty of mind which regulates a perception, and subsequently produces a conception of the ontological vision is “*the understanding*.” To understand an ontological vision here is more than *to know it*. It also includes a deeper inquiry to digest a meaning of existence in a comprehensive way. Hence an understanding of an ontological vision which places knowledge as an initiation process, perception and conception as a starting method, is the constitutive tool and method before one enters into an inquiry to formulate some constitutive properties of such an ontological vision.

Based on this systematization then, the following section will discuss “understanding” as the faculty, tool and method to digest the very constitutive properties of an ontological vision in the next section. This first section will look at some 20th century (idealist) philosopher’s and sociologist’s ideas concerning understanding. These thinkers take into account understanding as the main issue in perceiving and conceiving reality, or metaphorically termed as “life.” The last section of this chapter will focus on an elaboration of the Western and Eastern worldviews in which the explication of the ontological vision will touch on a specification of the ontological vision based on the temporal and spatial contextualization of the understanding of life.

5.1 Understanding as a tool and method

If one perceives an event in a particular spatial and temporal context, then one realizes a tendency to grasp such a reality. This realization does not come out of nothing; rather one grasps this perception in accordance with a kind of epistemic foundation which becomes a framework or a paradigm. This paradigm is not purely an individual construction. Instead, it is a combination between an individual's reflection of a cognitive paradigm projected onto a configuration of social cognition and a social intervention of a cognitive reconstruction. In this sense, one is able *to understand* the reality as it is perceived by the knowing subject.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833 – 1911), a 20th century German philosopher, takes the view that understanding is such a combination between an individual mind and a reflection of a social configuration of collective cognition. Furthermore, understanding is not only seen as a method of investigation for human sciences, but also as a capacity of the human mind to grasp or to produce an adequate comprehension about what he calls “the life-expression.”³⁷⁸ His conception of understanding shows how our mind constitutively intends to perceive of something as particularly meaningful. This intention subsequently forms ideas then a judgement concerning the signification of the conceived reality. Therefore, he analyses understanding on three levels.³⁷⁹ The first one is “the simple forms of understanding” or individual comprehension about a single reality or life-expression intended meaningful for a subject. The first one leads to the second level, which is the objective mind. If individuals understanding interconnects with each other, one realizes “the objective and elementary understanding” or the common agreement between an individual and a cultural contextualization of the meaningful life-expression. At this level an adaptation of individual comprehension into a larger scheme of meaningful life-expression occurs. The psychological development of a person shows this adaptation so that a life-expression is also understood in accordance with a structure of common categories of meaningful experiences and actions. He continues:

*“Inside such a structure exists a large number of typical orderings. The various individual life-expressions that impress themselves on the understanding can be understood as belonging to a particular category of experience; thus the relationship between life-expressions and mental events within this common experience provides both the fulfilment of the expressed mental event and its incorporation into a common experience.”*³⁸⁰

In other words, the second level of understanding appears as a management of individual cognition of life-expressions. The process of adaptation to the common experience of meaningful life-expressions takes place in a medium of language. Here

³⁷⁸ See Patrick Gardner introduction 1959 to Dilthey 1959: 211-213.

³⁷⁹ Dilthey in Gardner 1959: 217-220.

³⁸⁰ Dilthey in Gardiner 1959: 216.

language becomes a common expression in which individuals and their respective social contextualization of life-expression dynamically interact with each other. In Dilthey's terms the interaction is the nexus or the moment that an individual experience a process:

“by which something outer is enlivened by something inner or something inner is made visible and intuitable by something outer.”³⁸¹

The nexus articulates an interactivity between an individual and a social, respectively, or altogether, and a cultural system, or the tradition where one lives or the external organization of the community. Dilthey views that this reciprocity appears in the action of individuals. This condition of mental act indicates that an expression of an individual is a construction of interdependency between the contextualization or “objectification” of the subjective mind and the liberated expression of the individual one. In this sense, an individual mind still has the inner side which is not totally subsumed by the authoritative order of a cultural system. This inner life indicates an affirmative aspect which creatively enlivens the cultural contextualization, rather than serving as an imposition of external regulation on individual life. In other words, external intervention cannot absolutely implement its power to control any life-expression of an individual life.

This appearance of understanding becomes an interconnecting nexus between the affirmative aspects of the subjective mind and the outer elements of the spatial and temporal contextualization. The reciprocity between them avoids the tendency of considering external influences as ideological, as if an individual only totally agreed to the external organization of the community. Therefore, an understanding of life consists of two constitutive models of subjective thought. The first is the empirical knowledge which is culturally contextualized in a particular space and time. The second is the *a priori* theory which an individual can affirmatively abstract from a certain contextualization of a cultural system or an external organization of life. Both types are complementary to each other, so that without one an understanding of phenomena does not provide a comprehensive vision.

The reciprocal and complementary connection between the individual and the collective implies the third level of understanding. According to Dilthey, the higher form of understanding represents a deeper level of mental activity which includes the reciprocal and complementary connection between a fallible subjective mind together with the social reconstruction of the objective mind and meaningful life-expressions. An individual's comprehension risks uncertainty because thought-content is complex. Consequently, this implies the meaningful expression of the complexity of life. Hence, an incorporation of the subjective mind into the objective life-expression is indispensable.

³⁸¹ Dilthey as quoted in Makkreel 2008; cf. Franklin 1983: 310.

Though this incorporation is a significant the next level is not only a nexus of conformity or appropriate negotiation between individuals social contextualization. Dilthey mentions the higher form of understanding as:

“... insights into the inner life of men around us in order to determine how far we can rely on them.”³⁸²

This insight to inner life refers to the understanding that humanity itself is the essential content of understanding which is meaningful or intended for the sake of the expression of life-forms in all manifestations. In this sense, humanity appears as a set of principles of individuation for individuals. Consequently, the understanding of humanity will contest the nexus between an individual and a social and cultural setting. The idea of humanity represents a system which categorizes and encompasses the process of individuation for individuals³⁸³ and the subjective appreciation of the context of social and cultural reconstruction.

Dilthey seems to promote the inductive principle as the logical operation for understanding life-experiences. Induction guides all stages of understanding, step-by-step in order to produce a comprehensive inference about the life-expression as unity. Thus, the process of inductive inference will take the simple form of understanding to the level of the objective mind in order to arrive at a higher form which views humanity as the essential content of understanding. Included in these movements of inductive inference inevitably exists an interpretation of the life-expression. In other words, to grasp such life-expressions means “to read phenomena” and “to draw” a meaning from such phenomena. It is crucial that these processes be carried out one by one in order to avoid jumping to conclusions. By using the inductive argument here, it provides a guide of understanding that should be able to provide significations for each word which representatively reveals the life-expression. Consequently, inductive inference can show the meaning of a particular event within the constellation of the whole. Only by contextualization within the whole, do individual events obtain their respective meaning.

In general, Dilthey’s theory provides significant properties of understanding as a tool and method to grasp the vision of dynamic comprehensiveness. His idea of a higher form of understanding is in some ways continued in Weber’s account of the ideal type. According to Weber, the ideal type is the objective degree of evaluation for subjective understanding. It refers to a unified impartial criterion for contesting individual value and meaningful action by means of a law of causal explanation or *a priori* model of abstracted knowledge. In this sense, knowledge appears as a methodology to interpret such subjective understanding about rational and meaningful action. Under the conception of the ideal type, Weber defines an attribution of a shareable meaning and value to the subjective cognition of reality. This makes cognition presuppose knowledge

³⁸² Dilthey in Gardner 1959: 217.

³⁸³ Dilthey in Gardner 1959: 219.

of an ideational and material context. Only by means of such knowledge, can one *understand* a circumstance in which one is embedded. In this sense, our understanding about reality becomes teleological and pragmatic to the extent that it aims at a certain realization of values and it provides a way to achieve rational and meaningful action. Consequently, the understanding of a meaningful action is the inherent part of a rationalization of a system of means-ends causality in the modernization process. Hence the ideal type guarantees the impartiality of human understanding about reality.

Another significant property of understanding is that it includes the contextualization of subjective cognition in a certain setting. Understanding is not only a product of individual cognition of the meaningful reality. The independence of human understanding of reality from any influence of social context is also criticized by Peter Winch (1970).³⁸⁴ Winch emphasizes the significance of a social context as a form of life, or *Lebensform*, to use Wittgenstein's term. One cannot ignore such forms of life so that one can have an understanding of meaningful behaviour or rational action. Language is an indication of such contextualization of understanding in a life-form and a signification of rules which affects an understanding of social life. In other words, the interactivity between man and social associations are presumed for the production of the understanding of reality. Hence, the understanding of reality cannot be a discrete abstraction from the law of causality. Alternatively, in Winch's account, the understanding interdependently confers to a realm of social discourse and context about the meaning desired.³⁸⁵

Karl Mannheim (1931) rephrased the interrelation between individual *a priori* understanding of reality and the empirical influence of the social context into such *a priori* understanding. He mentions that there is no pure individual knowledge or no absolute individual understanding of reality, as if an individual were independent from any influence which comes out of a social context. In this case, epistemology and genetic psychology take into account such individual contemplation of a theoretical cognition in accordance with logical principles in order to produce complete knowledge without any contextual influences as if individual cognition were against the collective and contextual mind. Instead, knowledge production, as well as the understanding of reality, always occurs under the influence of primordial forms of collective knowledge and as a reflection of the unconscious influence by such collective cognition.³⁸⁶ These two kinds of experience of collective knowledge signify interdependence between the individual mind and the collective paradigmatic cognition.

It is now time to move on with the discussion of some of the implications from this theory. Dilthey intends to bring understanding to the epistemological foundations of human science. He does not generally consider that understanding is a broader mode of

³⁸⁴ Winch 1970, esp. chapter III, section 3.

³⁸⁵ Winch 1970: 115.

³⁸⁶ Reprinted in Mannheim 1979/1991: 30, 32.

thought which can offer a comprehensive vision of the meaningful life. He considers understanding as the mental means for establishing the universal worldview of the metaphysical conception. In this manner, he seems to miss that understanding is more related to a rough, multiple, holistic, fluid, yet hierarchical view of life in itself, than a fixed and formulated theory of metaphysical conception.³⁸⁷

So far Dilthey and the other 20th century thinkers discussed above emphasize some significant points about using understanding as the tool and method for grasping a vision of the dynamic comprehensiveness. These points are:

1. That understanding presupposes a contextualized life-expression or life-form. With both concepts, the known object appears as the structure to order subjective experience in accordance with the framework of the objective mind. The process of incorporating subjective cognition into the objective mind implies the circumstantially determined conditions of the collective mind. Such conditions shape individual action or life-expression within the set of logical principles of the collective mindset of the life-expression.
2. That understanding also reserves room for the expression of the affirmative inner aspects of subjective mind. The capacity of inner cognition is a faculty as well as a process of thought. It sets regulative principles of thinking from the level of ordinary perception until the level of the ideal form which constitutes the coherent structure of cognition. The regulative principles guide the process of inference such as analogy, deductive and inductive principles, including abductive reasoning.
3. From Point 1 and 2, we can infer that understanding is neither just an individual nor a collective property. Here understanding reveals *noesis* as a crossroad of a consciousness toward *noema* or the meaningful reality by combining simultaneously the personal and the collective. Consequently, understanding appears as a reciprocal interaction of both sides. Hence, the reciprocal connection is necessarily a comprehensive vision that articulates intended objects which are displayed in the reality as such.

These three points set up understanding in the way to grasp the comprehensive ontological vision. The vision itself is the cognitive picture of the world as the meaningful world so that it is something valuable and worthy of being conceived of. The vision included objects overall, such as the metaphysical, natural, artificial appearances of reality, and they turn simultaneously into the intended world. Subsequently, understanding constructs the intended world as the coherent structure which consists of anything preferred not only by collective, but also the subjective mind. In other words, understanding as the tool and method does not only transform the vision of the intended world into a production of the subjective and the collective mind,

³⁸⁷ Cf. Franklin 1983: 314-318.

but also into the *presupposition* for both minds. In this further development of thought, understanding does not only lead our mind to that vision as the end; instead, they determine each other.

5.2 Some constitutive properties of the worldview

The understanding of the vision of the meaningful world transforms knowledge of it into a worldview. I define worldview as a set of desired perceptions and conceptions about meaningful objects that are collected by means of grasping and analyzing such cognitive pictures in detail and integrating such objects into a coherent system and a structure with a comprehensive context. Understanding in this context constructs such a worldview to the extent that one can articulate the cognition of the essence of reality. Consequently, a worldview is simultaneously personal and contextual insofar as the understanding of meaningful world is the preference for knowledge production addressed either by individual cognition or by the contextual mindset.

It is common for us to conceive of the world as a virtual (re)construction of reality as things are in themselves. Thus they are creative and developing accounts which transform the earth into a world, or metaphorically, the chaos into a cosmos. The dynamic reconstruction of reality in itself or “a world” determines viewpoints concerning the phenomena of life. Thus, the presuppositions or the epistemic foundations are pertinent to the thinking process in perceiving the *noema* of reality. This constant factor is ideological insofar as this has to do with the contextualization of the believed true idea of the world. Unless the presuppositions are considered, one will have difficulty in understanding reality. As far as this implied understanding is concerned, our thought develops an epistemological method such as verification, justification or the validation of knowledge, of being true or false, as well as moral or ethical judgements of being good or bad. These are indispensable properties for defining an epistemic foundation as a “worldview.” Thus, a worldview offers a unique way to understand the world in accordance with a given culture. According to this definition, a worldview appears as an organized viewpoint concerning the intended world. In other words, reality is shaped according to certain patterns of schematic ideas so that the management of social and cultural systematization is possible to accomplish. These patterns of schematic ideas refer to the prototype of event, behaviour or things.³⁸⁸

A worldview is significant because it provides a vision of the meaningful world; therefore it is first necessary to analyze the constitutive properties of a worldview. Both Michael Kearney and Peter Kakol have developed “theories of worldview.”³⁸⁹ I would like to compare their respective accounts here to come to a better understanding of the properties of a worldview. Kearney analyses the characteristics of the theories of

³⁸⁸ Barnard & Spencer 1998 for entries: ‘worldview’ & ‘culture and personality.’

³⁸⁹ Kearney 1975; Kakol 2002.

worldview produced by scholars in anthropology, while Kakol employs the philosophical approaches formulated by process philosophy and the *Madhyamika*, the Tibetan-Buddhist one. Both scholars offer interdisciplinary approaches to the understanding of worldview in order to mention the essential traits of a worldview. After the analyses of the approaches of worldview, I will proceed with a philosophical reflection on these approaches and my own formulation above.

Kearney begins with an inventory of the theories of worldview. He categorizes the theories into four themes such as classification, time and space, causality and the self. Classification has to do with categories which can be found in a cosmology. The classification, for instance, distinguishes animate/inanimate, natural/supernatural, real/unreal, or mortal/immortal. Such classification analyses attributes from content, substances from essences. Other significant functions of classification in worldview are related with a construction of a local taxonomy and lexicon, linkages and separations among intended objects so that they are meaningful. Both display the use of language to express a coherent system of a local knowledge about natural things or space and time. In other words, classification is the signification of rational and logical principles embodied in a cultural setting. These logical principles: deduction, analogy, homology, isomorphism, and replications apply to the local cognition concerning natural and even metaphysical objects.³⁹⁰

Time and space represent the second character in a worldview. Both are categories that not only describe the intended reality, but also explain it in a comprehensive way. This categorization produces social as well as the cultural landscape of the local context, incorporating individual behaviour into the contextual cultural and social setting. It also articulates the mental development of a man/woman in a certain cultural contextualization. The categories of time and space also significantly explain the intention of mental cognition to the religious or supernatural realm. This metaphysical realm subsequently turns the worldview into a cognitive map of life which encompasses selfhood until the end of life's journey. While this idealization of life formulates the integration of mental development into the cultural contextualization of a meaningful life, it also includes a reconstruction as well as a reconstruction of the idea.³⁹¹

Causality and the self are the last two characters in a worldview. The first is a further derivation of the first character, classification, in a worldview. This is the main principle of thinking which powerfully explains either linkages or the separation of natural phenomena. The latter is related to the second character, time and space. A worldview also embodies a narrative of the idealized development of the sagacious selfhood.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Kearney 1975: 257.

³⁹¹ Kearney 1975: 259.

³⁹² Kearney 1975: 259-260.

The characteristics of the worldview discussed above draw from the anthropological approach to the vision of an intended world of meaningful objects. It is necessary to review such characteristics according to a philosophical approach, insofar as the latter can provide a complete explanation about the constitutive quality of a worldview. The philosophical approach referred to in this thesis is a comparative study of the worldview between the process and the *Madhyamika* philosophies. Peter Kakol starts with a classification of worldview into four types. They are

- the worldview of mutual independence between contrast or dualism (a);
- the one of mutual dependence between contrasting elements or monism (b);
- the worldview of dependence of the included on an independent and including whole, or it is known as the inclusive absolutism (c);
- and the vision of dependence of the included independent parts or the inclusive relativism (d).

The types of worldview a, and b are common in the North Atlantic history of ideas. The type c is commonly articulated in Eastern worldviews (especially related to Indian or Chinese ones). And the last one is the proposed worldview from the viewpoint of process philosophy.³⁹³

Kakol argues that these types of worldview embody a simultaneously complete and self-consistent system of pictorial cognition of the world; as if the world were depicted onto an unchanging schema. Meanwhile, his comparative studies show this misidentification of such qualities of a worldview. A worldview is not the permanent and perfect system of a vision of the meaningful objects.³⁹⁴ Instead, a worldview is a partial understanding of the reality from which one draws meaning. Nevertheless, the quality of “partial” in this sense does not indicate that a worldview is incomprehensive and incoherent. The partiality of a worldview shows that a vision of the intended world is relative to the contextualization of ideas and it is in a process of making, or a dynamic event to predicate an intended world. In other words, it is necessary to emphasize the actuality of the viewpoint of the intended world insofar as taking into account the past and the future, or temporal elements of a worldview, together with the explanation of historical cause and the prediction of future effects are realized or defined here and now. Because of the actuality of here and now, a worldview is an inclusive viewpoint of everything, but it does not include the self-evident structure of an overall viewpoint.

The actuality of a worldview also implies that such vision presupposes the ontology of reality as a flux of events. It means that reality exists in changing phenomena which the viewer, either an individual or the collectivity, tries to interpret. Such an event is an accumulation of reflection on antecedent events and its projection on subsequent ones. The interpretation of the past and the future occurrences shows that

³⁹³ Kakol 2002: 209-210.

³⁹⁴ Kakol 2002: 208, 215.

the viewer of reality prefers to articulate the meaning of reality by means of such changing events than to establish a permanent system of the whole. Subsequently, this preference shows the primacy of becoming over being, processes over things and events over structures. In other words, the primacy has affinity with the expression of both instrumental and intrinsic values. Given these changing events as the expressions of reality one should understand that a worldview is a dynamic vision of the intended world and it articulates the context of an axiological standpoint. A worldview includes inherently value judgements.³⁹⁵ Given such axiological content, a worldview inevitably becomes a transcended framework for the judgement of true knowledge and behavioral expression as if it appeared as the objective paradigm of any interpretation of meaningful objects.

Nevertheless, one will encounter a paradox if one critically evaluates such an explanation of the worldview presented above. On the one hand, a worldview represents a transcendent view about the intended reality; hence it guarantees the objectivity of the all-inclusive system of value judgement. Moreover, it provides norms for human behaviour as a stable reference of meaning for determining the ethical judgements of good and bad. On the other hand, standardization will be impossible unless one accepts that the axiological system itself is not self-consistent. If one retains the self-consistency for the worldview, then the all-inclusive vision of reality will turn into the exclusive worldview. If this occurs, then the exclusive worldview will represent the self-evident, bounded, and it is incapable of explaining any incoming changing events because of the virtual boundaries itself. The other paradox is the transcended worldview ignores the existence of other visions of intended reality which also generate their respective coherent systems of value. The claim that the transcended worldview includes overall incoming events and can provide any explanation for the meaning of any occurrence disregards the competency of other systems of value which can offer the credible judgement of meaningful events. If this claim holds, then the worldview becomes ideological, and it appears self-contradictory. The claim of all-inclusiveness or offering universal explanations becomes a particular understanding of reality and incompetency to explain all realities.

Hence Kakol suggests that one should take a complex paradoxical approach to the understanding of worldviews. The worldview represents a transcended vision of an intended world, yet it embodies an immanent vision of reality to the extent that reality itself exists in a contextualization of a spatial and temporal setting. The immanent vision will ground the transcended worldview so that it is no longer the “view from nowhere,” but it applies a vision from the contextualized system of value.³⁹⁶ The second paradoxical approach is the sense of the permanent appearance of reality as it is depicted by a worldview against the asymmetrical and accumulative events occurring in

³⁹⁵ Kakol 2002: 209.

³⁹⁶ Kakol 2002: 209.

reality. The asymmetrical and accumulative events represent the process of ‘*becoming*’ which is random and somewhat arbitrary, or in affirmative terms, they are occurring in a flux. In other words, the intention to generate a coherent system of value which is permanent and objective and the tendency to preserve a subjective approach to the changing events go hand in hand.³⁹⁷ The production of a coherent system versus an incomplete explanation of asymmetrical events also asserts the third paradox. The first discloses the series of views of reality which tries to provide clear and distinct or best explanations to the changing events. Nevertheless, these best explanations convey the unlimited or infinite reasons which make the best explanations indefinite and aimless. Thus the best explanations respond to changing events with a coherent system of values to discontinue the further explanation of the system of values as if by the more rendering propositions, the more comprehensive the system of values would be. It is necessary to let the vision of the intended world remain incomplete to the extent that the incompleteness of the vision brings the viewer to the awareness of emptiness, or silence.³⁹⁸ The awareness of emptiness and silence affirms an individual’s experience in being involved in a system of values. The involvement of individual experience in the system of values subsequently clarifies how the system of values functions in encompassing knowledge and behaviour to meaningful ends.³⁹⁹ This argument leads to a pragmatic approach to the vision of an intended world. Here pragmatic reason also articulates emptiness as openness which is the last paradox of the vision, that is, the affirmation of other systems of values.

This last paradox has to do with the existence of coherent systems of values. A worldview can be regarded as a universal vision of the intended world, yet this universality is not really an impartial and indifferent approach to the system of values. Universality is particular by means of the contextualization of the vision. One can conceive of this paradox in the context of an intercultural approach. This approach proposes that the phenomena of a worldview be conceived as a crossroads (*le carrefour*) of any other coherent systems of value. In other words, one should accept that worldviews appear as incommensurable visions of the intended world; yet at the same time they are interconnected with each other. This interconnection determines the further development of the very constitutive system of instrumental and intrinsic value.⁴⁰⁰

These four paradoxes of worldview are the reasons why Kakol concludes that a worldview is either complete or a self-consistent system of the vision of the intended world, yet not both.⁴⁰¹ The involvement of the individual experience of the owner of a

³⁹⁷ Kakol 2009: 210.

³⁹⁸ Kakol 2002: 212-213.

³⁹⁹ Cf. Hoffman 2002: 208.

⁴⁰⁰ Kakol 2002: 211; cf. van Binsbergen 2003a.

⁴⁰¹ Kakol 2002: 215-216.

worldview or the viewer is an indication of this inference. The worldview presupposes the experience of an individual viewer to conceive of the meaning of the intended object. If this experience is abandoned one will find out that a worldview is merely a theory, regardless of its influence to guide the viewer to grasp meaning from the system of values. The more significant reason for the involvement of an individual's experience of the worldview is the creativity of the viewer in producing any expressions of meaning in mind and behaviour. Otherwise, the worldview can restrict all possible expressions of meaning, or according to Kakol, represents only "the grand narrative" in Lyotard's terms⁴⁰² which is true for the sake of itself.

Indeed, synchronically a worldview can represent open or closed systems of values, flexible or rigid visions of the interpretation of any meaningful objects, as well as an incommensurable or communicative system of the intended world. Kakol reminds us that the open system is complete, but not self-consistent. Meanwhile, the closed system is incomplete, but self-consistent.⁴⁰³ Either of these types diachronically represents worldviews as a holistic vision which covers the past and the future. Yet Kakol insists on an open system because it is the embodiment the positive form of the process-like and the negative form of the vision of emptiness (*sunyata*). Moreover, the positive vision of the intended world is more inclusive than the closed one to the extent that it recognizes the ongoing process of dialectics. The ongoing process of dialectics is comprised of a series of successive accumulations of thesis and antithesis, yet paradoxically avoids the establishment of a synthesis as the final result of such a process. The final reason why the open worldview is preferred over the closed one is that it promotes the creativity of value expression rather than the selection of a fit vision into the framework of a values system. Thus, the open worldview always puts process and emptiness as necessary implications. Given these implications, the open worldview gives the theoretical form of the vision its social base. In other words, a worldview cannot be separated from its life-form and life-expression. Before I proceed to the next subsection, it is necessary to highlight some of the constitutive properties of worldview which emerged from the discussion above. First, a worldview is an all-inclusive vision of the intended world by means of human understanding. Yet the all-inclusivity of this vision implies a *general* approach rather than *universality*. It is because a worldview is a "local model of reality and for reality" (in Geertz's terms).⁴⁰⁴ Hence, a worldview represents a partial approach to cosmology and ontology. Second, a worldview comprises paradoxical yet complementary and reciprocal approaches. They are the all-inclusive vis-à-vis partial vision; the permanent, objective system of value to be completed by the flexible subjective one, and the incommensurability of worldview implied by the interactive model of the vision of the world. Based on these paradoxes,

⁴⁰² Kakol 2002: 216.

⁴⁰³ Kakol 2002: 216.

⁴⁰⁴ Kakol 2002: 218.

there are two groups of worldviews. The first group is the open worldview which represents a complete vision of the intended world, yet it is not a self-consistent one. The second worldview is a closed worldview which embodies an incomplete vision or value system, yet it represents a self-consistent one. Still both groups represent the basic opposite pair of the vision of the intended world.

Despite all these paradoxical approaches, a worldview is a form of understanding in which rationality, in whatever its expression, makes the attempt to use reason in order to find out the meaning of existence. Through classification, the spatial and temporal contextualization and the use of causality, worldviews explicate the development of “the self,” either for individuals or collectives to achieve their respective ends. Thus, worldviews employ understanding and knowledge not for the sake of themselves. They are dedicated to a certain purpose or a pragmatic reason of existence. Hence in some forms of worldviews, the vision of the intended world represents the preferred value system as the direction for individuals and a society to follow as their purpose in life that transforms the arbitrary and asymmetrical events of life into a meaningful paradigm. Given these pragmatic and direction oriented reasons, the integration of individuals into the larger scheme of the coherent system of values, as well as the creative expression of individuals to produce their own subjective meaning and to influence that larger scheme, are inevitably two necessary implications of a worldview.

5.3 Western and Eastern worldview?

One can say that a worldview is “a universal yet partial vision of the intended whole.”⁴⁰⁵ At the same time, one can argue that in fact a worldview is a universal vision with a local content. This means that a worldview never presents true universalism insofar as it is always an expression of a cultural contextualization. Nevertheless, this argument expresses a part of our understanding about worldviews. Another part is that our vision of the intended world can go beyond the boundaries of cultural contextualization. If one observes the constitutive elements of a worldview, the paradoxical approaches for instance, one will find out, that at the same time a worldview represents a localized vision of world and it still passes over the limits of a contextualized mindset.

A worldview is also a theory of the world which provides shareable visions, thus it is communicable to other similar forms. This is because the intrinsic content of a worldview is a values system which can be shared among all kinds of vision with the intention of abstracting a meaning from such value system. Otherwise, the existence of different worldviews appears to support the arguments of cultural relativism. Cultural relativists consider the existence of cultures as a self-evident, transcendental system of values, in addition to the mental and material expressions of such coherent values system. Culture in this sense is incommensurable and impossible to share its

⁴⁰⁵ Kakol 2002: 216-217.

constitutive values.⁴⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the argument of cultural relativists reduces the phenomena of culture to a series of *a priori* thoughts. As a result culture is linked to a theoretical viewpoint of the values system, rather than the experience of the expression of the living value in the mental and material expressions of the cultural orientation. The *noema* of culture is the consciousness or *noesis* towards the series of cultural experiences. The culture cannot be reduced to a theoretical approach. The experiential aspect of cultural activity shows the fact that a culture always includes a crossroads, that is, a series of intercultural encounters. An individual's experience at these crossroads puts interpersonal encounters in the first place. Interpersonal encounters occur through trade, the dissemination of religions, and personal exchanges in the arts or intellectual activities. These experiential crossroads of culture determine the appearance of culture as 'life-expressions,' to use Dilthey's term, or 'life-forms,' to use Wittgenstein's terms. Both terminologies highlight the contextualization of culture and presuppose an experiential approach to culture. Hence together with the theoretical approach, the experiential one constructs the expression of the uniqueness of culture. This uniqueness cannot be contested by an external standard which at the same time judges the compatibility between one coherent system of values and the others and the communicability of such intrinsic values with others.

This ontological view of culture one also can apply to the general approach of a worldview. On the one hand, a worldview is a cultural contextualization of an individual or collective vision of the intended world. Given this contextualization we can classify a worldview according to some cultural characteristics. This classification often has to do with the regionalization of culture like the West and the East. On the other hand, the classification does not indicate that each region has adopted a closed vision of the intended world. I agree with Kakol when he writes that the classification of the paradoxical approaches to worldviews does not mean a standardization of the Western type of worldview or the Eastern one. He writes:

*"Finally, I do not think that it is possible to use this classification of views to characterize and differentiate "Western" and "Eastern" worldviews. In my view, these tendencies can be found throughout the world, cutting across all cultures."*⁴⁰⁷

To some extent, it seem right for Kakol to conclude that even though there is a distinction between Western and Eastern characteristics of the worldview, neither can be seen as an open system or the other as closed, one simply cannot infer such a necessarily self-evident separation. Both characteristics, of having an open or a closed system can be either embodied in the Western worldview or in the Eastern worldview. To that extent, any definitive classification of worldviews is only a virtual reconstruction of the vision of the intended world. By the virtual reconstruction, I mean

⁴⁰⁶ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 284f.

⁴⁰⁷ Kakol 2002: 216.

that the vision is a pictorial cognition which is arranged to provide a clear and distinct definition of a Western mind and an Eastern mind. Subsequently, all things derived from the mind concerning these regionalizations are distinguished.

Meanwhile one should also consider that the argument that insists on the distinction between a Western and Eastern worldview is unnecessary also an inconsistent theory. This inconsistency results from the ignorance of specific characteristics of the worldview respectively. It seems to generate a synthesis between the classifications of the qualities of a worldview as a thesis, and the unnecessary attachment of these qualities to a certain worldview as the antithesis. The dialectics of these arguments should not be concluded with a synthesis. It is unnecessary to conclude that a certain worldview embodies a series of self-evident qualities. Instead, such synthesis needs a complementary perspective which suggests a reciprocal relationship that retains the process of dialectics in such a way that the inconsistency of the synthesis turns into necessary output. This argument is the following. The argument of unnecessary differentiation of a worldview is paradigmatically reciprocal with the other one which regards the unique representation of each worldview. The main reason paradigmatic reciprocity should be regarded is that the uniqueness of a worldview is worthy of retaining. To argue that any differentiation is aimless should not eliminate the uniqueness of every representation of worldview. Each worldview respectively maintains a parallel position. If the parallel position is maintained, each worldview is able to be an epistemological foundation which is equally deserving of being expressed in further derivations. That is to say that every worldview has its own way to determine further and detailed realizations in overall domains of the contextualized life of the intended world. The next reason has to do with the avoidance of hegemonic practice whether such hegemony is admitted or not, and whether such practice is actualized by the Western worldview or the Eastern one. If one regards worldviews as being equal among them, then one will find that specifications of the worldview are indispensable properties.

5.3.1 The Western worldview (according to Nishida's review)

As far as the reasons above are concerned, I will proceed with the specifications of the Western worldview and the Eastern worldview. I rely on Nishida Kitaro's account concerning the characteristics of these worldviews.⁴⁰⁸ Nishida's phenomenological approach of worldview starts with analyzing a process of individual cognition or the self-consciousness of an experiential subject in order to understand objective knowledge. The experiential subject in the process of knowing turns into a grammatical one by means of language as the intelligible expression of mind. This transformation

⁴⁰⁸ I take Nishida ideas mainly from his books on *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, 1970 and his *Last Writings* 1949/1987. For studies of his ideas see Dilworth in Nishida 1987, Heisig 2000, Kopf 2002.

articulates the Aristotelian approach, which conceives of the self-fulfillment of the individual (*entelecheia*, *ἐντελέχεια*), that is, to be a rational one. In order to be a rational subject, it implies the objectivity of our mind. Nishida considers this Aristotelian approach the logic of the grammatical subject. Meanwhile, this logic of the grammatical subject involves a predicate as the attribution of such subject. Being transcended together with the grammatical subject, the particular predicate emerges to be the objective attribution for the transcendental subject due to this dialectical process. According to Kant's account, this objective attribute transcends particular qualities so that every rational expression becomes the self-determination of being. Given this self-determination, consequently, our consciousness is able to conceive of the meaning of the intended object (as being in itself) in the framework of such metaphysical attribution of the predicate. Thus, the transcendental subject presupposes logic of the predicate.⁴⁰⁹ Both the grammatical subject and the objective predicate secure the true understanding of being. In other words, they determine the unconditioned categories in order to affirm the true being.

Beginning with these profound directions of the process of understanding, the first as the direction of the grammatical subject and the second as the logic of the predicate, Nishida then regards the experiential subject as the knower who has the intention towards being as the objective things. As the transcendental subject, a concrete knower no longer exists in mental activity; rather, it emerges as the non-being one. Given this kind of self-determination, the dialectical process transforms a concrete self to be the self-autonomous agent. Self-determination also means a self-negation of the experiential or existential self in order to move towards the objective existence of being in itself. By this self-negation, the transcendental subject is able to conceive of the intended world as the extension of the universal.⁴¹⁰ Further concerning the self-negation, Nishida writes:

*Each existential monad originates itself by expressing itself; and yet it expresses itself by negating itself and expressing the world.*⁴¹¹

The negation of the self makes the experiential self abandon itself in order to express knowledge of the objective existence of things. Given such self-negation, the experiential subject transforms from being contingent and particular to being permanent and universal. By this transformation, the transcendental subject emerges as a necessary means to achieve the end, of objective existence or Truth itself. It is only with these necessary means that the self acquires rationality. Aristotelian and Kantian accounts respectively keep this unconditioned in order to maintain the universal as the epistemological foundation of our understanding and knowledge.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Nishida 1987: 57, 62; see Dilworth in Nishida 1987: 3ff.

⁴¹⁰ Nishida 1970: 6.

⁴¹¹ Nishida 1987: 58.

In other words, according to Nishida, the Aristotelian and Kantian approaches to self-determination of objective knowledge bring the standpoint of the universal which includes all particular things. The universal is an unconditioned and impartial ground that determines the objectivity of knowledge, either for the self or other matters. Conversely, the individual will not conceive of its (meaning) being unless it attaches to the universal. Once the idea of being becomes intelligible, the existence of natural things is (re)constructed in order to be no longer subjective but objective.⁴¹²

Nishida considers the Aristotelian grammatical subject and the Kantian logic of the predicate as the approaches to affirm being by denying the concrete and subjective things. By this identification, Nishida indicates that a metaphysical standpoint such as these approaches presuppose cultural contextualization. The contextualization he describes in following argument.

“The Monads are thus co-originating, and form the world through their mutual negation. The monads are the world’s own perspectives; they form the world interexpressively through their own negation and affirmation.”⁴¹³

Nishida’s account (which refers to Leibniz’s account of ontology) above reveals the profound implication of the contextualization of the metaphysical approach to being. Nishida put the intelligible world in the framework of the interconnection between subjective thoughts. The nomads, he mentions, deny their respective subjectivity for the sake of understanding objective existence. Together they intend to apprehend the meaningful world by means of the mutual negation of experiential subjectivity. The result of such self-negation is the emergence of a universal being in its true sense. With such an argument, Nishida understands the achievement of the objectivity of knowledge as the production of shareable understanding about the intended world. In other words, the sociality of the rational self is a supportive formation of the universal beside the single rational self. In this sense, my argument obtains the true and objective judgement for the vision of the intended world.

Returning to the Aristotelian and Kantian theories of the affirmation of being, Nishida indicates the preferential approach of ultimate being manifested in the Western vision of the intended world. He adds:

“The unique reality of Parmenides was the ultimate being. ... The former (the Western approach – mine) was an ultimate affirmation,....”⁴¹⁴

The preferential approach of the ultimate affirmation of being entails the negation of the subjective self, or in Nishida’s own terms, the concrete subjectivity. Given such process of dialectics between the concrete self against transcendental subjectivity, the synthesis maintains the construction of the objective criteria of being. Nishida concludes that such

⁴¹² Cf. Nishida 1970: 245. *“Science universally denies the subjective; the ‘physical world’ is constructed thereby.”*

⁴¹³ Nishida 1987: 58.

⁴¹⁴ Nishida 1970: 240.

a process of dialectics as the ultimate affirmation by means of the negation (or denial) of the real self.⁴¹⁵ Consequently, such negation of the real self or the physical world, which are particulars, determines the (re)construction of the objective representation of the universal world.

5.3.2 The Eastern Worldview (according to Nishida's review)

Nevertheless, such metaphysical vision of the ultimate affirmation of being and the construction of universality does not represent the universality of the objective world. There is another approach which theorizes the world in an alternative way. Another metaphysical standpoint, according to Nishida, also starts with the vision of the identity of the rational self, insofar as the rational self is the central issue of the metaphysical viewpoint about human cognition of the reality. Nishida takes into account that the existence of the rational self implies an acting selfhood. With this identity of the acting subject, Nishida writes:

“However, I think that we can say that the true self is an acting self, and that the true reality is the object of the acting self. We realize our self by living and acting in this world. That which resists our action, which conflicts with us, is the truly objective. It is something about which we can do nothing at all, for it truly transcends us.”⁴¹⁶

One should focus on Nishida's following claim: *“We realize our self by living and acting in this world.”* Realizing the world is equivalent to living and to acting in this world. Given this sense, Nishida implies that thinking is doing something which is experiencing life and acting within it. This implication indicates another version of negation. The knowing subject or the rational selfhood is not characterized only by the quality of being transcendental and of following the judgement of objective existence. Nishida argues that the identity of the transcendental subject and the unconditioned judgement of the universal are the synthesis of the dialectical process of subjective and collective understanding. Instead, the rational selfhood necessarily implies the reversed movement from the transcendental subject back into the experiential or the empirical selfhood. This reverse movement towards the experiential subject is the next phase of self-negation. This Nishida refers to himself as *“the contradictory identity of the self.”* It is something which leads the known to the experiential understanding of the subject. In other words, the rational selfhood acquires its understanding not by staying in the quality of the pure objectivity of the universal.⁴¹⁷ The understanding is the action to

⁴¹⁵ Nishida 1987: 83. He writes *“If we conceive of the self in the direction of the grammatical subject, of objectivity, then existential subjectivity disappears, as in the case of Spinoza's concept of Substance. If we conceive of it in the opposite direction, that of the field of the predicate, it ultimately becomes an absolute Reason, as in the case of Fichte's development of Kant's philosophy. There too the real self disappears.”*

⁴¹⁶ Nishida 1970: 1.

⁴¹⁷ Nishida 1987: 99. I will discuss this account further regarding this quotation when I discuss the formulation of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview later in the final chapter in this part.

experience the known in the experiential sphere of individual cognition. Otherwise, true objectivity of the universal cannot be intelligible and shareable at all. Nishida reminds us if the unconditioned universality is preserved or if our vision of the intended world is excluded from a contextualized experience and action, “*we can do nothing at all, for it truly transcends us.*” In other words, a worldview implies an experiential approach, that is, to know the world is to act or to view it integrated within such a contextual world.

Thus, the conception of the rational self cannot ignore the reattachment to the experiential self. This return to the contextualized subject in a frame of space and time, or in history is a necessary condition in order to understand natural things in themselves. The consciousness in this respect is the determination of the intelligible world and the acknowledgement that the *noema* exists for itself and in itself;⁴¹⁸ that such existence is not completely determined by the *noesis*. Consciousness must go in both directions, to the *noema* in order to perceive and to conceive the world, and in the direction of the *noesis*, in order to understand that such existence is defined by a specific standpoint or an interested valuation of the *noema* itself made by our thought. In other words, the negation of the transcendental subject emerges as an affirmation to the true existence of natural things. The existence of natural things is not the result of the adjustment or even the appropriation of them into the framework of universality. The determination of their existence is due to internal valuation; not by means of the valuation of external judgement into their particularity. Thus, the negation of the *noesis* or the rational self emerges necessarily in order to allow the true self-determination of natural things. Without such a process of self-determination, we would only accept that there was the objective or universal existence of the intended world. If we only admit such universality, we will find out that such existence is transcendent and we can understand nothing about it. Given such negation, the *noema* keeps in itself the individual identity; or it has its actuality of existence. In other words, the bi-negation of the existential self followed by the rational one enables our minds to maintain an immanent demonstration of natural things. The things in themselves display their respective actuality without any intervening characterizations into such demonstration by our evaluation.⁴¹⁹

Consequently, Nishida takes into account that the juxtaposition of the existential self and the knowing subject towards the *noema* or the intended world occurs for the sake of the actuality of reality in itself. The result of this is that contradictory pairs of the self emerge in the contradictory identity of the self. By the contradictory identity of the self, Nishida means that the actuality of things including the selfhood presumes the matrix of subjectivity and objectivity, both of which are simultaneously perceived by our cognition. He writes:

“The self-conscious self, I will repeat here, is neither something merely instinctive, a grammatical subject, a mere self determination of the world’s

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Nishida 1970: 7.

⁴¹⁹ Nishida 1970: 244.

spatiality; nor something merely rational, a field of transcendental predicates, a mere self-determination of the world's temporality. It is the contradictory identity of objectivity and subjectivity, of the particular and the universal, of space and time. It is historical formative and volitional, a dynamically vector of the world. As its own uniquely individual and volitional self, in this paradoxical structure of inverse polarity and biconditionality, the self faces the absolute by transcending itself outwardly, and simultaneously, faces the absolute by transcending itself inwardly."⁴²⁰

Here Nishida states the interconnection of subjective and objective vectors, the juxtaposition of time and space, and the particular and the universal. These juxtapositions should be read as simultaneous reciprocity though they are paradoxical to each other. The type of thought presupposes an immediate reciprocal reference; that if one thinks of the one side immediately one reciprocally refers to the contrasting other.

Given these matrixes, the contextualization of the temporal dimension of reality is indispensable in Nishida's theory. The implication of the temporal dimension of reality within understanding reveals the inherent potentiality within the existence and action of being.⁴²¹ Time in this respect is not only the successive sequence of historical occurrence from the past, present and future. Nishida considers three layers of temporal dimension: the linear (the continuity qua continuity), the circular (the continuity qua discontinuity) and the dialectical time (the continuity qua continuity qua discontinuity).⁴²²

The first has to do with the unrepeatable and irreversible order of time. The present occurrence cannot return to the previous sequence. This sequence is objectively given in linear demonstrations, the factuality (to use Heidegger's term) or, to use Nishida's term, the *noematic* determination.

The second layer to some extent articulates the factual presentation of current time, which is irreversible in the first layer. Yet this layer goes deeper than the first. The circular layer demonstrates "the instantaneous present without dimension"⁴²³ of temporality. This means that the temporal dimension is a duration, or it is always the present. The past or the future cannot exist unless one experiences them respectively as the present. This second layer is the noetical determination of reality, or it occurs in our thoughts. Such noetical determination does not consider the causal relation with the previous occurrence, while the noematic determination does. The instantaneous present or the duration also articulates the non-relative present.⁴²⁴ Here the time dimension is also unconditionally determined by the past. This is like an endurance of existence in the middle of a movement of sequential time. Each phase of reality, the past, the present

⁴²⁰ Nishida 1987: 99.

⁴²¹ Nishida 1970: 3.

⁴²² Kopf 2002: 229.

⁴²³ Kopf 2002: 230.

⁴²⁴ Kopf 2002: 231.

or the future, is the potential self-determination which will be readily going to project the formed *noema* into the forming one in the depth layer of time.

In other words, the *noematic* determination or the linear conception of time represents external time, or the given world which is always moving and changing progressively and irreversibly in the successive order of historical occurrences. It also designs the originality and the causality of temporality. Meanwhile, the *noetic* or the circular conception of time actualizes the internal time, or the subjective side of the durable experience of the temporal dimension of life, or the non-relative present.⁴²⁵ It is subjective to the extent that it is our cognition that designs the intended world. These two layers do not exist independently. The *noematic* determination, the linear time does not exist distinguished from the *noetic* or the circular layer of time. Each layer being independent does not have an effect on being. Rather, their reciprocity determines the existence of being and together they form a dialectical time, which is the third layer, or the depth of the signification of being. Furthermore, such dialectical processes realize the potentiality of being to the actuality of experienced reality. Nishida describes such a third layer of time in the following quotation. He writes:

*“In the physical world, time is irreversible. Each pulsation of life is a unique event in time, which is an order of duration. Each pulsation of life, each formation of life, perishes, while the organism or the biological world endures. In this fashion the biological world is always moving, from the formed to the forming, within the structure of the contradictory identity of the many and the one. It is an infinite process of transformation. Living beings are dynamically formative, organic. That is why the biological world is conceivable in teleological terms.”*⁴²⁶

Each pulsation of life, the past, the present and the future, in itself is the self-determined presence. It signifies the sequential movement of the historical presence of being. These internal and external layers of time should coincide so that being maintains its respective existence in the physical as well as the biological world. The reciprocal relationship between these layers also affects the self-determination of the ends of every being. One will fail to grasp the existence of being unless one contemplates the teleological self-determination of being. The achievement of the ends in turns transforms being from the formed into the forming, and this transformative movement will be the reasons for the intelligibility of being in physical or biological manifestations.

The dialectical conception of time, therefore, becomes a key to understanding how the true existence of being is conceivable. Such dialectical process produces the synthesis, the final output of reciprocity. Nevertheless, what is significant in Nishida's account of dialectics is that he does not consider the synthesis, the output of the dialectical process as the final phase of mental activity or of individual cognition. He

⁴²⁵ Nishida 1970: 3.

⁴²⁶ Nishida 1987: 50.

posits the idea of “*continuity qua continuity of discontinuity*”⁴²⁷ in order to explain the dynamic actuality of being which presupposes the continuous creativity in both manifestations, the internal expression and the external realization of such internal potentiality.

The synthesis of “the continuity qua the continuity of discontinuity” in Nishida’s account represents the contradictory self-identity. Such identity deals with paradoxical sides and it secures the reciprocity between both. If one does not continue the synthesis with the on-going reciprocity of the opposite theses, then one will find that those opposite theses remain in contradiction to each other. Nishida writes, “*When the world of subject-object negates itself, the world of subjectivity and objectivity opposes each other....*”⁴²⁸ At the same time he asserts why one must maintain dynamic reciprocity between the opposite or paradoxical theses. Furthermore, one should no longer consider the opposite as the significant condition which constructs such unity. One should move forward to consider the dynamic world of contradictory self-identity as the manifestation of the self-determination of being. In other words, the unification of subject-object, immanent-transcendent, changing and irreversible should be conceived as the “un-mediated unity.”⁴²⁹ By such unity, each opposite side does not take the determinant role which constructs the unification. It is not subjectivity which mediates the unification as one of the opposite thesis; alternatively objectivity does the same from the other side. Rather, together they simultaneously presuppose the existence of each other because of such dynamic unification. In this respect, one should regard such un-mediated unity to be the metaphysical vision for individual cognition. Given the unification of contradictory identity, human cognition presupposes the epistemic foundation for a theory of existence or an ontological standpoint.

I need to focus a little longer in this discussion in order to infer some of Nishida’s constitutive arguments about the vision of the intended world. The un-mediated unification of the contradictory self-identity represents the idea of dynamism and creativity as the constitutive characters of being. Being in this sense is equal with the metaphysical self. On the existence of such a self, Nishida writes:

⁴²⁷ Kopf 2002: 225; Nishida 1970: 7 about the idea of the continuity of discontinuity. “*But the universal which determines the individual in this instance still must have a contrary determination in respect to the determination of the concrete universal which can be considered in terms of continuity in the sense of the individual determining the universal. Indeed, the concrete universal includes the universal which determines the individual, i.e. it is the ‘universal of universals.’ This is the meaning of the idea of the determination of the universal of nothingness. The universal which determines the individual determines itself by taking the absolute negation as mediation. That which exists in it ‘lives by dying.’ i.e. it is the continuity of discontinuity.*”

⁴²⁸ Quoted in Kopf 2002: 232. In this section, Kopf criticizes Nishida for employing the paradoxical terms, and he mentions the cause is “the seemingly all-pervasive dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity.” I do not agree with his critique. Kopf seems to miss Nishida’s point that such dichotomy is an inherent part of the unification, and that unification itself is indispensable in this sense. The unification itself is the articulation of the dynamic and creative vision of life.

⁴²⁹ Nishida 1970: 8.

“The self must always be understood as dynamic, as consciously active. But the active self’s existence is to be found neither in what merely spatial as physical matter, nor in what is nonspatial, or temporal—in the so-called mental, or mere noesis. The self is a dynamic spatial-temporal vector: it is creatively active as a self-determination of the absolute present. By transcending the merely transcendental forms of space and time, it exists in the paradox of its actively reflecting the world. This has the form of a contradictory identity, the dynamic equivalence of knowing and acting.”⁴³⁰

Individual cognition is capable of achieving such constitutive qualities, the dynamic, the active and the inclusive matrix of the subject-object. Such qualities contribute significantly in Nishida philosophy. Nishida clearly theorizes with the use of all the terminologies that the cognitive foundation of the existence of being is nothingness. He does not intend to articulate either the absolute emptiness, or the vacuum. He also does not describe the anomalous existence, or the anomie. The nothingness in his account is the result of self-negation of the universal, the transcendental or the objective self in metaphysical terms. The transcendental self or the universal itself is the result of the self-negation of the existential subject which refers to experiential selfhood. Thus, there are two levels of negation as the logical operation. The first one negates the experiential self in accordance with the direction of the grammatical subject and the logic of the predicate. The second one reveals the negation of the common foundation of objective knowledge. That is why Nishida considers nothingness as the formless form, the nonduality; it is something that expresses “the absolute place (*basho*) of irresolvable opposition”⁴³¹ of the two polarized sides. Thus, nothingness is an epistemic foundation which does not nullify our existence; yet it subsists in our life. This is because of the creativity and dynamism of the virtual place on which the existence of being appears as the transcendence as well as the immanence or as the unification which makes the created the creating. In other words, the two levels of the self-negation signify the absolute negation which results in the reciprocal affirmation of the asymmetric selves, subject and object.

Through this vision one can then perceive Nishida’s conception of the Eastern worldview. He suggests “*the absolute negation-qua-affirmation*”⁴³² in order to signify what can be typically considered the Eastern worldview. With this argument, Nishida means self-negation in itself is at the same time the self-affirmation, and this simultaneous consciousness is inherently embodied in the individual cognition.⁴³³ This simultaneous process of the epistemic cognition of reality entails the self-determination of the existence of the self. The self in this respect, again, is the expression of the contradictory identity of subjectivity, the experiential and existential mode, and

⁴³⁰ Nishida 1987: 84.

⁴³¹ Dilworth 1987: 6.

⁴³² Nishida 1970: 7.

⁴³³ Nishida 1987: 50.

objectivity, as well as the transcendental and rational one. In the face of nothingness, the self is not the metaphysical void. The self determines its own existence by the self-affirmation of such nothingness. Given this logical operation, Nishida also considers nothingness in a logical principle, that is, “*the logic of affirmation through the absolute negation.*” Such logic argues that the absolute being in itself immediately contains the absolute negation.⁴³⁴ This immediateness is inevitable because this operation makes absolute being itself conceivable. The same analogy is implied to the understanding of the existence of being. Our being become intelligible because our cognition affirms its existence itself through self-negation.

5.3.3 The critical evaluation

In other words, Nishida finds “nothingness” as the metaphysical ground of Eastern visions of the intended world, while the West presumably prefers to conceive of “being” than of ‘nothingness’⁴³⁵. The Eastern worldviews mentioned in his theory are the Indian, the Chinese and the Japanese, the South and the East Asian. He also classifies the West as the Greek, the Roman and modern European civilizations.⁴³⁶ If one critically evaluates these types of worldviews, one will find that Nishida suggests both affirmation and negation as the constitutive elements of an epistemic vision about the world. This epistemic vision provides a way of thinking that focuses on the division of things, such as the belief in the opposition between the East and the West, as though they were completely separated even in the domain of thought. The East and the West are also treated as if there is incommensurability between these two intellectual domains. Yet the characteristics of the Eastern worldview are not intelligible unless one considers the Western one. The more one believes in the opposition between the East and the West, the less one will understand the unique characteristics of the human intellectual domain. Nishida does not promote the distinct division between the East and

⁴³⁴ Nishida 1987: 83 cf. Dilworth’s interpretation of this type of logical operation, compared with the one of Nagarjuna’s logic of the four position of *+I*, *-I*, *+I and -I*, and *not (+I and -I)*. According to this kind of logic all formulations return to the same basic structure of biconditionality, that is, *+I*, *-I*, or *(-I and +I)*. In the linguistic phrases the structure of biconditionality is “is and yet is not.” Symbolically, they are explained by the hypothetical logic of $+I \equiv -I$, that is, *+I* if, and only if *-I*, or the nirvana (*+I*) if, and only if, *samsara* (*-I*), *samsara* (*-I*) if, and only if, Nirvana (*+I*). Or into interpret the Nishida logic, the formulation emerges as the (absolute) self-affirmed being (*+I*) if, and only if, the (absolute) self-negation (*-I*), the (absolute) self-negation (*-I*) if, and only if, the (absolute) self-affirmed being (*+I*). Dilworth 1987: 130-131.

⁴³⁵ This does not mean that the western philosophy does not interest at all to elaborate nothingness. For example the existentialist approach by Sartre indicates the elaboration of nothingness, see Sartre 1969 and Heidegger 1959 cf. other exposition of Nothingness in the Western philosophy see Luijpen 1971:42f.

⁴³⁶ See Nishida 1970 especially part II chap. III; cf. Dilworth’s commentary about the logic of the East in Dilworth 1987: 129-130. I think it is better to some extent to accept Nishida’s argument regarding the typical characteristics of the logic of the East, or the logic of the concrete and one of the West’s logic of the abstract. Yet, I also think it is possible to go beyond this comparative study of the metaphysical account.

the West. Instead, by articulating “affirmation and negation” as the logical operation, he intend to assert the dynamic vision of the intended world. According to his vision, the affirmative operation in a proposition is intelligible as long as one immediately presupposes the operation of a negative one. These logical operations are complementary with each other insofar as they construct a constitutive understanding of a logical proposition or that of the common sense of thought. Moreover, given this constitutive character, the affirmation and negation cannot be perceived separately. They are part of the logical correlation of reciprocity. It means that between affirmation and negation, there is a way that we can conceive of the truth value of a proposition. Traditional Aristotelian logic explains the square correlation of reciprocity, that is, the affirmative to the negative, and the universal to the particular. This square opposition is mainly categorized by “the contrast” and “the contradictory.” Both types of reciprocity project the dynamic comprehensiveness of the truth value of our constructive and systematized thought.

Thus, Nishida depicts the complete vision of the world embodied in either the Eastern or the Western worldview. This vision cannot be perceived if one strictly distinguishes ways of thought which keeps the prevailing side and which eliminates the undesired one. He also argues that strict distinction and differentiation between polarized sides are necessary as the “real” logical operation employed in analyzing the intended world. Instead, they are the product of thought articulated for the sake of the clear and distinct qualities of our proposition. If one were to fail to conceive of this constitutive function of the logical operation, then one would be unaware of the dynamic and creative face of reality in every manifestation.

Nishida’s argument above suggests the possibility of an epistemic foundation in the form of a worldview and a principle of thought. Nevertheless, he maintains his argument by providing cross-cultural analyses of such metaphysical theories of the intended world. He does not construct his argument of the logic of the East only out of Eastern viewpoints and theories. Instead, he seeks in building his arguments consultation with some European mystical theologians such as Erigena, Eckhart, Boehme and Cusanus.⁴³⁷ His cross-referent study of the metaphysical vision of the intended world actually confirms the fact that there is no such thing as a purely Eastern or Western worldview, and any derivations from such a worldview, i.e. the logic of the worldview. Nishida seems to show this actual condition, whether he intends it or not. There is also such a thing as the permanent vision of the intended world as if it were a certain model of systemized and structured thought that is frozen solid.

For this case, one can confer with Karl Mannheim’s argument concerning social movement based on the fact that such historical change presupposes dynamic social knowledge. The dynamic development of the spatial framework itself emerges as a

⁴³⁷ Dilworth in Nishida 1987: 130.

movement occurs among individuals or people who share in a worldview. Mannheim indicates that there are two kinds of social movements.⁴³⁸ The first type of social movement is horizontal mobility which occurs among people with different backgrounds. This mobility does not replace the social status of the people so that there is no substantial change in a worldview. The interconnected people retain their respective viewpoint of the world as it is implied in their traditions. The second type of social movement is vertical mobility of people. Cross-cultural encounters also affect the vertical movement of people, that is, between social stratifications. This movement results in a development of social stratification, and consequently a transformation of tradition. The development, as well as the transformation of a social class and its tradition, is a projection of those in the epistemic level, the people's worldview. It is inevitable that in this sense, a social change becomes a dynamic response as well as an interpretation to *understand* reality in accordance with a reconstruction of the worldview. The point is that these social movements reveal the dynamic quality of a worldview. This dynamicity of worldview refers to the conception that a culture itself has to do with a dynamic and creative development of all aspects of reality. According to the perspective of temporal succession, a culture is never a self-evident and bounded embodiment of the organized and systematized world or the cosmic reality. Here, one finds the involvement of historical aspects with either horizontal or vertical mobility in the development of society. This is the reason why Mannheim believes that knowledge presupposes not only the contextualization of thought but also a temporal progression or a history.

Back to the categorization of the Eastern and the Western worldview, one can also view these classifications according to such horizontal and vertical movement. The result is that each worldview can no longer be thought of as being original and pure. The East and West have interacted with each other for ages through trade or the exchange of cultural artifacts, and cultural ideas, including the dissemination of various religions. The historical facts of such exchanges support the improvement as well as the development of these metaphysical visions. There have been several indispensable anthropological and historical studies that have shown these facts, in the Asian context with Denys Lombard's detailed volumes on Java Island's ancient culture and modern society.⁴³⁹ I think the elaboration of the sociology of knowledge has shown that all social and cultural institutions, or any social and cultural systematizations as well as structures, improve and develop along with intercultural encounters and exchanges; that there are no such things as the homogenous and pure form of cultural institution or systemized structure of social life. That one form of social system affects the other has been the case since even ancient times, either in the Northern or the Southern part of our earth. Even though Nishida has shown a typical Eastern metaphysical vision, such a

⁴³⁸ Mannheim 1979/1991: 7-8.

⁴³⁹ Lombard 1990/1995 vol 1-3.

vision does not only originate from the contextualized place. Every metaphysical vision, regardless the profundity it has, cannot secure itself from any external influences and keep itself from the internal self-determination to improve or to develop “a new expression” of such social institutions. Thus, given this dynamism and creativity concerning the improvement and development of cultural institutions, including its metaphysical aspects, one only indicates the terms “Eastern” or “Western” and “Northern” or “Southern” in order to locate where such social and cultural institutions first emerge. Such identifications are also used to explain how the contextualization of the metaphysical vision in a cultural institution occurs. In short, the locating terms is only an analysis of the context, and the context does not immediately determine the content of the metaphysical vision. In Wittgenstein’s theory the location is the life-form, “*lebensform*”; or in Dilthey’s account, it is “life-expression.”

Meanwhile, it is not Nishida if he does not employ his way of thinking in building up his arguments. His idiosyncrasy clearly defines that even the logic of the East should be formulated in such a way that the other non-Eastern audiences can also understand the logic. Moreover, his argument uses a way of thinking which belongs to the Western standard of logical formulation. On the one hand, as the discourse of non-European philosophies, which have pointed out in the part I of this thesis in Carine Defoort and Rein Raud’s debates and Borz-Bornstein’s discussions,⁴⁴⁰ Nishida’s argument does not reflect how Eastern people typically think of the intended world and produce their respective knowledge. Although Nishida wrote his books in the Japanese language, his philosophy is another reflection of the analytical and critical “tradition” of European philosophy. Moreover, Nishida also uses dialectical thought which one usually finds in modern philosophy.

On the other hand, Nishida uses the European tradition of philosophical thought in order to define the unique approaches of the Asian way of the metaphysical vision of the intended world.⁴⁴¹ Meanwhile, he is still aware of the detailed approach one can find in each contextualized location in Asian philosophy, such as Indian, Chinese and Japanese philosophy or the Buddhist worldview. By doing this, Nishida employs the European philosophical approach for the sake of the intelligibility of such Asian philosophies and worldviews in front of the international audience. Such issues of intelligibility are, for instance, presented in the following argument. Nishida writes:

“But granting that Indian philosophy minimizes the volitional individual to an even greater extent than does Greek philosophy, there is at least a true concept of the negation of the individual. So we have explored the paradox that the individual in fact achieves authentic self-consciousness through realizing its own negation. In Indian philosophy one finds an absolute negation of the individual will. India therefore developed a concept of the religious, and from a perspective that is diametrically opposed to that of the

⁴⁴⁰ Botz Bornstein 2006; Defoort 2001, 2006; Raud 2006a, 2006b.

⁴⁴¹ Dilworth in Nishida 1987: 144 cf Heidegger 1959, Sartre 1969

religion of Israel. Moreover, Indian culture has evolved as an opposite pole to modern European culture. And yet it may thereby be able to contribute to a global modern culture from its own vantage point."⁴⁴²

One can focus on the last sentence of Nishida's argument above. "Yet, it (the Indian philosophy) may thereby be able to contribute to a global modern culture from its own vantage point." Each philosophy and worldview articulates that any form of human thought is capable enough of expressing an understanding of the world from its own standpoint with regard to its unique approach. It is also indispensable to argue that there is no such thing as a powerful system of thought so that it can determine the objectivity of knowledge and our cognition.

In this way, Nishida also reminds us that it is the matter of the reflection of our self-consciousness when one analyses the judgement of the objective knowledge of the intended world. It is our self-reflection of the intended object which determines the content and the extension of our cognition to the objective world.⁴⁴³ This is the reason why Nishida also starts with the issue of self-cognition of the objective world, as it is in the Western philosophical tradition. Therefore, Nishida indeed has adopted a similar starting point as European philosophers and mystical thinkers. Nevertheless, he has a unique approach to discussing such issues in the academic dialectical discourse. By doing this Nishida uncovers the profound "fact" concerning the self-reflection of our cognition of the intended object. The fact is that our cognition of the intended world employs a logical approach, as well as adopting presuppositions as the grounds of our cognition, and that our cognition requires a thinking domain so that one is able to express his/her reflections. Therefore, while critically reviewing Aristotelian and Kantian even Hegelian logic, Nishida does not reject such logic. While he insists on the logic of contradictory identity, he also suggests that Western logic cannot be replaced by his logic. The dialectical discourse may opt out the antithesis or the thesis form and decide to accept the synthesis. The Aristotelian or Kantian logic may no longer be regarded from the viewpoint of the synthesis of logic, let says that it is the Hegelian one. Furthermore, by concluding that nothingness is the Eastern epistemological foundation for self-cognition of the intended object, Nishida also acknowledges the foundation of the Western epistemological foundation, i.e. being or the transcendental substance which maintains the objectivity or the universality of our self-reflection of reality. Despite criticizing scholars who often misunderstand and confine his thinking only to the domain of religious experiences, Nishida accepts that the human mind requires

⁴⁴² Nishida 1987: 94.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Nishida quoted in Dilworth in Nishida 1987: "The philosophical standpoint is that of the self-reflection of the religious self in itself, not looking back to the intelligible world from the religious standpoint, and not making the content of the intelligible world its own content. It is not the standpoint where an absolute self constitute the world, but that of the self-reflection, or of the self-reflection of the absolute self."

many thinking models in order for our thought to become intelligible and understandable.

In this respect, Nishida expresses his “way of thinking” that is the logic of contradictory self-identity, or the logic of nothingness, or non-being in his account. His logic does not emerge as linear dialectics which ignore the “proven wrong” theories (they could be theses or antitheses). Instead, he considers “*the continuity qua the continuity of discontinuity*” dialectics, which is to some extent the dynamic circular logic of my argument. By dynamic circular logic, I conceive of the dynamic affirmation and negation between the internal logic and the external modes of thought. On the one hand, such dynamism in this sense enables self-cognition to accommodate the reciprocal assertion in order to maintain the abstract comprehensiveness of our logic. On the other hand, such dynamism also covers the unique approach of concrete individuality or subjective cognition. In other words, one can conceive of the unique approaches of various forms of logic, the Western and the Eastern; and simultaneously review them from the standpoint that these various forms of logic are the discursive forms of our thinking or serve as the general human capacity to think and to reason.⁴⁴⁴ Such discursive forms are in themselves reciprocally related to each other. Moreover, they are in themselves also complementary.

5.4. Affirmative as quality of a worldview

So far, my consultations with anthropologists, thinkers and philosophers from either the Western or the Eastern tradition of abstract thought have provided me with some substantial characteristics of worldview. I will now analyze these characteristics in order to uncover the logical implications within such characteristics. A discussion of these implications are necessary for preparing the formulation of the affirmation as an epistemological foundation, the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview in the next chapters.

I want to go back to the comparative elaboration of worldview in accordance with Peter Kakol’s exploration of the process philosophy and *Madhyamika*. Kakol’s comparative elaboration finds that a system of the vision of the world cannot be self-complete and self-consistent. It is possible that either of these can be used as the constitutive attribute of a worldview.⁴⁴⁵ To that extent, Kakol’s argument agrees with Nishida’s account of the contradictory identity of the self-determination of the worldview. Thus, an all-inclusive view of the intended object is complete, yet it is itself inconsistent (the open worldview) or it is incomplete yet it is self-consistent (the closed worldview). My focus here is on the pair of the constitutive qualities, the complete and

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Nishida 1987: 126; van Binsbergen 2003a.

⁴⁴⁵ Kakol 2002: 215.

the self-consistent or the incomplete and self-inconsistency which represents the attributions of the worldview. My arguments are presented in following points.

- a. If two qualities of attributes are either both positives, in this case if they are complete and self-consistence, or if they are both negatives, incompleteness and self-inconsistency, then they will contradict each other. Completeness and self-consistency are similar qualities which are positive, while incompleteness and self-inconsistency are similarly negative qualities. One can symbolize such qualities in numerical figures as +1 for the positive and -1 for the negative. If both similar qualities describe the attribution of the worldview, then the symbolical expression is +1 and +1 for the complete and self-consistency, and -1 and -1 for the incomplete and self-inconsistency.
- b. Considering point (a) it can be inferred that two equal qualities of attributes cannot simultaneously exist as the identification of the conceivable system of thought. If these positive or negative attributes retain in order to characterize the true system, then such a system will fall into the infinite series of symmetric theorems which adds nothing to establishing a the coherent system. By providing infinite proofs of the true and coherent system, they cannot judge the coherency from inside the series as such. The proof of such theorems, whether it is true or false, is possible if one takes into account the opposite quality as the attribution of worldview. The opposite side in this respect is the external attribution for the other one.⁴⁴⁶
- c. Thus, the pair of qualities should be one positive and the other negative. The pair of the opposite qualities will provide the complementary attribution to a worldview. The complementary attributions refer to the logic of non-duality. Such logic contains opposite qualities without a further synthesis. They are also equivalent to each other: $+1 \equiv -1$, or +1 if and only if -1.⁴⁴⁷ In this case, “*the complete (+1) system is true if and only if it is self-inconsistent (-1)*,” or vice versa. Such equivalent relationships explain the reciprocity of such attributes as well as clarifying the comprehensiveness of the worldview.
- d. The logic of equivalence says that both sides have the same truth values even though each of them represents opposite qualities. Providing the same truth value, regardless of similar qualities, the opposite attributes construct a coherent vision of the intended world. Simultaneously the attributes combine and construct either the complete or the self-consistent system, but not both at the same time. The construction that entails the system of an all-inclusive vision is true. Consequently, this truth value puts an end to the infinite proofs of the theorems.
- e. This end connotes the condition in which no more arguments can be used to prove the truth of worldview. Such a condition is signified by a freedom from words, or an action of not clinging to the series of arguments. Metaphorically this end is

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. the proof of the incomplete theorems by Kurt Gödel in Hoffman 2002: 201-204.

⁴⁴⁷ Dilworth in Nishida 1987: 130.

called silence or nothingness.⁴⁴⁸ One possible problematic thought may arise, in regard to the output of the logic of equivalence between the contradictory qualities, and their consequences for the attribution of a worldview. If the accumulation of just positive attributes or just negatives ones produces infinite arguments and to the extent that infinite arguments cannot provide the required proof of a coherent and true system of knowledge, then it is necessary to put an end to such an infinite series of theorems. To end the arguments, the series of words metaphorically, is to transform a worldview from discursive arguments into an actual vision of the intended world. In other words, silence or nothingness in this respect reveals the actualization of a worldview in the attitudinal realms. By revealing the worldview in such a realm, one can indicate that a worldview needs no additional system as the proof of its meaningfulness.⁴⁴⁹ If the arguments can be discontinued, then the vision can continue the true explanation of the coherent system itself.

These five arguments above are enough as the starting point to posit ontological and epistemological foundations of our understanding of reality. By ontological foundation I mean the dynamic comprehension of our existence in the world, while an epistemological foundation is a basic cognition of our existence which is beyond the clarification of the positive and negative as the logical operation for the form of our cognition. Both foundations lead our cognition so that one includes an understanding of the opposite yet interactive aspects of the reality. Such understanding affects our cognition to conceive that the reality emerges as simultaneously interactive in itself.

These ontological and epistemological foundations in turn generate an affirmative worldview. An affirmative worldview does not represent the universal vision of the world. Rather, it represents the particular standpoint of the world. If an affirmative worldview claims to be the universal then it becomes the *contradiction in terminus* insofar as such claim will reduce the worldview into a closed system of the intended world; meanwhile a connotation of a worldview in itself is the open one. By emerging as the universal a worldview cannot be affirmative. By maintaining the particular standpoint, an affirmative worldview continues to acknowledge appearances of reality and any representations of models of thought.

Both presuppositions subsequently generate the principle of affirmation, the thinking normative for our mind about the non-dualistic representation of reality. Such a principle regulates our cognition towards the intended world so that one can grasp the meaning of the occurrences which emerge in reality. The regulation of the mind in this sense is an action of self-consciousness towards reality. The self-consciousness depicts the intended world in such a way that it lets the world be actualized as concrete as it is. Our cognition grasps such actualization by emptying and broadening our mind. Otherwise our cognition is only submerged into an infinite series of arguments, as if

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Hoffman 2002: 204; Suzuki 1988: 6.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Suzuki 1988: 16.

such arguments will clarify and distinguish the true existence of reality.⁴⁵⁰ When our mind “stops” providing arguments, it realizes the dialectic time to “enjoy” such actual appearance. If the metaphysical vision or philosophy in general becomes the active enjoyment of reality as such, our metaphysical elaboration in philosophy turns into a concrete experience of reality.⁴⁵¹ And this is the realization of the principle of affirmation.

The last two topics, the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview I want to discuss in detail in order to provide an explanation of affirmation as an epistemological foundation. The discussion will be contextualized by the use of particular cultural orientations. In this case, I look at Chinese thought by examining the ancient Chinese text the *Daodejing* and Sundanese thought by using the *Tritangtu* or the triadic structure of existence. I also want to use the works of 20th CE French philosophers Paul Ricouer and Gilles Deleuze concerning their respective theories of affirmation. This discussion will also consider the intellectual background of the post-structuralist philosophers.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Hoffman 2002: 207, Suzuki 1988: 7 “*It is no abstraction, it is concrete enough and direct, as the eye sees that the sun is, but it is not to be subsumed in the categories of linguistics.*”

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Suzuki 1988: 11.

Chapter 6: An account of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview in the Daodejing and in Sundanese sagacious expressions

If principle of affirmation and the affirmative worldview no longer emerges only as theoretical viewpoints about reality, but also as interactive ways of understanding reality, in this sense, it becomes the practical approaches to reality then this theoretical vision can inspire a formulation of a system of values of life which affects a realization of way of life. The more the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview become the system of values of life, the more they appear as the sagacious knowledge which can inspire an attitude in the domain of praxis. These mental activities in this respect are what both Nishida and Suzuki write concerning taking a wise standpoint toward reality. While Nishida concentrates on the actuality of the metaphysical vision of the reality, Suzuki emphasizes the emergence of the actual expression of philosophy as sagacious activity in daily practice. In discussing *Dao*, Suzuki writes:

“But we must remember that, if the Dao is something highly abstract transcending our daily experiences, it will have nothing to do with the actualities of life. Life as we live it is not concerned with generalization. If it were, the intellect would be everything, and the philosopher would be the wisest man. But as Kierkegaard points out, the philosopher builds a fine palace, but he is doomed not to live in it—he has a shed for himself next door to what he constructed for others, including himself, to look at.”⁴⁵²

The epistemological vision of the world implies the actual experience of life in corresponding with the mental activities as such. To live in the middle of others and to abandon “the fine building of the theoretical vision” expresses the sagacious manner of the wise.

The implication of the actuality of the metaphysical theory of the world at the same time articulates the comprehensive vision of the -meaningful world. Such comprehensiveness distributes the realm of the theoretical standpoint to the practical attitude toward life, from the one of subjectivity or the individual standpoint to objectivity or a common theory. The comprehensive vision also has to do with the analytical approach to daily cognition and the intuitive response to daily occurrence.⁴⁵³ Given this comprehensiveness, the sagacious cognition is not only practical knowledge or *phronesis*. It is theoretical knowledge or *sophia* as well, which also presumes the

⁴⁵² Suzuki 1988: 11.

⁴⁵³ Hansen 1992: 2.

analytical approach to human cognition. The comprehensive vision is analytical since it is related to the application of language as an intelligible expression of an individual or a collective mind.⁴⁵⁴ These kinds of mind articulate the capability to provide reasonable explication of daily phenomena. This is the abstract approach to concrete objects, thus the sagacious cognition presumes theoretical knowledge. The comprehensive vision is also the intuitive interpretation of reality. This refers to *phronesis* as the practical yet uncertain knowledge about life-world. The intuitive approach to the life-world represents ambiguity, multiple standards of explanation and interpretation, which sometimes contradict each other. Sometimes, modern thinkers equate this practical knowledge with the lack of self-consistency or a self-coherent system explaining reality.⁴⁵⁵

Sagacious knowledge recognizes the limitation of the practical approach as if it were not capable of offering a self-consistent and complete system of knowledge. Yet, such limitation reveals an awareness of finitude; furthermore this awareness deals with the basic issues of human cognition, that is, to perceive human beings as mental activities in all forms are the capacity of every subject regardless its contextual background.

Hence, *sophia*, or theoretical thought is related to questions such as: “What does ‘thinking’ mean?” “What does one know?” and “Is there any such thing called ‘knowledge’?” or “What is the true nature of the object one knows?” Meanwhile, *phronesis* or practical, technical and methodological thought responds to questions such as: “How can one perceive or conceive of reality and life as such?” “How can one justify individual cognition?” and “What are the prerequisites of universal knowledge which comprises the “impartial and indifferent quality” of human cognition?” From the Western standpoint, it is the task of science and critical philosophy to establish methodology for the sake of the validity or the justification of objective knowledge. This last issue also connotes the capacity to provide abstraction from our cognition of the concrete. Abstraction proves that subjective cognition can be compared to the others and that by doing so the subjective mind can become familiar with the standard procedure of abstract thought.

These questions indicate that as the thinking subject thinks it perceives and conceives things, as if it were going out of itself for something. This “getting out of” implies that thinking is a reversal movement, that is, “going back to” the subject’s mind. Consequently, this movement makes a thinking subject “being-for-itself” from the condition of “being-in-itself.” In other words, the cognitive subject transforms the object always from the state of “being-for-the subject.” This transformation indicates that an object as such belongs to the knowing subject. Yet this cognitive process leaves the problematic question concerning the quality of knowledge that can be produced.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Hansen 1992: 4.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. van Binsbergen 2008b: 51-52.

The reason I bring up these basic problematic issues is to ask whether or not these epistemological standpoints can be still the root of knowledge which hands down the unresolved matters in the realm of praxis and theory. In the realm of praxis, many can be mentioned including: violent conflicts within a nation, or a region, or between nations and regions wars and genocides, the negative effects of the implementation of science and technology—the side effect for our nature, the degradation of the quality of life, and the crises of meaning generated by secularization, urbanization, or so called developmentalism.⁴⁵⁶ To be included in the realm of the theoretical are the unresolved issues of poverty and of the hegemony of the powerful capitalist economies (i.e. multinational corporations or superpowers) over the rest of the countries in the world. On the one hand, globalization brings dynamic improvement to the understanding of local knowledge and an appreciation of local skills to solve contextual problematic matters. On the other hand, it provides limited space for locals to participate in global decision making in the economic domain, especially concerning trade and political decision making. What is called *global* in this respect appears as hegemonic power, rather than the chance to get involved in the “privilege of global prosperity.”⁴⁵⁷

Thus, the model of the objective knowledge developed by Enlightenment philosophers and the modern scientists seems to ignore “the fact” that the model is only one among many versions of knowledge production. It is important to recognize that there are many types of knowledge production. These other versions cannot simply be categorized under the classification of the magical, mystical or spiritual cognitions of the world, which are performed by shaman or any other specialized elders—because these cognitions cannot fulfill the prerequisites of the *a priori* or objective knowledge.⁴⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the saying of the local figures (such as the guardians and elders in Sundanese context) often posits “the know-nothing” as the indispensable prerequisite of the cognitive activity.⁴⁵⁹ The Western thinkers might classify this foundation of knowledge as the spiritual or mystical domain, or a religious standpoint, rather than *true knowledge*. This is the reason Nishida insists that his logic of nothingness should be perceived as it is in itself despite the fact that his commentators classify it in the religious domain.⁴⁶⁰ The argument of *know-nothing* is an acknowledgement of the finitude of human capability to think. Although Western thinkers claim universal knowledge, such universality only signifies a particular coverage of the known object. In other words, universal knowledge in itself emerges as a particular understanding of the world.

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. van Binsbergen 2008b: 53.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. van Binsbergen 2008b: 55.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. van bisnbergen 2008b: 60, 69.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. van bisnbergen 2008b: 52; Lau 1979; Nishida 1987; Suzuki 1992.

⁴⁶⁰ Nishida 1987: 125.

If one retains universality of knowledge, this model of knowledge appears as ideological or the closed and *frozen* system of knowledge. Thus, when such local sagacious figures insist on *know-nothing*, they really mean the avoidance of the excessive acknowledgement that our human cognition *knows-everything*. Even if they declare a mystery in *noema*, this assertion reminds us to respect the independence of things-in-themselves and by doing so we let nature display itself as such to us without any *naming of the object*. Furthermore, *letting the world display itself as such* indicates that one can only conceive of things-for-us partially, and it is never perceived in the form of complete knowledge. By respecting the things-in-itself, the knowing subject also preserves itself as being-in-itself. It means that the subject does not exclude the experiential self while one perceives something. Given this preservation of the subject's cognition towards an object, the knowing subject makes an effort to characterize or to define the object in details in accordance with *our judgement*. On this affirmation of the experiential subject and the things-in-themselves in cognitive activity, Nishida writes:

“Since the religion of India and the teaching of Lao-Tzu and Chuang-Tzu deny the actual world in the direction of the determination of the noesis (act of knowledge), science stands in fact in diametrical opposition to the latter positions. However, absolute denial becomes absolute affirmation; the absolute denial of actuality is precisely an absolute affirmation of it. It is actuality-qua-reality. The scientist regards the actual as thing [..]; Buddhism sees it as mind [..]. Western scholars often consider the Buddhist idea that ‘The willows are green; the flowers are red [....] directly to be a naturalism or a sentionalism. But it is actually an idea which stands in the exactly opposite viewpoint.”⁴⁶¹

Nishida notes that the Indian and Chinese wise figures precisely prefer an *interactive* experience of our cognition in perceiving objects than to perceive the objects using a deductive reasoning, or an empirical analytic to the object. . If the experiential self stays as it is as such, one will affirm not only the self's existence, but also the one of others. This is the significance of *know-nothing*; and this model of cognitive activity denotes not only the ethical attitude to reality, but also the epistemic paradigm of mental activity.

Realizing that this mode of thinking includes all mental activities, one should consider this following proposition. Asian and African wisdom traditions do not only belong to the domain of religiosity or the practical (or technical sense actually) mode of knowing or *phronesis*. They also represent the theoretical mode of knowing or *sophia*. Thus, Asian and African sagacious knowledge should emerge as a partner in dialogue with the Western type of scientific or philosophical knowledge. They are no longer the complementary model of knowledge for the Western one. The reason is that they are always regarded as the object of comparison when Western thinkers consider them to be the complementary knowledge model.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Nishida 1970: 244.

⁴⁶² Cf. van bisnbergen 2008b: 55.

So far, I have emphasized the significance of the Asian (and African) models of sagacious knowledge not to the extent that they are regarded as pseudo-knowledge, but as they sufficiently conceive of true knowledge in the intended world. It is time to enter the realm of Asian sagacious knowledge. For this purpose, I decided to discuss in the following subchapters the Chinese and the Sundanese models of philosophic sagacity that emerge in the *Daodejing* and the Sundanese account of *Tritangtu*. These explorations intend to explicate the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview.

6.1 Affirmative reciprocity in the *Daodejing*

This section consists of the contextual setting of the *Daodejing* and the exploration of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview implied in the text of *Daodejing*.

6.1.1 The Contextual setting of the *Daodejing*

Some Chinese scholars, including *Fung Yu-Lan* and *D.C. Lau*,⁴⁶³ regard the idea that Lao Tzu might be a historical figure or a legendary one. It was Chinese historian *Ssü-ma Ch'ien* whose book *Shih Chi (Records of Historians)* associated Lao Tzu as a historical figure *Li Erl*, or the legendary *Lao Tan*. This man came from the state of *Ch'u*. He lived precisely in the hamlet of *Ch'ü-jen*, in the *Li-hsiang* village in the district of *K'u*. Both *Yu-lan* and *Lau* notes that *Ssü-ma Ch'ien* has confused *Li Erh* with *Lao Tan* the historian at the time of *Chou*. These two names might refer to two different persons. But one thing is sure that Lao Tzū was an officer in charge of the archives during the *Chou* administration. It was believed that he lived a very long time. Some say he was about a hundred and sixty years old, while others claim was over two hundred years old. By cultivating the way, he was also known as a recluse gentleman who advocated self-effacement and the namelessness of his doctrine. Another factual clue is that Lao Tzū was an older contemporary of Confucius (551 – 479 BC). Because of these contradictions, one can understand the difficulty of correctly associating Lao Tzu with a “real” person in Ancient China.

From the exploration of Chinese ancient literature, Lau finds out that the book *Lau Tze Daodejing* was written in between the 6th and 4th century BC.⁴⁶⁴ This date corresponds with the fact that the book was composed after Confucius' *Lun Yü* and *Mencius*; even Lau tells us that Chuang Tzu, the other great thinker of Daoism, did not mention the name of Lao Tzū as his predecessor or at least a contemporary figure, despite the widely accepted (and legendary) story of the encounter of these Daoist

⁴⁶³ Fung Yu-Lan 1969: 171; Lau 1979: 8-9.

⁴⁶⁴ Lau 1979: 149.

thinkers at around 286 and 240 BC⁴⁶⁵ or in 3rd century BC. It is not my aim to explore the historical person of Lao Tzū and the historical events that recorded the relationship of the person with other ancient Chinese thinkers.

Still the historical setting of the work is indispensable because such a setting can inform us about the style and the structure of the book. The observations made by Lau indicate that the book should be considered as a collection of old rhyming passages which spread orally and were accepted by the Chinese people at the time. An editor whose name was associated with Lao Tzū (or the old man) had formulated these rhyming passages. Later he had compiled them into an anthology of ‘the sayings of the old man.’⁴⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the anthology did not show a consistent composition from a particular thinker that belonged to the Daoist School. Instead, one should consider it as the collection of passages which shows “a common tendency in thought.”⁴⁶⁷ This explorative commentary is indispensable for my observations throughout the book. An explorative approach to the book can lead to the creative interpretation of the *dao* (道) from such ancient rhyming passages or chapters if one intends to abstract the metaphysical vision of the intended world.

The *dao* (道) or the way is one of the central terms in Chinese philosophy. The denotative meaning of the term is ‘road’ or ‘way.’ Meanwhile, the connotation of the term in the ethical domain is associated with moral conduct or truth.⁴⁶⁸ One can find out this association implicitly in Confucius’ *Lun Yü*, especially when he talks about the reasons to actualize the benevolent man (or the perfect virtue, *jen* or *ren*, 仁) by means of obeying “the way of propriety.” For example, Confucius in this sense said:⁴⁶⁹

“Yan Yuan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, ‘To subdue one’s self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?’ (XII, 1)

顏淵問仁。
子曰、克己復禮為仁、一日克己
復禮、天下
歸仁焉、為仁由己、而由人乎哉
。

Fan Chi asked about benevolence. The Master said, ‘It is to love all men.’ He asked about knowledge. The Master said, ‘It is to know all men. (XII, 22)

樊遲問仁。子曰、愛人。問
知。子曰、知人

The two quotations above indicate that proper morality is the way to develop the characteristics of the benevolent man or the sage. The other way to achieve the man

⁴⁶⁵ Lau 1979: 155-158.

⁴⁶⁶ These rhyming passages are Lao lai tzu, Lau ch’eng tzu (the old man with mature wisdom), Cheng chang Che (the elder from the state of Cheng) see Lau 1979: 163-164.

⁴⁶⁷ Lau 1979: 165.

⁴⁶⁸ Fung Yu-Lan 1969: 177.

⁴⁶⁹ Fung Yu-Lan 1969: 70. For the content of *Lun Yu* in Chinese characters and English translation see <http://www.yellowbridge.com/onlinelit/analects12.php>.

perfect virtue is to perform the rites.⁴⁷⁰ This is an indication how the idea of actualizing the way (*dao*, 道) in daily behaviour is indispensable for the sake of self-emergence as the Sage or *Jen* (仁). At the hands of Lao Tzū then the connotation of morality is no longer the only suitable understanding of the way. The way then connotes a metaphysical vision of the world. Moral conduct is only a small part in such an approach. The historian *Ssū-ma Ch'ien* recorded Lao Tzū's reply to the question about the rites asked by Confucius. Lao Tzū said:

*“What you are talking about concerns merely the words left by people who have rotted along with their bones. Furthermore, when a gentleman is in sympathy with the times he goes out in a carriage, but drifts with the wind when the times are against him. I have heard it said that a good merchant hides his store in a safe place and appears to be devoid of possessions, while a gentleman, though endowed with great virtue, and wears a foolish countenance. Rid yourself of your arrogance and your lustfulness, your ingratiating manners and your excessive ambition. These are all detrimental to your person. This is all I have to say to you.”*⁴⁷¹

The way to achieve sagacity is not through moral conduct or performing rites. Such moral conduct and the employment of the rites inevitably hint at self-interest which leads a person to desire self-benefits rather than the pure intention of helping or serving others. Given this likelihood, to follow the way does not only mean being moral and or performing the rites. Following the way is to theorize life metaphysically and to go beyond the boundary of active behaviour in order to understand the very essence of the sagacious life. Thus, the way (*dao*) represents the metaphysical vision of existence. *Daodejing* is the example of how such a metaphysical vision is explicated.

I rely on D.C. Lau's commentary and translation of the *Daodejing* for my exploration of the book. According to Lau, the main metaphysical vision of the *dao* (道), or the worldview of the book is *nothingness* (wu 無). To understand this worldview, one needs to identify juxtaposed terms which are often employed in lines and between verses. Given these juxtapositions, one should regard *nothingness* as the negative side while *something* is positive. This juxtaposed pair in a verse, for example, is:

*The myriad creatures in the world are born from something, 天下萬物生于有, 有生于無. and something from nothing (normal typing is mine).*⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Lun Yu I, 9 “The philosopher Zeng said, ‘Let there be a careful attention to perform the funeral rites to parents, and let them be followed when long gone with the ceremonies of sacrifice;-- then the virtue of the people will resume its proper excellence.’ (曾子曰、慎終追遠、民德歸厚矣). See <http://www.yellowbridge.com/onlinelit/analects01.php>

⁴⁷¹ In Lau 1979: 8.

⁴⁷² The English translation and the number of line are arranged by D.C. Lau in Lau 1979: 101. For Chinese characters see <http://www.yellowbridge.com/onlinelit/daodejing40.php>.

How do we understand the purpose of this juxtaposed pair, something-nothing? The opposite terms do not indicate a circular movement as if something and nothing are reciprocally connected for forever. Lau does not agree with the idea of circular movement implied in the opposite pair. Such circularity can connote a cyclic change from being something, or the positive, to being nothing, or the negative, and vice versa. If one perceives such cyclic change, one will easily misunderstand the metaphysical presupposition of the *dao*. Despite the fact that the book mentions “*Turning back is how the way moves* (Lao Tzu, 1963, ch. 11, l. 88),”⁴⁷³ this line does not infer that the opposite pair implies such cyclic change. One side will replace the other and vice versa. Instead, such opposite pair is an amplification of the preferential intention of thinking. It is more *valuable to hold fast* the negative or *nothingness, the weak and the submissive* rather than to understand the positive or *something, ‘the strong’ or the powerful*.⁴⁷⁴ This preferential thought maintains the idea of existence; that existence is neither something nor substance. The existence in itself, as the thing in itself, or the *dao* is unintelligible. The “real” *dao* (道) can neither be spoken nor named. If one as the thinking subject perceives existence as knowledge of something, one will find out that such knowledge is limited. Thus, the employment of the opposite pair—as the linguistic expression of human cognition of the existence in itself—along with the preferential intention to nothing, the weak, the submissive or the negative, are the manner in which the book explains the existence as such even before and after it is perceived and conceived by our mind.

My argument is a bit different from Lau in the sense that the use of the negative has to do with the abstraction of the book. Given this preferential cognition of nothingness, our cognition is “to let the existence appear as such.” On the one side, the pair of opposite terms is useful to describe the existence we perceive, but on the other side opposite terms themselves are only expressions of existence. Such expressions do not emerge as existence in itself. In other words, the application of linguistic expressions of binary opposition is at once inevitable to characterize existence otherwise one cannot recognize existence at all. Nevertheless, it is limited in its description of existence as such. The linguistic expression in this sense is just a capacity of our mind and has nothing to do with the ‘true appearance of existence.’ In this sense, one cannot infer *nothingness as something exists*. Instead, one should understand that such a term is the verbal identification of existence, which is of course limited to our partial cognition of existence.

⁴⁷³ Lau 1979: 26.

⁴⁷⁴ Lau 1979: 32-33. Lau writes: “*We have seen that the term ‘Nothing (wu)’ is sometime used for the dao, because, if we must characterize the dao by one of a pair of opposite terms, the negative is preferable because it is less misleading.*”

The purpose of my exploration is not to analyze the linguistic use of binary oppositions. Instead, the uses of verbal expressions are considered as long as it identifies the intelligibility of existence. Such verbal expressions reflect our mental activity when it reveals the limited cognition of the existence as such. Our cognition, however, can articulate a presupposition of epistemological foundations which appears as a paradigm for our thought. One can also derive from such epistemological foundations a metaphysical vision of the meaningful world or a worldview which constitutes a comprehensive formulation of existence. The last derivation of such metaphysical visions becomes the regulation of our cognition. Such regulations appear as principles of thought. In the next subsection, I will explore these forms of the cognition of existence.

6.1.2 The affirmative worldview attending to the principle of affirmation in *Daodejing* (道德經)

6.1.2.1 Interconnectivity in the affirmative worldview of *Daodejing*

The first subsection is concerning ‘affirmation’ as an epistemological foundation. As I have previously explained, I mean by epistemological foundation a virtual framework for cognitive activities. Such a cognitive framework guides our *noetic* cognition towards the noematic expression of existence. Moreover, the cognitive framework becomes an indispensable presupposition for knowledge production of the meaningful world. Thus, an epistemological foundation shapes our understanding of existence in the physical or non-physical forms. Now, it may be asked, how does *the Book of the Way and the Virtue* - explicate this epistemological framework? Of course the text the *Daodejing* does not explicitly deal with this subject. Instead an interpretive approach must be adopted to analyze the poetical expressions of the lines and chapters of the *Daodejing*. In other words, the epistemological foundation is an implication abstracted from semantic analyses of the book. I adopt an analytic-interpretive approach starting with the first two chapters of the book. The chapters presented here are taken from Lau’s translation of the *Daodejing* (1979).⁴⁷⁵

Chapter 1

The way that can be spoken of Is not the constant way; The name that can be named Is not the constant name.	道可道, 非常道。 名可名, 非常名。	<i>dao ke dao,</i> <i>fei chang dao;</i> <i>ming ke ming,</i> <i>fei chang ming.</i>
The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;	無, 名天地之始;	<i>wu, ming tian di zhi</i> <i>shi;</i>

⁴⁷⁵ *Daodejing* Pinyin for these chapters see <http://www.yellowbridge.com/onlinelit/daodejing.php>. The transliteration or the Romanization of *Daodejing* for these chapters see www.edepot.com/taotext.html

Part II

The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.

有，名萬物之母。

you, ming wan wu zhi mu.

Hence always rid yourself of desire in order to observe its secrets;
But always allow yourself to have desire in order to observe its manifestation.

故常無，
欲以觀其妙；
常有，
欲以觀其徼。

*gu chang wu,
yu yi guan qi miao,
chang you,
yu yi guan qi jiao.*

These two are the same
But diverge in name as they issue forth.
Being the same they are called mysteries,
Mystery upon mystery –
The gateway of the manifold secrets.

此兩者，
同出而異名，
同謂之玄。
玄之又玄，
眾妙之門。

*ci liang zhe,
tong chu er yi ming.
tong wei zhi xuan,
xuan zhi you xuan,
zhong miao zhi men.*

Chapter 2

The whole world recognizes the beautiful as the beautiful, yet this is only the ugly; The whole world recognizes the good as the good, yet this is only the bad.

天下皆知美之為美，
斯惡矣；
皆知善之為善，
斯不善矣。

*tian xia jie zhi mei zhi wei mei, si e yi;
jie zhi shan zhi wei shan,
si bu shan yi.*

Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;
The difficult and the easy complement each other;
The long and the short off-set each other.
The high and the low incline towards each other;
Note and sound harmonize with each other;
Before and after follow each other.

故有無相生，
難易相成，
長短相形，
高下相傾，
音聲相和，
前後相隨。

*gu you wu xiang sheng,
nan yi xiang cheng,
chang duan xiang xing,
gao xia xiang qing,
yin sheng xiang he,
qian hou xiang sui.*

Therefore the sage keeps to deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching uses no words.

是以聖人處
「無為」之事，
行「不言」之教。

*shi yi sheng ren chu
wu wei zhi shi,
xing bu yan zhi jiao;*

The myriad creatures rise from it yet it claims no authority;
It gives them life yet claims no possession;
It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
It accomplishes its task yet claims no merit.
It is because it lays claim to no merit
This is merit never desert it.

萬物作焉而不辭，
生而不有，
為而不恃，
功成而弗居。
夫唯弗居，
是以不去。

*wan wu zuo er fu shi,
sheng er fu you,
wei er bu shi,
gong cheng er fu ju.
fu wei fu ju,
shi yi bu qu.*

Chapter I and II are the profound grounds both of which concentrate on the dynamic approach of existence. I interpret the dynamic approach to address a comprehensive ontological conception. I consider this comprehensiveness as the interconnectivity. The

poetical expressions line by line in these chapters apply language games which are comprised of pairs of juxtaposed terms. They are among others, “the named and the nameless,” “to have desire and no desire,” “Something and Nothing,” “the good and the bad,” the difficult and the easy,” “before and after,” and “to act with taking no-action.” On the one hand, these juxtapositions can be regarded as opposite terms in our cognition. On the other hand, our mind recognizes their opposition just in accordance with our thought. The existence appears to our cognition in its own way so that our mind can only perceive “a part of it.” Given the partiality of cognition, the book uses pairs of juxtaposed terms on purpose for the sake of providing a comprehensive vision of existence. Understanding this, our cognition perceives such juxtaposed terms as if they were in an opposition or a contradiction. Meanwhile the book employs these juxtaposed terms as complementary pairs, so that the juxtapositions represent neither contradiction, nor opposition, nor paradox as such. It should be regarded as the interconnecting sides).

If one observes closely the use of these poetical lines one will see that the pairs no longer represent juxtaposed terms separately as if they were the negation of the other. Instead, the juxtaposition conveys an idea of dynamic unification. That is the reason the first two lines of the first chapter play with the terms “the way and the not-way” and “the named and the nameless” in order to describe such a presupposition. Thus, despite mentioning *nothingness*, the “nameless” or the “beginning of heaven and earth,”⁴⁷⁶ the first chapter reminds us simultaneously of the presence of *something* or the named as the mother of things. By this reminder, the book conveys that the human mind is dependent on the cognition of the interconnecting complementary *Nothing and Something*. Both terms interconnectedly reveal affirmation epistemological foundation of complete picture of reality although our capability can only perceive a part of reality.

One can compare this language game of the interconnecting pairs with the cosmological symbols of the *I Ching* or the Book of Change. The Book of Change symbolizes the beginning of heaven and earth and the mother of the myriad creatures with the same diagram. The *nothing(ness)* or “*wújí*” (無極) and the *something* or “*tàijí*” (太極) are described with an empty circle. The nothingness, the nameless as the mother is absolute non-existence, while somethingness, the named or *tàijí* is absolute existence. Given the property of absoluteness, both appear as the complementary explanations of existence. In other words, it is impossible to conceive of existence as only “absolute somethingness,” as well as only “absolute nothingness.” In turn, such an understanding of the realization the realization of interconnectivity on “the way” hints the

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Lau 1979: 21. Here Lau mentions that Nothingness is the indication of the “real” way. I do not agree with Lau and propose another approach which treats Nothingness as a part of the language game of the juxtaposed terms.

epistemological foundation of the Chinese thought as such⁴⁷⁷. (One might identify the interactivity of the nothingness and the somethingness as the essence of existence. This identification cannot ignore the presupposition of interconnectivity as the dynamic paradigm of ontology and epistemology, which provides the comprehensive vision of the meaningful world. Given these comprehensive vision, there is specific linguistic expressions in order to formulate the understanding of the *dao*. If one goes closely through the lines and chapters, one will find the application of these complementary juxtapositions. In other words, the poetical lines and chapters of *Daodejing* express an affirmative worldview which hints the interconnectivity as the epistemological foundation.

Chapter 3

Not honor men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft;

不尚賢，
使民不爭；
不貴難得之貨，
使民不為盜。

bu shang xian,
shi min bu zheng;
bu gui nan de zhi huo,
shi min bu wei dao;

not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind.

不見可欲，
使民心不亂。

bu jian ke yu,
shi min xin bu luan .

Therefore in governing the people, the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies, weakens their wills but strengthens their bones. He will keep them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act. Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.

是以「聖人」之治，
虛其心，實其腹，
弱其志，強其骨。
常使民無知無欲。
使夫智者不敢為也。
為「無為」，則無不
治。

shi yi sheng ren zhi zhi,
xu qi xin,
shi qi fu,
ruo qi zhi,
qiang qi gu,
chang shi min wu zhi wu yu;
shi fu zhi zhe bu gan wei ye.
wei wu wei, ze wu bu zhi.

Chapter 4

The way is empty, yet use will not drain it
Deep, it is like the ancestor of the myriad creatures.
Blunt the sharpness;
Untangle the knots;
Soften the glare;
Let your wheels move only along old ruts.
Darkly visible, it only seems as if it were there.

「道」沖，
而用之或不盈。
淵兮，
似萬物之宗；
挫其銳，
解其紛，
和其光，

dao chang, er yong
zhi huo bu ying.
yuan xi,
si wan wu zhi zong.
cuo qi rui,
jie qi fen;
he qi guang,

I know not whose son it is.

同其塵；

tong qi chen;

⁴⁷⁷ See Bidang Litbang PTITD/Matrisia (the Department of Development and Research PTITD/Matrisia) 2009: 10, 15-16; Williams 2006: 367, 434.

It images the forefather of God.

湛兮似或存。

zhan xi si huo cun.

吾不知誰之子？

wu bu zhi shui zhi zi?

象帝之先。

xiang di zhi xian.

These chapters 3 and 4 describe a response to the interconnectivity as the profound understanding of ontology. This response indicates the content of interconnectivity itself as it is suggested in the second verse of the 3rd chapter. They are “emptying and filling,” “weakening and strengthening,” “keeping innocent of knowledge or freeing from desire (in order to)” and “the clever not daring to act”; “taking no action (*wu wei*) and by doing so, the order will prevail.” On the one hand, self-awareness of interconnectivity reveals an interaction of non-judgment and the non-intervention towards the meaningful world. On the other hand, such self-awareness also articulates the dynamic process of knowing based on the affirmative worldview.. When one knows, one also emerges as the passive subject and by becoming so one *recognizes* the things as they are in themselves. This recognition is equal with the action of subject *to let the things-in-themselves to be known or intelligible*. This *letting-be-known* is the transformation of the things as such into the *things-for-u*.⁴⁷⁸ This transformation changes the knower from being an active agent into a passive one. This transformation also reveals the actuality of self-consciousness or the event of knowing itself.

This process of knowing also transforms the critical-metaphysical standpoint, or philosophy into sagacious cognition. By maintaining their respective identity, the knowing subject and the object, are involved in interconnectivity and this removes the gap so that the knowing subject still can perceive the transcendent object. This *cognitive attitude* articulates the emergence of wisdom from the actuality of philosophy. Suzuki and Nishida, Feng Qi and Yan Guorong in their respective works take into account the articulation of philosophy to be wisdom.⁴⁷⁹ Wisdom in this respect is not only *practical knowledge* or *the knowledge of the concrete* or *phronesis* in the Greek classification. Wisdom also includes *sophia* which is the theoretical vision of the meaningful world. It is precisely the affirmative worldview.

Grammatically, this self-recognition in the event of knowing relies on the use of the juxtaposed terms in order to represent such dynamic interconnection in the event of knowing. Lau in this sense regards that the preference of using these terms, such as, *nothingness*, *weak*, *low*, and *supple* in the lines and verses indicate an affirmative worldview. Furthermore, he writes:

“we have seen that the term ‘Nothing (wu)’ is something used for the dao, because, if we must characterize the dao by one of a pair of opposite terms, the negative is preferable because it is misleading. It follows that as ‘Nothing’

⁴⁷⁸ Feng Qi in Yang Guorong 2002.

⁴⁷⁹ Nishida 1970, 1987; Suzuki 1998; Yang Guorong 2002.

*is preferable to 'Something' so are other negative terms to their positive opposite.*⁴⁸⁰

This preference is not just the exhortations of the rulers or the officials who are considering the lives of the common people. Nor does it signify the strategy of survival of the common people while they are in the inconvenient situation, i.e. in the middle of war or during political turbulence. Lau suggests for the content of the *Daodejing* both social contexts.⁴⁸¹ Yet, beyond the social contextualization of the book, the linguistic usages of the 'negative terms' profoundly articulate an affirmative approach of the world. Even if *nothingness* is used more than *somethingness*, this preference still implies that both are main characterizations of the metaphysical vision. Were our cognition only to conceive of one side of the complete reciprocity, we would not understand nothingness as the metaphysical vision of the world and the meaningful reason for existence. According to Nishida, this metaphysical vision is *the absolute negation as affirmation*.

Therefore, it is our consciousness which grasps things through the sensation of the thing-in-itself. Our mind then abstracts this comprehensive vision of the world out of the perception as such. The conception also transforms the knowing subject as the being-in-itself into the being-for-itself.⁴⁸² Our self-consciousness means an intention towards something and by intending something our being is meaningful. We know for the sake of our existence. We know *things-for-us* not only for the sake of objective knowledge which can only be conceived by the transcendental subject.

In other words, when Nishida conceives *nothingness* as the main character of the Eastern worldview, he does not mean *nothingness* as void or the *nihilism*. Instead, the definition asserts a dynamic and comprehensive vision of the world. *Nothingness* articulates the vision of the very existence of the world. From this it follows that our self-disposition immediately perceives the actuality of the perceived object. Our cognition emerges neither for the sake of knowledge, nor for the objectivity of human knowledge. Our knowledge makes our life understandable and thus it is the meaningful actuality. The intention of concrete action is what the last verse of chapter 3 describes. "*He will keep them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act. Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.*" The affirmative worldview is the self-consciousness of the non-active subject who realizes the *dao* towards sagacity in the interconnectivity.

Chapter 5

Heaven and earth are ruthless, and
treat the myriad creatures as stray
dogs;

天地不仁，
以萬物為芻狗；

*tian di bu ren, yi wan wu
wei chu gou;
sheng ren bu ren,*

⁴⁸⁰ D.C. Lau 1979: 33.

⁴⁸¹ D.C. Lau 1979: 28-32 especially Book II chapters 57-62, 75, 80.

⁴⁸² Nishida 1970; Yang Guorong 2002.

the sage is ruthless, and treats the people as stray dogs.

聖人不仁，
以百姓為芻狗。
天地之間，

yi bai xing wei chu gou.
tian di zhi jian,

Is not the space between heaven and earth like a bellows?

其猶橐籥乎？

qi you tuo yue hu?

It is empty without being exhausted:
The more it works the more comes out.

虛而不屈，
動而愈出。
多言數窮，
不如守中。

xu er bu qu,
dong er yu chu.
duo yan shu qiong, bu
ru shou zhong.

Much speech leads inevitably to silence.

Better to hold fast to the void.

That knowledge should lead someone in the pathway of sagacity is rephrased by this poetical expression in this chapter. The pathways seem to abandon self-cognition as if it were a “stray dog,” something useful only for the sake of a ritual ceremony. Some interpretations of the first sentence focus on the fragility and uselessness of life so that one should not become too dependent on it. Heaven and earth represent the contingent life, and so does the sage or the king. Hence, it is an exhortation to “*hold fast to the void.*”⁴⁸³

However, I would like to suggest another interpretation of this chapter. I consider this chapter to provide wise advice for common people about better ways to respond to the fact that life is contingent. This chapter depicts the comprehensive conception of the affirmative worldview. Such a comprehensive conception is made up of the appearance of the physical and of the non-physical. *Heaven and Earth*, as well as *the sage* is symbolic significations of the physical, while *the void* is the non-physical. I do not employ the technical term as metaphysical in order to avoid the denotation of *heaven* as the metaphysical thing and so does *the void*. One will be confused if these denotations are employed. I also do not denote *the void* with the metaphysical inasmuch as the metaphysical is regarded as something higher than the physical. The physical should be subsumed under the metaphysical. I think that this hierarchy of existence cannot be suitable in the way of thinking represented in this chapter. Thus, *the void* should be the non-physical to the extent that it exists in an equal level with the physical.

If heaven is the physical and the void is the non-physical, one will find the vision of the world in the apposition of *heaven and earth*. Yet, such a vision will be not comprehensive unless one considers the void as the non-physical complement of the physical representation. In other words, heaven and earth exist reciprocally with the void. The physical is the reciprocity of the non-physical. Either the physical or the non-physical can occupy a higher level. Given this equal position, one could read the lines above as presenting an affirmative worldview.

⁴⁸³ Yi-Ping Ong’s notes on the chapter V, see *Dao Te Ching* translated by Charles Muller 2005: 166, n5 & 6; cf. with Lau 1979: 29; Tjan. 2007: 5.

It is true, to some extent; one should prefer the void rather than *heaven and earth*, and *the sage*. One should alternatively choose for the permanence and the void over the contingent, *heaven and earth*. Yet, it is also true that both juxtaposed sides should be regarded in order to maintain the comprehensive conception of the world. In my opinion, they are what one will find while on the pathway to sagacity.

Chapter 6

The spirit of the valley never dies.
This is called the mysterious female.
The gateway of the mysterious female
Is the called the root of heaven and earth
Dimly visible, it seems as if it were there,
Yet use will never drain it.

谷神不死，	<i>gu shen bu si,</i>
是謂玄牝。	<i>shi wei xuan pin.</i>
玄牝之門，	<i>xuan pin zhi men,</i>
是謂天地根。	<i>shi wei tian di gen.</i>
綿綿若存，	<i>mian mian ruo cun,</i>
用之不勤。	<i>yong zhi bu qin.</i>

This short chapter reveals the affirmative *theoria* as the worldview of the *Daodejing*. This worldview concentrates on the beginning of life or “the root of heaven and earth.” Such beginning can also connote the source of life. The beginning, the source, or the root of life rephrases nothingness as the *dao*. In this sense, the worldview also reveals the cosmological presupposition. The metaphorical expression such as *mysterious female* indicates the preferential application of the *weak-meaning* terms. It is the negative on its own side that reciprocally affirms the presence of the positive on the other side. Both reciprocal sides reveal our sagacious disposition to the complexity of life itself.

According to the affirmative worldview, life is neither the one nor the many. Instead it is comprehensively constructed by these complementary substances. Life in this respect is comprised of complex manifestations of naturally constructed mutual symbioses. They in themselves are emerging as an interconnecting system of life whether they respectively participate in that system actively or passively. Such a system is like a web of rhizome where its intersections are hard to identify. The main cosmological standpoint here is that the source and the root of life is never a singular something as if it were the substance. Whether it is the substance or somewhat *the thing* is not the point. Instead, the source is so mysterious that no precise term can characterize it perfectly. This is indicated by the use of metaphorical terms: *the spirit of valley* (*gǔ shén*, 谷神) which has no precise denotation or connotation to a specific spirit or a supernatural creature. Rather, the name signifies *the nameless* or *the untold way*. A translation of this phrase in Bahasa connotes *nurani* or *conscience*.⁴⁸⁴ According to the translator, *conscience* signifies the *dao* which resides in the human inner-self. The affirmative worldview needs a language game which applies juxtaposed pairs so as to explain the comprehensiveness of such a dynamic approach. The application of such a

⁴⁸⁴ See Tjan 2006: 6.

game reveals a specific way of thought and in turn such a way determines a principle of thought which is the principle of affirmation.

6.1.2.2 The principle of affirmation as applied in *Daodejing*

The previous explorations take into account the interconnectivity and the (attending) affirmative worldview from six chapters in the Book I of the *Daodejing*.⁴⁸⁵ In this part, the exploration will consider some chapters in the Book II of the *Daodejing*. These chapters especially explain *virtue* (*dé*, 德). By *virtue* the book conceives of the principle of thought and conduct which is attended to the affirmative worldview. This is the way the book explicates the constitutive expression regarding the *cognitive attitude* concerning life. Life in this respect is not a transcendent object which is ready to be *conquered* by the knowing subject. Life is also not just immanence which can be clearly experienced. Rather such principle of affirmation treats the transcendent and immanent aspects of life at once. These aspects are no longer two separate features, but rather they appear simultaneously. These ways of understanding are articulated in the application of the juxtaposed propositions. The following chapters explicate the principle of affirmation which manages the way of understanding life.

Chapter 38

A man of the highest virtue (*de*) does not keep to virtue and that is why he has virtue. A man of the lowest virtue never stray from virtue and that is why he is without virtue.

上德不德，
是以有德。
下德不失德，
是以無德。
上德無為而無以為。

shang de bu de,
shi yi you de.
xia de bu shi de,
shi yi wu de.
shang de wu wei er wu yi wei.

The former never acts yet leaves nothing undone. The latter acts but there are things left undone.

下德 無為而有以為。
上仁為之而無以為。

xia de wu wei er you yi wei.
shang ren wei zhi er wu yi wei.

A man of the highest benevolence acts, but from no ulterior motive. A man of the highest rectitude acts, but from ulterior motive.

上義為之而有以為。
上禮為之而莫之應，
則攘臂而扔之。

shang yi wei zhi er you yi wei.
shang li wei zhi er mo zhi ying,
ze rang bi er reng zhi.

A man most conversant in the rites acts, but when no one responds rolls up his sleeves and resorts to persuasion by force.

故失道而后德，
失德而后仁，
失仁而后義，
失義而后禮。

gu shi dao er hou de,
shi de er hou ren,
shi ren er hou yi,
shi yi er hou li.

⁴⁸⁵ I follow the categorizations of the Book I and II of the *Daodejing* as suggested by D.C. Lau. See D.C. Lau 1979. The First book is concerning the way or *dao*, while the second one concentrates on the virtue or *de*. In Yu-Lan's translation *de* connotes 'internal power.' See Yu-Lan 1969.

Part II

Hence when the way was lost there was virtue; when virtue was lost there was benevolence; when benevolence was lost there was rectitude; when rectitude was lost there were the rites.

夫禮者，
忠信之薄，
而亂之首。

fu li zhe,
zhong xin zhi bo,
er luan zhi shou.

The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and good faith, and the beginning of disorder; Foreknowledge is the flowering embellishment of the way, and the beginning of folly.

前識者，
道之華，
而愚之始。
是以大丈夫處其厚，
不居其薄。

qian zhi zhe,
dao zhi hua,
er yu zhi shi.
shi yi da zhang fu chu qi hou,
bu ju qi bo,

Hence the man of large mind abides in the thick not in the thin, in the fruit not in the flower. Therefore he discards the one and takes the other.

處其實，
不居其華。
故去彼取此。

chu qi shi,
bu ju qi hua.
gu qu bi qu ci.

The sentences in italic are mine, in order to indicate that they are juxtaposed propositions. “A man of the highest virtue (*dé*) does not keep to virtue and that is why he has virtue.” This proposition is associated in juxtaposition with: “A man of the lowest virtue never stray from virtue and that is why he is without virtue.” The latter does not represent a better choice. In this case being weak or submissive is a misunderstanding of the source or the root of life.⁴⁸⁶ Instead, by both embodying the highest virtue and the lowest one can demonstrate the dynamic comprehension of life. This juxtaposed pair of verses recognizes the quality of the highest virtue as constitutive as that of the lowest one. Both are necessary to realize virtue as such. That is why *having virtue* is equivalent with *being without virtue*. In other words, it will be impossible to understand life unless it is presented by the comprehensive virtue.

Now, the other example is for the juxtaposed propositions. “A man of the highest benevolence acts, but from no ulterior motive.” This proposition is associated with: “A man of the highest rectitude acts, but from ulterior motive.” Here *benevolence* is juxtaposed with *rectitude*, as if the first were against the latter; as if the first were preferred rather than the latter. Benevolence in this case represents the natural or spontaneous capacity to be and to act the good; while the rectitude the constructed or desired capability. If one thinks of a replacement of the first over the latter, one will find out that the benevolent act is also meaningless. The natural capacity to be and to act the good is nothing unless the constructed one provides formal expressions for such internal motives and vice versa. In other words, the rectitude is the framework or the designation

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Lau 1979: 26-27.

while benevolence is the content for formal morality. The framework cannot ignore the content, otherwise the rectitude becomes meaningless. Hence, the chapter considers the natural as constitutive as the constructed because life necessarily implies both models of complementary understanding.

The explication of these juxtaposed propositions represents the principle of affirmation. Such a principle regulates human thought so that it perceives objects always from a dynamic viewpoint. Furthermore, our cognition comprehensively conceives of objects in a reciprocal correlation. If there is a perception or a conception of paradox or opposition, such opposition or paradox arises only in our mind. One will misunderstand life, if one considers that such opposition *really exists*. This kind of principle one can compare with Aristotelian principles of thought.

According to the Aristotelian principles of thought, two things which are completely different cannot equally exist; otherwise the contradiction between them is inevitable. Moreover, if they appear the same, they are inconceivable or illogical. Only similar things can be equally parallel. Consequently, the different things should be constructed in a hierarchical position. The truth value of the contradictory things is clear; *if one is true the other is false*. It is impossible to consider both are true, and so they are false. This truth value asserts that it is impossible to conceive of two different things in a reciprocal connection, or in an equal even complementary position. Different things should negate each other in order to maintain their existence. Otherwise, they are both unintelligible.

One can indicate that in this comprehensive vision of existence an alternative logical approach is applied instead of the Aristotelian model. I would like to present another chapter in order to indicate that this comprehensive vision necessarily considers two different things.

Chapter 45

Great perfection seems chipped
Yet use will not wear it out;
Great fullness seems empty,
Yet use will not drain it;

大成若缺，
其用不弊。
大盈若冲，
其用不窮。

da cheng ruo que,
qi yong bu bi.
da ying ruo chong,
qi yong bu qiong.

Great straightness seems bent;
Great skill seems awkward;
Great eloquence seems tongue-tied.

大直若屈，
大巧若拙，
大辯若訥。

da zhi ruo qu,
da qiao ruo zhuo,
da bian ruo ne.

Restlessness overcomes cold; stillness
overcomes heat.
Limpid and still, One can be a leader in the
empire

靜勝躁，
寒勝熱。
清靜為天下正。

jing sheng zao,
han sheng re.
qing jing wei tian xia
zheng.

Chapter 52

The world had a beginning
And this beginning could be the mother of the

天下有始，以為

tian xia you shi, yi wei
tian xia mu.

Part II

world.

When you know the mother
 Go on to know the child.
 After you have known the child
 Go back to holding fast to the mother, And to the
 end of your days you will not meet with danger.
 Block the openings,
 Shut the doors,
 And all your life you will not run dry.
 Unblock the openings,
 Add to your troubles,
 And to the end of your days you will be beyond
 salvation.

天下母。

既得其母，
 以知其子，
 既知其子，
 復守其母，
 沒身不殆。
 塞其兌，
 閉其門，
 終身不勤。
 開其兌，
 濟其事，
 終身不救。

*ji de qi mu,
 yi zhi qi zi.
 ji zhi qi zi,
 fu shou qi mu,
 mo shen bu dai.
 se qi dui, bi qi men,
 zhong shen bu qin.
 kai qi dui,
 ji qi shi,
 zhong shen bu jiu.*

To see the small is called discernment;
 To hold fast to the submissive is called strength.
 Use the light
 But give up discernment.
 Bring not misfortune upon yourself.
 This is known as following the constant.

見小曰明，
 守柔曰強。
 用其光，
 復歸其明，
 無遺身殃，
 是為習常。

*jian xiao yue ming,
 shou rou yue qiang.
 yong qi guang,
 fu gui qi ming,
 wu yi shen yang,
 shi wei xi chang.*

The chapters above both indicate the model of thinking based on the principle of affirmation. Both use juxtaposed terms, lines and verses to express their meaning. For example: “Great fullness seems empty, yet use will not drain it” and “Block the openings; unblock the openings,” These reminds us to consider the language games of ‘fullness and empty’ or ‘to use it but it will not drain.’ Either words or phrases do not regard the opposite denotation of each word as the absolute contradiction which consequently entails total separation between them. Instead, the words and phrases are somewhat opposite, as if they were contradict. The principle of affirmation suggests such words and phrases are reciprocally complementary. Their denotations and connotations presuppose this mode of interconnectivity so that each word or phrase explains the existence of the other. The *fullness* recognizes the appearance of *emptiness*, and this association between them is reciprocal.

This mode of reciprocal relationship also appears in the following lines in chapter 45:

Great straightness seems bent;
 Great skill seems awkward;
 Great eloquence seems tongue-tied.

大直若屈，
 大巧若拙，
 大辯若訥。

*da zhi ruo qu,
 da qiao ruo zhuo,
 da bian ruo ne.*

Restlessness overcomes cold;
 stillness overcomes heat.

靜勝躁，
 寒勝熱。

*jing sheng zao,
 han sheng re.*

Each line consists of the reciprocal depiction of the dynamic vision of life. Such understanding might be too complex to be perceived. Yet this is not merely a tautological style of cognition. This reciprocity reveals the comprehensive awareness of the complexity of the essence of life. One should be careful when classifying the Chinese metaphysical vision as monism.⁴⁸⁷ One often considers that the essence is something permanent or that it is the constant element in existence.⁴⁸⁸

The essence, according to the *Daodejing*, embodies a reciprocal distinction between *change and permanence, bent and straightness, skillful and awkward, eloquence and tongue-tied*. The important point is that the *Daodejing* constantly presents the dynamic approach of existence through the application of juxtaposed terms, lines and verses. This style enhances the depiction of the attending affirmative worldview. This linguistic style also emphasizes the connotation of affirmation as the epistemological foundation. The description of these presuppositions is poetically defined (see Chapter 52 above):

<i>The world had a beginning</i>	天下有始，	<i>tian xia you shi,</i>
<i>And this beginning could be the mother of the world.</i>	以為天下母。	<i>yi wei tian xia mu.</i>
<i>When you know the mother</i>	既得其母，	<i>ji de qi mu,</i>
<i>Go on to know the child.</i>	以知其子，	<i>yi zhi qi zi.</i>
<i>After you have known the child</i>	既知其子，	<i>ji zhi qi zi,</i>
<i>Go back to holding fast to the mother.</i>	復守其母，	<i>fu shou qi mu,</i>
	沒身不殆。	<i>mo shen bu dai.</i>

It may be asked in what way the *Daodejing* describe the epistemological foundation of affirmation and an affirmative worldview. The principle of affirmation employs popular terms such as *mother* or *child* so that common people can identify the idea of a nurturing relationship by such terms. By using a nurturing relationship, this chapter articulates the identification between *the mother* and *the child*. A mother can identify herself with her child during the nurturing phase, and the child identifies with its mother. This identification emphasizes an event of intensive interaction between these subjects. Such an event represents a unification of these subjects. Metaphorically, such unification signifies that *the origin of existence* and the existence itself, neither can be separated, nor do they negate each other in order to maintain their respective existence. The origin and the existence neither stand transcendentally nor immanent with existence; instead they embody an experiential relationship. Just like ‘the mother’ and ‘the child,’ the origin of existence and existence affirm their respective identity by maintaining such kind of relationship.

If the chapter suggests the experiential relationship between the origin and the existence, then the principle of affirmation enhances the requirement to know both. My

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Hansen 1992: 218-219.

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. Lau 1979, Yu-Lan 1969, Williams 2006: 434.

argument is different from Lau's concerning the preference for the weak. Despite categorizing *the mother* and *the child* as weak, the chapter does not imply that the identity of the weak prevails over the strong and that the preference of the weak is less of a misconception of the profound foundation of existence. I argue that the chapter only conveys the identity of the constellation of existence.⁴⁸⁹ I suggest that the chapter poetically implies a preference for the experiential relationship between existence and the source rather than an account of their respective identity. The preference 'to go back to hold fast to the mother' is the principle that maintains the reciprocal relationship and in this kind of relationship the moment of unification of the source and the existence is experienced. Furthermore, unification affirms the identity of the respective agent. I think this is a further interpretation of Nishida's account of "the absolute negation qua affirmation."⁴⁹⁰ The absolute negation of the identity of the source, as well as existence brings these subjects to experience the event of unification. Consequently, such unification *affirms* the identity of such an agent. In other words, the principle of affirmation preserves identity through experiential interconnectivity.

The emphasis on the experiential aspect in the ontological conception reappears in chapter 78 and chapter 81 that is the last chapter in this book.

Chapter 78

In the world there is nothing more
submissive and weak than water. Yet for
attacking that which is hard and strong
nothing can surpass it. This is because
there is nothing that can take its place.

天下莫柔弱于水，
而攻堅強者，
莫之能勝，
以其無以易之。

*tian xia mo rou ruo yu shui, er
gong jian qiang zhe mo zhi
neng sheng,
qi wu yi yi zhi.*

That the weak overcomes the strong,
And the submissive overcomes the hard,
Everyone in the world knows yet no one
can put this knowledge in practice.

弱之勝強，
柔之勝剛，
天下莫不知，
莫能行。

*ruo zhi sheng qiang,
rou zhi sheng gang,
tian xia mo bu zhi,
mo neng xing.*

Therefore the sage says,
One who takes on himself the humiliation
of the state
Is called a ruler worthy of offering
sacrifices to the gods of earth and millet;
One who takes on himself the calamity of
the state is called a king worthy of
dominion over the entire empire.

是以聖人云：
「受國之垢，
是謂社稷主；
受國不祥，
是為天下王。」

*shi yi sheng ren yun:
shou guo zhi gou,
shi wei she ji zhu;
shou guo bu xiang,
shi wei tian xia wang.*

Straightforward words seem paradoxical

正言若反。

zheng yan ruo fan.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Lau 1979, Williams 2006.

⁴⁹⁰ Nishida 1970, 1989.

By taking *water* as the reference for the weak, this chapter shows the dynamic comprehension which involves simultaneously the weak and the strong. Moreover, the example of water goes beyond the idea of the circular replacement of the weak over the strong, the submissive over the hard, and this circularity runs vice versa to infinity.⁴⁹¹ Water embodies the experiential unification of the source and the existence, the permanence and the change, the essence and the substance. Water also enhances the reciprocity between these subjects. Furthermore, the chapter applies the explication of how the way of our cognition works in order to produce knowledge about life. By applying the juxtaposed terms, the weak and the strong, the submissive and the hard, our cognition lets the object articulate itself for us. In other words, once again, the application of those words considered the opposite is a typical way the book uses to explain the dynamic vision of the world. With this method the book is able to apply the principle of thought that of affirmation. This is the reason this chapter ends with this poetical proposition, “*straightforward words seems paradoxical.*” To acknowledge the dynamic approach of life is to take into account the interconnectivity between juxtaposed (or what are considered paradoxical) terms.

Chapter 81

Truthful words are not beautiful;

beautiful words are not truthful.

Good words are not persuasive; persuasive words are not good.

He who knows has no wide learning;

he who has wide learning does not know.

信言不美,

美言不信。

善者不辯,

辯者不善。

知者不博,

博者不知。

xin yan bu mei,

mei yan bu xin.

shan zhe bu bian,

bian zhe bu shan.

zhi zhe bu bo,

bo zhe bu zhi.

The sage does not hoard.

Having bestowed all he has on others,
he has yet more;

Having given all he has to others,
he is richer still.

聖人不積,

既以為人已愈有,

既以與人已愈多。

sheng ren bu ji,

ji yi wei ren ji yu

you,

ji yi yu ren ji yu

duo.

The way of heaven benefits and does not harm;
the way of the sage is bountiful and does not contend.

天之道,

利而不害。

聖人之道,

為而不爭

tian zhi dao,

li er bu hai.

sheng ren zhi dao,

wei er bu zheng.

Before moving on to the further discussion of the attending affirmative worldview and the principle of affirmation in other cultural contexts, I would like to point out that this chapter is also important because it reminds us about the use of language. Our language in this sense is the expression of our thoughts. The principle of affirmation connotes the awareness of the limitation of language in order to define meaningful life. Any linguistic expression is not totally correspondent with life as such.

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Lau 1979: 25-27.

The limitation of language and the finitude of human cognition are depicted with the following juxtaposed phrases: “*Truthful words are not beautiful; beautiful words are not truthful.*” These two phrases try to provide the dynamic approach of the meaningful world despite the fact that our language is limited. Given this awareness, such juxtaposed phrases also invite the knowing subject to take into account silence as the realization of the dynamic comprehension of the meaningful world.

Given the silence, the realization of the dynamic comprehension, mental activity or cognition appears as a way of life. Our knowledge has an aim, that is, to produce language as an expression in the hands of the sagacious person to be. Such a linguistic expression helps our mind to grasp the way of sagacity. The way to sagacity is the way of sharing with the fellow other the dynamic knowledge of the intended world. Suzuki asserts this share-ability of sagacious knowledge in the following propositions:

*“But as Kierkegaard points out, the philosopher builds a fine palace, but he is doomed not to live in it—he has a shed for himself next door to what he constructed for others, including himself, to look at.”*⁴⁹²

The *sophia* and *phronesis* do not exclusively belong to the knowledge of the philosopher or the potential sagacious individual. Knowing for the sake of knowledge as such is never admitted to the sagacious man. That is why the sage after “*having bestowed all he has on others, he has yet more.*” In this sense, the principle of affirmation refers to the continued desire to be in experiential relationships with others. For “*the way of the sage is bountiful and does not contend.*” The principle of affirmation makes obtaining knowledge an action to be applied in the pathway to sagacity and to maintain the interconnectivity with nature and other creatures.

6.2 The Sundanese account of *Tritangtu* or the triadic structure of an affirmative worldview

The second part of this chapter explores the Sundanese context in order to explain the attending affirmative worldview and the principle of affirmation. For this purpose, I refer to chapter 3 in the Part I. In this chapter, I have elaborated the pious lessons which reveal the worldview of Sundanese sagacity. Such a worldview is echoed from cosmological expression or from sagacious expressions. The cosmological expression to be explicated is “*Tritangtu*” or the triadic structure of existence. The sagacious expression that will be explored is “*opat kalima pancer*”; this expression emphasizes the term “*pancer*.” Both expressions signify the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview.

⁴⁹² Suzuki 1998: 11.

6.2.1. The contextual setting

According to Jakob Sumardjo, a prominent Sundanese thinker, “*Tritangtu*” or the triadic structure is associated with the Sundanese political system. Another more complex interpretation of the *Tritangtu* finds that it does not only signify the political domain. It also emerges as the triadic structure of ontology. The structure depicts the metaphysical conception of existence according to the Sundanese standpoints.⁴⁹³ In the political domain this triadic structure connotes three ‘socio-political and cultural figures.’ They are ‘*Resi*’ or the highest priest or the religious advisor; ‘*Ratu*’ or ‘*Prabu*,’ a territorial leader (more like a king), and ‘*Rama*’ or the founding father or the prominent elder of a village. These figures fulfill not only political functions, but also spiritual and familial ones. It is interesting to mention that these figures obtain their respective identities by means of their function or their duty. The political identities have no meaning at all unless each figure fulfills their duty respectively.⁴⁹⁴

The duty of the highest priest or the religious advisor is to maintain sagacious knowledge (theoretical and practical, somewhat technical), to lead the religious ceremony, to teach kings, as well as that people about Sundanese values and normative principles. The metaphorical term for the duty of the highest priest is “*silih asah*” or “*the interactive grinding*.” By the value of the interactive grinding, it means that by practicing the duty of teaching or educating kings and people, the highest priest improves the personality of kings and people to be more qualified. Consequently, by doing that, the highest priest also *improves* his qualifications and maintains his position as a religious figure. The duty of *Ratu* or the king is to lead his people to express sagacious knowledge and to realize these normative values in their daily activities. The king is the guard of the expression of such value. He has to guarantee that his people color their respective daily activities in accordance with these paradigmatic values of life and normative standards. The metaphor for this king’s duty is “*silih asih*” or “*the interactive compassion*.” This metaphor means that the king must govern his subjects by means of “compassion,” not absolute power. Thus, the king cannot exercise authoritarianism; instead he has to actualize the quality of compassionate leadership. This quality will encourage the king truly to protect and to serve the people. Reciprocally, by means of carrying out this duty, the king maintains his authority over the people, and also preserves his quality of compassionate personality and leadership. The last figure is *Rama*, or it denotatively means the father. *Rama* can connote the founding father of a village; alternatively he is also the father of the family. He has the authority to represent his subjects or his family. If one closely observes the quality of

⁴⁹³ For the association with political domain see Jakob Sumardjo 2003: 249ff; 2006: 33, 339-342; cf. Yosef Iskandar *Tritangtu di Bumi*, Robert Wessing 1979, 2001, (2003, 2005). For the more advanced interpretation see Jakob Sumardjo 2003, 2006 and Ki Laras Maya 2008 (this last reference is somewhat mystical).

⁴⁹⁴ Jakob Sumardjo 2006: 339ff. Ekadjadi 2005/2009: 141.

the father, one will find that his duty is associated with nurturing activities. This means the father is responsible for the development of his people in accordance with the expression of the values of life and morality. This nurturing quality actually belongs to motherhood rather than to fatherhood. If the maternal quality is associated with the paternal duty, it means that the father is a metaphor for parenting. This metaphor also indicates that the relationship between elders, leaders of a village and a family and their subjects appear to be a familial one. The village actually consists of the primary relatives.⁴⁹⁵ This also means that the familial ties follow the parental systems which affirm the line of the father and that of the mother. The metaphorical term for the father is “*silih asuh*” or interactive nurture. It is the task of the parents and the children to interactively develop good characters in accordance with the Sundanese values of life. The interactive development of sagacious characters becomes the inherent part of daily activities of the people. By doing so the people also develop even nurture their leader, the head of village, the king and also the highest priest.

I now turn to an examination of the sagacious expression that is “*opat kalima pancer*” or “*the four, the fifth (is) the core.*” This expression coheres with *sakawolu* or the 8 sacred pillars.⁴⁹⁶ If *opat kalima pancer* combines with *sakawolu*, the result is 8 compass directions and 1 centre. This symbolic combination connotes the sun or a *mandala*.

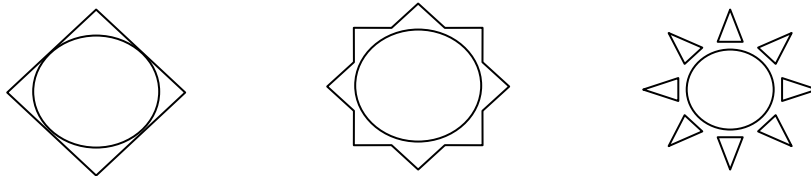


Figure 8: The symbolic diagrams of *opat kalima pancer* and *sakawolu* or the *mandala* and the Sun.⁴⁹⁷

This sagacious expression mainly applies to the political domain, especially if this expression connotes a *mandala*.⁴⁹⁸ A kingdom or a political unit is a symbol for the universe, *macrocosm*. A *mandala* or a microcosm represents the holistic and complete occupation of the territory. Therefore, it also depicts a total vision of the world as if the political unit maintains the order throughout the entire world. This total vision will be

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. Robert Wessing 1979, Ekadjati 2005: 172ff.

⁴⁹⁶ Sumardjo 2006a: 264-267. The eight sacred pillars connote the eight direction of compass. These directions comprise two squares, which also refer to the *mandala* or the diagram of universe. By relating the three with the *mandala*, this poetical line connotes three with the perfect beginning. In the Sundanese sense, one should differentiate the source and the beginning.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. Sumardjo 2002: 24; 2003: 66-67; 2006b: 186.

⁴⁹⁸ Sumardjo 2006a: 303-306. *Mandala* is the Indian cosmological concept, especially Buddhism's one. This concept was adapted by some ancient Sundanese kingdoms since the end of 16th century CE.

unintelligible unless one considers the determinant role of the centre. The concept of *mandala* takes into account the concentric centre as the primordial essence of a kingdom, that is, the absolute power. This absolute power in this sense is embodied in the palace or with the king himself. Therefore, the absolute power is associated with the term “*pancer*,” which in the Sundanese lexicon denotes *the core, water fountain, or sunlight*. This term, if one refers to the absolute power of the palace and the king, connotes the constitutive authority of political power to maintain the prosperity of the kingdom. That is the reason that the term ‘*pancer*’ suitably connotes terms such as *extend* or *expand*.⁴⁹⁹ These terms take into account the abilities of the absolute authority of the king and the palace to extend the kingdom for ages and to expand its territory until it reaches the end of the world. To exercise this duty the king should be supported by his kingdom or his subjects. It is the king who has the duty of protecting and developing the lives of people and the land, but it is the duty of his kingdom and his subjects to support him with their respective approval. This support sometimes can be identified by tributes, but most often with people’s total submission to the authority of the king.

Thus, it is clear that the triadic structure and the conception of the *mandala* in the political domain constitutively represent an interactive relationship. This type of relationship occurs among the triadic figures and between the king (the palace) and his kingdom, or his subjects. This interactivity in turn determines the identity of the highest priest, the king and the people. Their respective statuses become meaningful because of the exercise of duties. These duties naturally grow from the nature of humanity and they reveal the interconnectivity of any type of manifestations of life. In other words, the duties embody the affirmative relationship. Moreover, this is a natural capability and it intuitively flows from the inner part of humanity. The idea of an affirmative relationship is indispensable for understanding the interpretation of the triadic structure and the *opat kalima pancer* or *mandala* in metaphysical terms.

6.2.2 *Tritangtu* and ‘*Opat kalima Pancer*’ as the attending affirmative worldview

A metaphysical interpretation of this triadic structure emphasizes the idea of equality and the unification which characterizes the property of the affirmative relationship as such.⁵⁰⁰ Both ideas seem to contradict to each other. ‘Equality’ presupposes that existence consists of many, while ‘unification’ refers to the singular representation of existence as the one. If then both ideas characterizes the affirmative relationship implied in existence, one can indicate that existence conceptually appears as the one and the many at once. Yet this interpretation still considers only a fragment of existence, as if existence can be divided into small units. This interpretation also places ‘the one’ vis-à-

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. my interpretation concerning the term ‘*pancer*’ as the middle and the intermediary in chapter 3.

⁵⁰⁰ Sumardjo 2003.

vis ‘the many,’ as if the first were the impartial and indifferent or the pure representation, while the other refers to partiality or an incomplete representation of existence.

If one goes beyond the interpretation above, one will discover that the properties of an affirmative relationship, that is, equality and unification are not contradictory. Instead, both signify the dynamic comprehension of life. They affirm the complexity of life, as well as the limitations of human cognition to grasp such complexity. Our cognition needs these juxtaposed terms, *the one and the many, the equality and the unification* so that one can construct the description of life as such. I suggest this application of the juxtaposed terms as the “*guiding interconnectivity*”. By ‘the guiding interconnectivity’ I imagine the existence of one side determines that of the opposite other in juxtaposed connectivity. A subject cannot exist only by establishing its individuality. Instead one recognizes self-existence by affirming and by being affirmed by the existence of others. In other words, I perceive my existence because my presence directs me to acknowledge the other and because I am acknowledged by the presence of the other. With this active and passive acknowledgement, existence is intelligible. This infers that existence *implies* interactive identification.

So far, some experts on the Sundanese metaphysical conception, including Undang Darsa and Edi S. Ekadjati (2004), Edi S. Ekadjati (2005/2009), Jakob Sumardjo (2003, 2004, 2006) and Robert Wessing (1979, 1988, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2006) have explained the “*Tritangtu*” by means of symbols, icons, folklore and myths. The explanations provide a semiotic approach for deciphering such signs. Nevertheless, this approach provides an abstraction of a complete conception of the local cosmology, not to explain the moral implications from such signs. The significance of a local cosmology as a constitutive web of culture is because it provides an interpretive explication for the existence of the local society and the world as well. This interpretive approach, according to Geertz, aims to provide meaning rather than to produce a theoretical law.⁵⁰¹

The interpretive approach to the meaning of *Tritangtu* as it is implied in the semiotic media explains the triadic layers of existence.⁵⁰² The first layer is the upper-world, the heaven, (*Buana Nyungcung*) which consists of nine stratifications and which is inhabited by the supernatural personification, heavenly deities, spirits, and the sacred animals. The second is the underworld, the earth, (*Buana Larang* or *Patala*, or, *Bumi Paniisan*) which is inhabited by the chthonic forces and supernatural figures. Sumardjo argues that these layers represent heaven and hell. The indigenous conception does not know such a destination in afterlife. In the underworld live gods and goddesses which maintain the life of the creatures and the balance of the natural elements (land, water,

⁵⁰¹ Geertz 2000: 5.

⁵⁰² Sumardjo 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Wessing 1988, 2006; cf. Geertz 1969, 1971, 2000.

and air) in the third layer.⁵⁰³ It may be asked where then are the bad spirits? The indigenous belief places these kinds of spirits in the *Mandala Samar* which is one layer just before the ultimate one. In this stratification, the bad spirits have to purify themselves by means of reincarnation. Thus, it is more like a purgatory (in the Christian sense) than a conception of hell and eternal punishment. Sumardjo continues that the identification of such afterlife destinations, the upperworld associated with heaven, or the underworld with hell, comes from the Indian (and Chinese) heritage of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Meanwhile, the third layer is the middle-world (*Buana Panca Tengah*) which is the place for human, animals and plants, as well as the material things. The upper-world and the underworld, the heaven and the earth can be represented by some sacred animals and plants which are some real and some fictional. They are the tiger, snake, dragon, monkey (also called *wanara*), *ciung* (a species of singing bird), cock, water buffalo, phoenix, eagle, *garuda*, *kawung* (a species of palm tree), rice and many others. One can find the sacred animals and plants in the middle-world. They are believed as the (re)incarnation of the supernatural figures and spirits; alternatively they represent the incorporation of the bad spirits. The middle-world is also the place where one can find the *axis mundi*. The idea of the *axis mundi* or the intermediary can be identified only in the place where there is life. Especially for human beings, the traditional account of this layer separates mankind into two categories.

The first category is *jelema* and the second is *manusa*.⁵⁰⁴ The first category denotes *creature* in English. Furthermore, it conceives of a man who is still taking the form of a natural creature. He or she is not transformed yet into a *real* human being. In other words, a *jelema* refers to a person who still needs to develop his or her personality. This kind of man should direct himself or herself into the realization of sagacious selfhood. The second category reveals the condition of the sagacious selfhood. *Manusa* is the full realization of a person's wise character. This desired realization is marked by a natural capability to be the intermediary. In other words, the sagacious selfhood should be able to maintain the reciprocal relationship with nature and supernatural figures. This is the duty of the *axis mundi*. To be the intermediary a sagacious person applies some constitutive symbols and semiotic media and he or she should be able to express an open mind towards the natural phenomena. The constitutive symbols and the semiotic media are, for example, a mountain, water fountain, rocky shrines, graves, groves, playing musical instruments (*kacapi*, *suling* [bamboo flute]), displaying puppet shows (*wayang*), telling sacred stories (*pantun* or poetic narrative) and performing

⁵⁰³ See Sumardjo 2006a: 63. It is interesting that the underworld is inhabited by *Sang Nugraha Batara Nagaraja*, or the Dragon-King, *Naga Rahiyang Niskala* or the immortal Dragon-Spirit, and the female figure: *Nini Bagawat Sang Sri* whose "duty" is to maintain the fertility of the land together with her husband: *Aki Bagawat Sang Sri*.

⁵⁰⁴ See Laras Maya 2007: 25-26, Sumadjo 2006a: 62.

religious feasts (*slametan*). With these practices being a wise selfhood is identical with becoming the mediator, the *axis mundi*. This capability, according to Ki Laras Maya, is defined by the Sundanese term *patalina*.⁵⁰⁵ The word denotes *interconnector* or “link up” in English, while it connotes the ability to weave the web of life together with the universe (*alam*) and the supernatural figure (*Gusti*).

As far as this capability of weaving the web of life together with the other *figures* of life is concerned, one has to continue a further interpretation of the *Tritangtu*. The triadic structure in this respect does not only represent the explanation of the cosmic order between the macrocosm and the microcosm. The interpretation should move from this cosmological meaning into an existential one. To do this one should take into account the attending affirmative worldview. The exploration focuses on the symbolic number 3. According to the Sundanese, three is the semiotic representation of existence. The signification of the number does not only explain the cosmic order, but also it depicts the ontological conception of existence. Sumardjo consider such conception as *the pattern of three (pola tiga)*. This pattern comes from the dry-field community (*ladang*). This type of community lives by ploughing their fields and they are no longer dependent on the forest to get their food. The important idea in this *way of fulfilling the daily needs* is that the people abstract the idea of *birth* and *creativity* from what they do for daily activities.⁵⁰⁶

The metaphorical idea of the three can be identified in the following Sundanese poetic (*pantun*) explanation of existence.⁵⁰⁷

“ngaran tilu sakawolu
ngaran dua sakarupa
sahiji keunana pasti”;

“Tilu sapamula
Dua sakarupa
Hiji eta-eta keneh”.

*My translation: “The name three comes out of
the eight sacred pillars (mandala)
The name two is the similar appearances
The One is the absolute”;*

*“Three is at the beginning,
Two is the equal,
(and) One is still as it is”*

My interpretation of these lines is that the *three* refers to the many, the *two* refers to the juxtaposed conception of existence, and the *one* is certainly the unification of existence. Such unification is also associated with the source.

Furthermore, these lines consist of the idea of unification and that of the unreduced many. The one and the many are two complemented conceptions which avoid the dissolution of the many into the one or the submission of the many under the

⁵⁰⁵ Ki Laras Maya 2008: 15-17.

⁵⁰⁶ Sumardjo 2006b chap. 7 & 9. I develop Sumardjo’s idea of the pattern of three. I consider that this type of community is the spiral development of the previous type, that is, the hunting and gathering community. I prefer this development more than the theory of the linear evolution of society as if the dry-field community were the new phase of development leaving behind all characteristics of the previous one. For the purpose of this elaboration, I do not discuss the development of community in the cultural-historical sense.

⁵⁰⁷ See Sumardjo 2006a: 264.

one. Unification in this sense embodies the singularity as well as the plurality. The unification of the one and the many is what the three stands for. The three embodies the idea of the affinity between the one and the many, that their interconnectivity constructs the comprehensive ontological vision of existence; that they are interconnecting to each other. Hence, I do not think that the unification, the one in this sense can associated with monism.⁵⁰⁸ Monism only conceives of the teleological condition of the one, the creator which includes the many, the creatures. Such inclusion explains that the creatures are merely composed of the attributes of the one and all dissolve under the criterion of the one.⁵⁰⁹ Nevertheless, unification in this sense belongs to mystical experience and it is not sufficiently explored by such a cognitive explanation. As far as this mystical experience is concerned, such experience will not suggest the idea of an opposition between the absolute one against the submissive many. Hence the unification of the one and the many symbolized in the three and the triadic structure is not the complementary opposition. Instead, the unification reveals the interconnectivity in the conception of existence.

Taking another interpretive approach to the triadic structure, Sumardjo and other anthropologists treat the middle-world as the place of mankind. *Here* human beings have the duty to weave interconnectivity and so do the other figures in the triadic structure. This parallelism in duties of interconnectivity is caused by the fact that the triadic structure implies equality among the figures. As far as the equality of the triadic figures is concerned, interconnectivity is the heart of the respective manifestation of these triadic subjects: mankind, nature and the supernatural figures.

The comprehensive ontological vision according to the Sundanese sagacious expressions, “*Tritangtu*” and “*pancer*” is the dynamic interconnectivity. This is the vision becomes clear when one recognizes the juxtaposed terms not as a contradictory pair, but as the intelligible comprehensive complement. Moreover, existence, whatever it is, appears intelligible if human cognition lets existence express itself as it is. If human cognition prematurely intervenes in the self-revelation of existence, the result is not a comprehensive viewpoint of existence as such. The intervention will produce the cognitive mapping of existence. I do not intend to provide such cognitive mapping of existence by proposing the principle of affirmation. Rather, my intention is to suggest that human cognition has several epistemological foundations. The principle of affirmation is one of them. Guided by the principle of affirmation epistemological foundation our cognition then describes the self-revelation of existence by means of employing juxtaposed terms so that the self-revelation of existence becomes intelligible.

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. Sumardjo 2006a: 42-43; 2006b: 17.

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. Schaffer, 2007. The cognitive explanation considers the attribution of oneness in monism as the teleological conception, the target of being one and the units counted as one, the singular or the plural.

Regarding this ontological understanding according to the Sundanese sagacious expression, one can take into account other conception of true reality of existence in the Sundanese context. The understanding of interconnectivity is also depicted into the diagram of '*pancer*'. While the triadic structure offers the idea of the meta-space so as to the upper-world, the underworld and the middle-world in order to explain the interconnectivity, the diagram of '*pancer*' offers the idea of the intermediary core in order to enhance the interconnectivity as the role play in the conception of mandala

The '*pancer*' also reveals the manifestations of existence, which is not only an attribute of true substance. The Sundanese metaphysical conception does not theorize that existence in terms of essence, substance, and attributes —like Aristotle and other Western philosophers do. There is no account of a rigid distinction between the substance and attributes or the essence and the substance. Instead each manifestation exists by identifying the interconnectivity of the essence (the supernatural figure) and the substance (the universe and the human). By this interconnectivity I mean that the Almighty is recognized through the aesthetic configuration of the universe and through the intensive awareness of the human mind which reflects on such an aesthetic appearance of the universe. The understanding of mankind cannot be separated from the idea that human beings emanate from the supernatural figure and nature. Nature in turn is the expression of how the supernatural figure maintains life and how mankind develops the quality of life.

One can also theorize that nature is the manifestation of the supernatural figures and mankind's creative '*expression*' and '*manifestation*' in this sense indicates how the Sundanese culture explains the interconnectivity which dynamically affirms the existence of others. Therefore, one should focus on the elaboration of the affirmative worldview by taking into account the interpretation of '*pancer*.' '*Pancer*' expresses the core as the intermediary. The core in this vision is transformed from the position or self-identity into role play. In the Sundanese conception, role play is determinant on other factors than position or self-identity. In other words, if I may rephrase, a role play exceeds a self-identity; or an interactivity which carried out in a role play as such convey the true meaning of existence.

The affirmative worldview in the Sundanese conception conceives of a distinction between role play, position and self-identity. The first is the main interpretation of the term '*pancer*' for the position of the core. The core is recognized not by its middle position, but by its role play. The core transforms itself from being the concentric accumulation of the authoritative power into being able to initiate and then to maintain an interconnectivity for all manifestations of life. In this sense, the core appears as the intermediary middle which has role to interconnect the four (or eight) compass directions (or pillars in *Mandala* sense. One can associate these compass directions with the upper-world and the underworld, the front [the future] and the back [the past]). By realizing the role of the intermediary middle the core affirms a

uniqueness of itself together with the four This conception of meta-space also implies the awareness of a unique unification of any individual subjects. The unification affirms the plurality of the manifestations of life. Metaphorically said when the core or the sunlight illuminates all compass directions, its brightness weaves all directions into a unified picture of an interconnected landscape. By illuminating and unifying the landscape, the centre affirms each unique appearance of the manifestations of life. This unification in turn conveys that heaven, earth and human beings are equal to each other so that each figure has the duty of being an interconnector for the other two.

6.2.3 The principle of affirmation as implied in the Sundanese context

The attending affirmative worldview have been indicated by the triadic structure, *Tritangtu* and the sagacious expression “*opat kalima pancer*” or especially revealed by the term ‘*pancer*.’ One can derive the principle of affirmation from these two epistemological presuppositions. I understand the principle of affirmation to refer to the method of maintaining the cognitive activity when our mind perceives of the things as themselves. Yet, an exploration of the principle should not ignore that Sundanese thinking does not apply a rigid distinction between epistemological and ethical thought. The Sundanese mind takes into account these philosophical approaches as complementary thinking. To think of principles of thought, like logic is to affirm that the ethical account is the inherent consequence. It is impossible to separate the epistemological and ethical mind in their respective domains. Furthermore, this mode of thought is intelligible as the logical inference of the presuppositions, affirmation and the affirmative worldview.

Regarding this definition of the principle of affirmation, I suggest some fragments of the pious lessons of the sagacious selfhood in the Sufic Shrine *Nagara Padang*. These fragments focus on the lessons of the wise-to-be person who already manages a fulfilment of daily needs and a kind of ruling authority. A *successful* person, a mature individual should be able not only to express the philanthropic a socio-ethical theory towards others, a mature individual is also capable to express the philanthropic habits when he or she naturally actualizes the noble values of life. This internal motivation (*hidep/hedap*) can be understood if one realizes the affirmative worldview. This is the reason that the ontological foundation interactively determines the socio-ethical one, and vice versa.

The following is the lessons of the ‘successful person in his or her business.’⁵¹⁰

“*Ayeuna naék ka tonggoh, aya nu ka sebut Gedong Peteng. Gedong Peteng atawa kauangan téa, kantor kauangan. Tah dinya sabab budak téh geus nékadna ti dinya moncor tina geus panyipuan, geus meunang ngagodog* My translation: “Now we are going to climb to the next stop. There is a place called the Dark Cave. The child, who already passes the final examination and has the initiation rite, wants to find a job so that he can fulfill his daily

⁵¹⁰ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008.

Part II

moncor ka dinya, geus nempona pan nempo duit. Pan hayang gawé, ku hayang boga duit..”

“Butuh panghasilan tina ladang sakola téh, keur kahirupanana. Tah asup ka gedong peteng. Tah didinya munajat. Meureun éta budak téh poék haténa da can boga gawé. Ieu mah urang gambarkeun ka budak téh nya. Supaya ieu mah jelas. Tah si budak téh meureun ka dinya. Da hayang boga gawé hayang boga duit, peteng haténa téh. Ari batur geus gawé ari aing can. Hayang boga gawé kawas batur. Da ari geus nempo duit mah geus apal. Asup, munajat asup kana Gedong Peteng. Sanajan di Gedong Peteng, supaya diilangkeun pepetengna supaya caang padang téa. Naon, lamun ieu mah gawé sing buru-buru meunang gawé, sing buru-buru usaha sing meunang panghasilan, nya munajat di kauangan. Ari kauangan lain paranti nginjem ka bank gaib. Ngan didinya urang ngadua di kauangan atawa di Gedong Peteng. Nuhunkeun dorong doa ti para karuhun urang, anu tadi téa, nuhunkeun dipangusulkeun, dipang tawasulkeun ka nu maha agung, ka dat mahakawasa saking tékad urang sing diijabah naon nu ditujukeun nu pikahayang. Nyaeta mun engke mah tina ladang sakola hayang buru-buru gawé, lamun pepeteng dina haté sing geura dicaangkeun.”

One’s daily occupation as a farmer, a trader, a teacher, a governmental officer, etc., has something to do with the child passes the initiation process. Entering adulthood means to be self-independent in fulfilling one’s daily needs. An adult can ask for guidance from the heavenly ancestors and the Almighty for getting a job and performing daily work. When the adult manages to fulfill his or her daily living, then there is another duty to perform, that is, philanthropic activity. This philanthropy is based on the act of charity or *amal ibadah*. One does not have to be rich in order to be charitable. One should be charitable at anytime and under any conditions. The pious-lessons fragment below indicates this duty.⁵¹¹

“Apan ménta kamajuan jalan usaha? Dibabarikeun usaha. Sabab nyuhunkeun sakieu, lamun munajat di kauangan sakieu. Abdi nuhunkeun digampilkeun ngalak rizki, atawa nuhunkeun rizki saseueur-seueurna. Hiji

needs. The child needs income to support his life; that is why he or she prays at this place. If the child still can’t find a job, he or she is in the dark; that is why praying in this place is to find illumination, or guidance to find a suitable job to support his or her living.”

“We need income for our living. Entering the cave, a pilgrim prays there and he asks to have guidance for an occupation he or she will do. He or she prays for illumination so that he or she can strengthen his or her motivation; and the heavenly ancestors and the Almighty confirm this intention and lead his/her motivation to have a successful occupation for his/her living. This is why a pilgrim asks for an illumination to brighten his dark situation.”

My translation: “Does a man need a daily work for his life, isn’t he? In a daily life, after an adult gets a job, he starts life on his or her own.

One can pray for an abundant income. Yet,

⁵¹¹ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008.

keur bekel amal, keur bekel ibadah, keur méré maweh ka sanak warga kaluwarga, rizki nu turun temurun ka anak incuna. Ulah aya carita urang ménta rizki anak urang rék dibikeun, anu aturan téh nyimpang téh ulah. Nuhunkeun rizki anu seueur hiji keur bekel amal, bekel ibadah, keur méré maweh ka sanak warga sakaluwargi. Omat. Rizki lain keur pribadi”.

“Enya rizki téh, dinuhunkeun rizki nu seueur, hiji keur bekel amal, bekel ibadah, keur méré maweh ka sanak warga. Ari sanak warga téh umum. Sanak warga kaluwarga. Ari kaluwarga téh nu deukeut, ari sanak téh jararauh, warga téh batur pan, ngan meureunan wajib ditulung ku urang. Malah rizkina nu turun temurun ka anak incu urang.

“Atuh rék amal ibadah téh kumaha meureunan? Apan amal ibadah téh keur hirup. Éta pan kudu keur hirup urang. Keur urang hiji keur jagjag, keur bisa usaha didinya amal ibadah sabab lamun geus kolot geus ripuh moal bisa amal ibadah, paling ge kudu diamalan ku batur diderek. Nya. Atuh meureun urang lamun teu soso-soso amal ibadah ti keur jagjag ti keur aya mah iraha dék amal ibadah, keburu maot atuh urang. Sedengkeun kesempatan amal ibadah aya didinya. Sabab engke balik kaditu mah mun kahadean bakal murag kahadeanana, mun goréng kari murag kagorenganana urang. Geus balik ke beulah ditu mah”.

after his or her business bears its fruit, one should remember that his or her income is not only for himself or herself. The income is for realizing an act of charity. We might ask for an affordance, yet this material abundance is not only for our interest. It is our duty to support our brothers and sisters so that they can fulfill their own living. To fulfill the needs of our children and other members of community is the part of this act of charity.

“We can say that our income is for the act of charity by supporting others’ lives either they are our close family, friends or everyone in our community. We do this because their good life is also our responsibility”.

“We carry out the act of charity during our life. We should not postpone the charity until we are rich, or later when we are old. We can no longer help people if we are old or if we are dead. The act of charity cannot be postponed. It has to be done in our lifetime, in any condition, here while we are still on earth. Later, in the afterlife, we can only harvest what we have done here. If our life now is charitable we can harvest good things there, if it is self-centered, we will harvest the bad”.

The pious lessons above tell us that carrying out the duty of charity is a matter which must be taken care of in our life time. This is an indication of the principle of affirmation. This principle articulates a dynamic interconnectivity between an adult and the others. Such interconnectivity should be affirmative in order to maintain the quality of life of the others. The interconnectivity in this respect makes one affirm the life of the other. The duty of charity has nothing to do with what one will get in afterlife. This duty naturally flows from our nature as human beings. We are responsible for the life of others no matter what condition we are experiencing. This is the determining interconnection. Our existence affirms the life of others, and so do the others for our living. Metaphorically said, it is the life as such which motivates human beings in whatever condition to affirm others’ existence.

The capability to exercise charitable activity in order to support others’ daily lives is then associated with the ethical principle of *ngarérét*, or “to look at our surrounds.” This ethical principle enhances the idea of the principle of affirmation. To

look at our surroundings is to be aware of the contextual setting of our life. It is a human's responsibility to develop the quality of life in their surroundings. This duty is described in the following fragment.⁵¹²

"Ayeuna dagang geus kapanggih kaunggulanana, geus kapanggih kamajuanana, dagangna payu, batina lumayan gede. Sok kudu eling didinya, hiji amal ibadah. keukeuh sanajan beunangna ku urang, éta rizki pasti aya hak fakir miskin, urang kudu sanggup tulung pinulungan. Sipatna urang kudu bisa ngarérét. Aya carita ngarérét katuhu, ceuk sunda mah, ngarérét katuhu tuh batur tulungeun, nya. Ngarérét ka kénca tah baraya bélaeun."

My translation: "Now, our business is successful, or it shows a progression, we enjoy the benefit of it, the gain is much. Now it is time to be aware that we have the duty of charitable acts. Even we can claim that our benefit is ours, this affordance is also the right of the poor. Therefore we have to be able to help each other. Our nature should be able to look at our surrounds (ngarérét). This is the story of "looking at the right," according to Sundanese people; Look at the right, there are our brothers and sisters who need to be supported, Look at the left, there is everyone in the community to be defended."

The principle of affirmation also suggests the idea that one cannot claim success as their own individual right. Our success is also the right of the others so that they can enjoy it together with us. *Ngarérét* in this sense is not only a religious duty towards the other because "*amal ibadah*" or the act of charity is similar to the Islamic doctrine of philanthropy. The 'translation' of *ngarérét* into '*amal ibadah*' is a way of understanding this principle of affirmation. If one can focus on the implication of the principle, one reveals that the principle is not merely a socio-ethical attitude. *Ngarérét* also implies the thinking domain which emphasizes the cognitive capability to 'be aware of' or 'to recognize' the contextual and temporal setting around a subject. This capability also indicates that such awareness or recognition is "the theory of the charitable action." In other words, to look at our surrounding is to theorize the contextual setting which motivates a subject to be able to respond to the situation in his or her neighbourhood. Thus, *ngarérét* in this respect comprises of two approaches. The first one is the ethical praxis towards the others. The second one is the cognitive theory of the contextual and temporal setting. The first connotes *phronesis* which is the technical and practical knowledge of philanthropy, while the latter is associated with *sophia* which theorizes sagacious knowledge of philanthropy. The latter covers the mental activity from the sagacious disposition which is the initial response of the wise to the increased awareness that relies on the theoretical reflection on the context.

The nuance of the theory and practice of sagacious knowledge towards others and the context reappears in an intense level of interpretation. In the next phase of the

⁵¹² Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008.

pilgrimage at the Shrine Gunung Padang, one will reflect on ‘authoritative power.’ The pious lessons about this quality of leadership are as follows.⁵¹³

“Tah lamun weton sipatna jalur Karaton. Sabab ti dinya budak téh mun carita budak téh geus boga gawé, budak téh. Geus ngudag kauangan mah berarti geus munajat di kauangan geus ningkat kana gawé, geus boga udagan aya kahayang tujuan anu katangtuanna boh gawé di pamarentahanana boh kumaha, boh dina jalan tani, boh jalan dagang, boh jalan naon, (jeung) kapangkatanana sagala, ti dinya ayeuna munajat di Karaton. Lamun kaitanana jeung hirup manusa mah, didinya tempat munajat: hiji kawibawaan sebab meureunan lamun digawé atawa geus boga usaha kudu boga kawibawaan. Ceuk ayeuna karisma téa meureun ceuk bahasa kieu mah. Kawibawaan ka dinya munajat keur kawibawaan, keur kaunggulan. Hiji kawibawaan, kaunggulan, kajayaanana dina usahana boh di pamarentahanana, keur kasalametan lahirna, keur kasalametan batinna, selamat dunyana, selamat akheratna tah didinya, munajatna didinya. Ari ngudagna cenah di keraton ngudag kaunggulan, kajayaan, sabab lamun urang duduk di paméréntahan tanpa maké kaunggulan moal bisa. Keukeuh kudu aya kaunggulan aya dina kajayaan. Ayeuna mun dagang, pan meureunan kudu tenar jeung unggul kakara bisa maju. Tah eusi keur kawibawaan tempat Karaton. Ogé lamun aya hiji didinya munajat hayang naékkeun kadudukan, naék pangkat tah bisa munajat di Karaton”.

My translation: “Here is the main character of the way of Karaton. It is told that after having a suitable occupation, the child is able to fulfill the daily needs. To satisfy daily living is to follow the way or the child’s destination. Consequently, the child in whatever his/her occupation, is able to improve the quality of life. This improvement of the quality of life means an embodiment of the authoritative power or self-competency. The child can realize this authoritative power for his/her own good here in this world or later in the afterlife. The authoritative power has no meaning if it does not entail glorification. Therefore a pilgrim can pray for the authoritative power for his or her leadership”.

“Ngan lamun nyambungna Nagara Padang teu aya unsur nyalikakeun batur, tapi ungsurna keur ngajungjungkeun diri pribadi lamun legana ka dulur, atuh ka legana pisan ka warga urang, atawa naon, ka sawareh. Keur nangtungkeun hiji diri pribadi, dua lamun geus kaudag urang kaunggulan keur tulung tumulungan téa, mun teu mah kudu sanggup munajatna didieu boga jangji. Mun geus kapanggih dina kaunggulan dina kamajuan, kudu sanggup nulung ka nu butuh nalang ka nu susah, nganter ka nu keueung, méré ka nu daek. Nyaangkeun (nu keur poék)”.

“One should remember that the realization of authoritative power is related to the meaning of Nagara Padang. One should achieve his/her leadership without doing harm to the people. The authoritative power is to glorify oneself but the effect of such glorification should appear as something to benefit the people. Everyone, whoever and whatever, he or she, should get the benefit of the leadership. The authoritative power is to motivate the leader and the people to support each other. The pilgrim who prays at this stop has a promise, that one day after he or she enjoys the authoritative power and its benefit, he or she should be able to support others’ lives. He or

⁵¹³ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008.

she should be able to support people who are in need, to stand by people who are in trouble, to guide they who are ignorant, to give people what they want. To illuminate those who are in the darkness.”

The principle of affirmation is rephrased in the second paragraph. The self-fulfillment of daily needs is related to the responsibility to develop one’s authoritative power or self-competency. Consequently, the expression of the self-authoritative power in leadership means that the leader should be able to apply his or her power to develop others’ quality of life. This is another explanation of the principle of affirmation. The ruling power will be useless unless one applies it for the benefit of the people. The principle of affirmation in this context is associated with the principle of “*nulung ka nu butuh nalang ka nu susah, nganter ka nu keueung, méré ka nu daek*” (“to support those who are in need, to stand by those who are in trouble, to guide those who are ignorant, to give people what they want”). Metaphorically the formulation of the principle is “*Nyaangkeun nu keur poék*” or “to illuminate those who are in the darkness”. It is interesting to note that the principle of affirmation connotes these verbs: ‘*nulung*’ (to support), ‘*nalang*’ (to stand by), ‘*nganter*’ (to guide), ‘*méré*’ (to give), and the metaphorical verb ‘*nyaangkeun*’ (to illuminate). These verbs reveal the interconnectivity of the subject and others as if our existence would be meaningless without acknowledging the presence of others’ and vice versa. This is not another way of understanding the Hegelian dialectic of the Master and the Slave. According to the Sundanese conception, the reciprocal relation between the leader and the people is not one that of the Master and the Slave. Instead, the leader and the people are in equal positions. The authoritative power of a leader does not make him or her superior to the people. This is not about the rebellious dependency of a slave to on the master. This is about a theory that applies authoritative power as a strong an intense motivation of the leader to share life with his subjects.

The authoritative power in this sense has to do with other principles and some noble values of life. They are ‘*welas asih*’ (in Indonesian Islamic terms, *rohman rohim*, localizations of the Arabic *ar-rahmani ar-rahim*) or compassion; ‘*silih asah, silih asuh, silih asih*’ or the mutual teaching, mutual nurturing, and offering mutual compassion; ‘*silihwangi*’ or the mutual dignification; and ‘*sapajajaran*’ or equality. These noble principles and values of life embody a divine level of life qualities. I suggest that the interpretation of this divine level of life’s quality is connected in part to the connotation of the term ‘*pancer*.’ The guardian of the Shrine indicates the connotation of ‘*pancer*’ is the position of the middle. Metaphorically said, ‘*pancer*’ is the Almighty. He says:

“Pancer tengahna. Tah, ari pancer tengahna ka mana? Mun tiba-tiba kaler, kidul, kulon, wétan, tengahna téh anging anu nyiptakeun urang Dat mahakawasa. Kadinya hartina téh. My translation: “‘Pancer’ is the middle. Thus, where does the middle expand? It is impossible to know that it immediately expands to the north, south, west, and east unless one

Ayeuna mun diwujudkeun kana diri urang. Pancerna, anu tara bohong téa di urang, atawa batin urang, haté urang".⁵¹⁴

identifies that the movement is because of the middle. The middle is the Almighty who creates us. That is the meaning. Now if the middle applies in our self, that 'Pancerna' is the part in our selfhood which never lies, it is our heart, our inner-self."

The inner-self or our heart in this sense is the microcosm which resemble the capability of the Almighty, that is, that of 'expanding' or 'extending' in order to reach out any kind of the manifestations of life. This is the interconnectivity of existence as the web of life which reaches out to all things and all fellow human beings. I suggest the principle of affirmation as a growing spiral. The developing layers of the spiral movement articulate the extending interconnectivity of all directions.

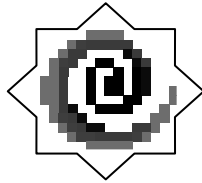


Figure 9: The spiral movement of affirmation.

Thus, when the 'pancer' or the middle is expanding, it reaches out in all directions in order to maintain interconnectivity between the core and all directions or the periphery.

Furthermore, the interpretation of 'pancer' as the expanding core implies another understanding of the principle of equality or *sapajajaran* in the Sundanese context. Sumardjo formulates this equality in the Sundanese poetical phrase "*cangkang rejeung eusina kudu sarua lobana*" of which I have suggested a literal translation on chapter 3: "*the shell [or the peel] and the seed should be the same amount.*" I suggest developing Sumardjo's interpretation of this phrase.⁵¹⁵

The shell or '*cangkang*' stands the designation because a shell is the outer appearance which designates the inner part, while the seed or '*eusi*' stands for the essence because it embodies the potential source, something to be self-revealed at the level of appearance. When designation and essence are regarded as the same measure, one can find that this 'measurement' refers more to the quality of these subjects than the quantity of them. In other words, the appearance of the thing is the same quality with the potential inside of the thing. This proposition does not represent the dualistic approach of ontology. It is not a theory which takes the outer appearance to be less valuable than the inner aspects of the thing. According to Sumardjo, the Sundanese mind prefers to theorize that the designation is as valuable as the essence. Nevertheless,

⁵¹⁴ Pak Undang in Djunatan 2008.

⁵¹⁵ Sumardjo 2006a: 331-336.

this is not the expression of *the complementary opposition*, as Sumardjo has argued.⁵¹⁶ Rather, the pair of designation-essence reveals the comprehensive vision, and the way of thinking which conceives of the dynamic interconnectivity of the quality embodied in life

Given this understanding, then, one can establish the role play of the middle, that is, interconnectivity, is associated with essence, while the position and the self-identity of the centre is associated with the designation. This connotation is possible due to the principle of affirmation. (Interconnectivity in this sense is the potential expression of the centre, or existential role for existence. Interconnectivity as the essence is something to be self-revealed in the level of designation in order to affirm the existence of the position of the intermediary middle and the directions).

6.3. The principle of affirmation throughout three Asian contexts

I want to end this chapter by proposing some formulations of the principle of affirmation after I explored some of the sagacious texts in various Asian contexts, including Chinese *Daodejing* and the Sundanese pious lessons. From these texts as one can see, these explanations focus on an epistemological discourse which tries to give a response to the quest whether there is mode of ontological and epistemological paradigm. This model can be an alternative to be proposed in the context of the intercultural encounters⁵¹⁷

Given these definitions, I would like to start with the idea of interconnectivity as a concept of existence which is implied in *Daodejing* and in the Sundanese pious lessons. The concept of interconnectivity in these cultural contexts is not precisely the same in detail, yet they provide a similar approach. Below are some formulations of the interconnectivity.

- a. *An expression of being can be formulated by juxtaposed expressions which often appear as an opposite pair of the quality of being. To that extent, this opposite pair is an implicit description of interconnectivity as the ontological conception of being.*

The constitutive understanding of the interconnectivity is that existence can reveal itself to human cognition without any intervention. It is better for the human mind to let existence appear as such, rather than to interfere or to design a signification for existence. By letting existence appear, our cognition needs to apply a juxtaposed expression in the form of a linguistic expression. The juxtaposed expressions or terms are the solution for the problem of knowing, or precisely the production of knowledge about existence. The application of the juxtaposed pair of terms in describing and then explicating existence affirms the limitations of human cognition to represent the true

⁵¹⁶ Cf. Sumardjo 2006a: 331.

⁵¹⁷ van Binsbergen 2003a.

understanding of existence. Existence in this sense is depicted as the dynamic interactivity of its manifestations.

In other words, one cannot perceive 'white' unless one thinks of it in terms of its determining relation with 'black.' One cannot know the male without being familiar with the female, and so on.⁵¹⁸ That is to say that the existence of 'A' is intelligible only by *affirming* the existence of 'non-A.' Existence consists of both juxtaposed expressions. One may argue that these juxtaposed pair of terms represents a binary opposition or contradictory terms. If one only thinks of the expression as such, one might infer this. If one regards these expressions as the true appearance of existence, one needs to go beyond such terms as 'terms.' These juxtaposed terms *function* for a recognition of being. It is within the capacity of our mind to affirm the description of the self-revelation of existence *in the form of these juxtaposed expressions*. This is also not to say that these juxtaposed terms are the exact reflection of existence as if it were a composition of the juxtaposed terms. The juxtaposed expressions are merely linguistic ones if one ignores the determining relationship between them. The cognition of the dynamic reciprocity between the juxtaposed expressions produces the idea of existence. Hence the juxtaposed expression presupposes a dynamic relationship in this comprehensive vision of existence. From this standpoint, it can be say:

- b. *that our mind affirms the employment of the juxtaposed expressions in order to arrive at the understanding of interconnectivity as the underlying foundation of the expression of being.*

The affirmation of mind in the proposition above articulates the interconnectivity revealed implicitly in the expression of being. From this viewpoint, the idea of interconnectivity does not only produce a concept of existence for the sake of knowledge as such. Furthermore, it *guides the mind as intensive as possible to enjoy being as such*. In other words, the interconnectivity brings our mind closer to being. In this sense, the concept of being is affirmed as a cognitive experience. Given this experiential approach of being, the interconnectivity acknowledges that an experience is not an exact copy of being. The interconnectivity still leaves a room for an unknown explication yet it is experienced as a part of being. By letting the unknown side to be revealed and experienced by the mind, the interconnectivity emphasizes that a conception of being is always partial. Given this cognitive and experiential content of being, one may suggest: epistemological foundation

- c. *the recognition of being on the basis of the interconnectivity (as it is explicated by of juxtaposed expressions) emerges in the framework of affirmative worldview. .*

In the previous proposition the idea of interconnectivity can be perceived if one considers it as the cognitive foundation of our thinking process. The application of the juxtaposed expressions enhances the necessity of cognitive foundation by which one

⁵¹⁸ See *Daodejing* chapter 1-2.

identifies the complexity of the knowing process. It means that if one knows something one will require mental and experiential aspects of thinking activity to grasp the known and unknown side of existence. Subsequently, this thinking process does not come out of nothing. The apprehension of the complementary sides of existence of being is possible since it is guided by the comprehensive vision of existence, that is, the affirmative worldview. The affirmative worldview is comprehensive because the vision distributes the known, as well as the unknown elements of the existence of being. In this case one can continue

- d. *that human cognition of the known and unknown sides of objects is based on a thinking paradigm which epistemological foundation articulates the interest of grasping a complete vision of the world.*

Our cognition of the existence also reveals our interest to occupy the object. For this purpose, it provides a complete vision of existence. Yet to have this complete vision means to include a belief that the vision at the same time reflects the actual appearance of existence. Such a belief turns our knowledge into a set of “justified true beliefs.”⁵¹⁹ If one considers this implication of interest, then one can suggest:

- e. *that the affirmative worldview of the world leaves room for an incomplete understanding of the existence. Hence, the affirmative worldview, on the one hand, tries to cover the incomplete vision of the world with the acceptance of the partial comprehension. On the other hand, it projects such an acceptance as a relatively complete reflection of the actual world.*

This awareness that our knowledge of reality is always incomplete brings a comprehension of possible actualization of existence in any manifestations. The Furthermore, this comprehension *articulates* the principle of affirmation which guides our mental and experiential aspect of thinking activity to realize the interactivity between the known and unknown sides of an object. Such interactivity may appear as a role play actualized by a subject towards an object as if this role play were functioned as an attribute of the existence. The principle of affirmation suggests otherwise. This principle enhances the interactivity between knowing subject in its positions and the perceived object which consists of the known and the unknown sides so that the principle generates dynamic approach of reality which includes the partial comprehension of reality in the belief that project the partial vision of the world onto the reflection of actual world. Realizing this interactivity of the partial vision and the projection of the accepted reflection of the actual world one can continue

- f. *that the affirmative worldview implies the principle of affirmation which realizes the complementary interactivity between the known and unknown sides of the object. Such elements are the self-realized identity of the knowing subjects and the objects.*

⁵¹⁹ Cf. van Binsbergen 2003a: 248.

The principle of affirmation suggests the idea of a complementary interactivity between the knowing subject and the perceived object. It is to say that the existence of “A” is intelligible as the known side insofar as it is associated with the existence of “non-A,” as the unknown side and vice versa. This is the role of the juxtaposed expressions of A and non-A in order to represent a complementary interactivity in the conception of the existence. These language games apply the complementary interactivity between things. One can continue with the following proposition:

- g. *that being is intelligible since its actualization applies the interconnectivity instead of an establishment of the identity of knowing subject and an object.*

The application of the juxtaposed terms—in some cases like in the *Daodejing* such terms can be a verb, an adjective, or an adverb⁵²⁰—indicate that the principle of affirmation constitutes the interconnectivity, rather than the establishment of the self-identity of a knowing subject or an object. Once again, this preference articulates the equality between the essence and the designation. Both ontological concepts are complementary to each other so that one cannot know essence unless one considers the designation. These ontological concepts are the juxtaposed terms so that one should conceive of both interconnecting and interconnected. The Sundanese model of the principle of affirmation explains the preference of interconnectivity in the form of life values. They are “*silihwangi*,” ‘*silih asuh*, *silih asih*, *silih asah*’ or ‘*welas asih*’ and others. One may see these values as interconnecting. Given this preference, one can infer:

- h. *that the principle of affirmation employs socio-ethical values in order to maintain interconnectivity in the cognitive and experiential domain. These socio-ethical values are not only practical, but also theoretical thought concerning existence.*

Geertz implicitly argues that the socio-ethical values, which are metaphorically expressed either in the life values or in the sacred symbols, cannot be confined only to the category of morality or aesthetical thought. Instead, one should regard them as the actualization of a fundamental vision of the intended world or a worldview. In other words, socio-ethical values, *ethos* to use Geertz’s term, reveals necessarily the ontological even metaphysical conception about existence. One might argue the correlation of worldview and *ethos* is an empirical coercion or a pragmatic universality. Nevertheless, such arguments do not recognize the fact that social-ethical values articulate a model of thought as well as the basic epistemological foundation for theoretical thought.⁵²¹ So whatever form is the expression the metaphysical vision, even

⁵²⁰ For examples *arise together, each other* or (*xiāng*) (相) and the “(literary) equivalence” or “*zhī*” (之), see *Daodejing* chapter 2.

⁵²¹ Geertz 2000: 127. He writes, “*Sacred symbols thus relate an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality; their peculiar power comes from their presumed ability to identify the fact with value at the most fundamental level, to give to what is otherwise merely actual, a comprehensive normative import. The number of such synthesizing symbols is limited in any culture,*

if this vision is formulated in a divination rite, or an oracle, such expression reveals human capability to think regardless of its cultural orientation.⁵²² Furthermore, one should consider interconnecting life values as sagacious knowledge. In other words, socio-ethical values embody the theory of the way to attain sagacity. Sagacious knowledge in this sense brings theoretical thought closer to the practical. One can no longer conceive of the former without the latter. Given this interconnectivity in practical (or ethical) and theoretical thought, one may conclude:

- i. *that the self-identity of existence presupposes the interconnectivity as it is maintained equally by the principle of affirmation. It is the principle of affirmation that reveals the equivalence between the theoretical and practical expression of interconnectivity in the cognitive and experiential domains.*

To conclude this chapter, I will summarize these nine propositions. The first three of the nine propositions, (a) to (c), provide formulation of interconnectivity. These first propositions explicate the basic presupposition for the following propositions. The basic presupposition takes into account a dynamic comprehensive vision of existence. This vision is either monism or pluralism; either the unification or the plurality.

The second group, (d) to (e), is the formulation of an affirmative worldview. These propositions account for the realization of the presupposition in the cognitive paradigm. This is the theory of the metaphysical intended world. The world of existence according to this affirmative worldview is a cognitive construction of the known and the unknown object, of the cognitive and experiential thought about the world. This construction conceives of interconnectivity of these cognitive manifestations of the intended world.

The last group of four propositions, (f) to (i), are the explanation of the principle of affirmation. These propositions are derived from the affirmative worldview. These propositions articulate the preference of interconnectivity as the explanation of the essence of existence. Interconnectivity in turn is described metaphorically in the socio-ethical values or life's interconnecting values.

The most important thing to know about these serial theories of the principle of affirmation and the attending affirmative worldview is that they are not the only contextual way of thinking. They are not limited to the East Asian or the Southeast Asian context. Rather they actualize a 'way of thinking' or a mode of cognitive activity expressed by a model of thought. This proposition presupposes that a model of thought

and though in theory we might think that a people could construct a wholly autonomous system independent of any metaphysical referent, an ethics without ontology, we do not in fact seem to have found such a people. The tendency to synthesize world view and ethos at some level, if not logically necessary, is at least empirically coercive, if it is not philosophically justified, it is at least pragmatically universal"

⁵²² Like *I Ching*, *petungan* or the Javanese numerological system, *elmu buhun*, or the Sundanese offering of knowledge, *paringkelan* cycle, the Sundanese calendar systems, in Asian Context or *Sangoma* divination in African Context, see van Binbergen 2003 chap. 7; Geertz 1969: chap..3; Wessing 1979: 107f.

is not the monolithic system of thinking and knowing, that the production of knowledge is not carried out according to a certain model of thought. Rather a model of thought always includes various modes or 'ways' to perceive and to conceive of existence. The principle of affirmation guides a model of thought which appears as inclusive approach to many kinds of knowledge production. This inclusive approach offers an attempt to bring various forms of knowledge production in an interactive dialogue. In this sense, the principle of affirmation tries to give a response to a need to find out epistemological principles in the context of the intercultural encounters⁵²³. As far as the awareness that the principle of affirmation belongs to our human nature—they are not bound in certain contextual settings—is concerned, this thesis will move on to the explication of the principle of affirmation in the North Atlantic philosophical discourse.

⁵²³ Cf. van Binsbergen 2003a:240.

Chapter 7: Accounts of affirmation in the North Atlantic philosophical discourse: Paul Ricoeur and Gilles Deleuze

The previous chapters are my elaboration of the principle of and the attending affirmative worldview in accordance with the texts of sagacious knowledge from various Asian cultural orientations. The present chapter focuses on how similar topics appear in the texts of some North Atlantic philosophical discourses. This chapter consists of three sections. The first explores some constitutive themes in the context of the North Atlantic philosophical discourse during the 20th century. The second explains Ricoeur's account of primary affirmation (*L'affirmation originaire*). The third section elaborates Deleuze's theory of the pure affirmation of life. This period of time is marked by the emergence of some constitutive substances of philosophical discourse.

One can see the rise of Existentialism, neo-Positivism, neo-Marxism, Pragmatism, Feminism, critical theory, Structuralism and Post-structuralism, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism, and Intercultural Philosophy, besides Modernism itself as the heir of "Aufklärung" or the Enlightenment.⁵²⁴ If one explores the contents of a philosophical encyclopaedia, one will find that the philosophical discourse in the 20th century comprises these schools or prominent individuals. It is indispensable to include classifications of regional philosophy as main entries in such encyclopaedic collections. One can include other categorizations, such as linguistic philosophy, analytic philosophy, or English philosophy, German philosophy, French philosophy, American philosophy and Continental philosophy. Other than these main streams, one can indicate the rise of African philosophy, Indian, Chinese, Japanese or Asian philosophy, and Islamic philosophy within the period of 20th century.⁵²⁵ My intention in this section is not to provide detailed information about each school, whether individual or regional philosophy. Rather I want to focus on the essential topics which describe a historical correlation of my elaboration concerning the topics of this work. Thus this section is not a historical survey of philosophical discourse among the North Atlantic philosophers and thinkers during the 20th century until the present day. Instead, I choose some influential viewpoints on ontology and epistemology in this contemporary philosophical discourse. These viewpoints indicate the tendency to consider affirmation as an epistemological approach for contemporary philosophy.

⁵²⁴ Cf. Sugiharto 1996; Lechte 1995; van Binsbergen 2003a.

⁵²⁵ From the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, entries Philosophy, the influence of philosophy, the chronological table of philosophy. Defoort 2002, 2006; Mudimbe 1988; Odera Oruka 1990.

These ideas lead us to concentrate on the thinking of two prominent 20th century French philosophers Paul Ricoeur and Gilles Deleuze. One can find their accounts of affirmation in their respective texts. The exploration of affirmation in Ricoeur's text is called 'primary affirmation' (*l'affirmation originnaire*). There are two of Ricoeur's works *History and Truth* (1965) and *Oneself as Another* (1990) that represent an his exploration of primary affirmation.⁵²⁶ Deleuze's four main works in connection with the principle of affirmation are *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962/2002), *Difference and Repetition* (1968a/1994, especially in chapter 1), *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968/1990), *the Logic of Sense* (1969/1990). These works are complemented by two other works: *Bergsonism* (1960/2002) and *What is Philosophy?* (1991 co-authored with Felix Guattari) These referential works on affirmation does not only explore Deleuze's thought of affirmation, but they also suggest an alternative approach to human understanding about the meaningful world by means of sagacious approach to the contextual world where we live. The main concern of Deleuze theory of affirmation takes into account the side of the human mind which does not intend to seek scientific explanation or an analytical approach to the world. The other side of the human mind is indeed concerned with this scientific or analytical approach. Therefore, Deleuze (alone or together with Felix Guattari) elaborate on the topic of affirmation in the aesthetical, imaginative and somewhat psychological (or it is more accurate to say psychoanalytic) domains of our thought. The purpose of the application of the domains is to give a comprehensive picture of the intended world as such and to emphasize a dynamic and creative concept of existence. The later argument reveals the emergence of the concept of the world and the creative expression of existence. Thus, for the Deleuzean approach it is inevitable to consider other linking arguments such as "difference" and "plane of immanence" while one elaborates affirmation.

7.1 Salient topics in the contemporary North Atlantic philosophical discourse of Knowledge of the Self

The problem of human knowledge concerning its existence is not yet resolved. The philosophical discourse of knowledge in contemporary philosophy reveals the ongoing debates on knowledge production of the world as things in themselves, and the intelligibility of human knowledge. Based on these topics this section consists of three subsections: the problem of knowing, the presupposition of negativity and the otherness of the experiential self.

7.1.1 Aspects of the problem of knowledge in contemporary philosophy

The problem of knowledge is one of the central themes for contemporary philosophy. Instead, it is a continuing reflexivity of the intention of the human mind to perceive as

⁵²⁶ Ricoeur 1965: 13 esp. chap. 6ff; cf. Kelbley 1965; Perez 2002: 396.

well as to conceive of some object whether inside or outside our being. This is about how a subject grasps an object and consequently yields knowledge of the object as such. The history of philosophy has indicated how the North Atlantic philosophers dealt with the topic thoroughly. Despite the fact that they have posed various critiques of the nature of human reason and its employment, there is a tendency to elaborate reason in a broader sense rather than just a critique. I mean that when the Western thinkers no longer believe in the grand narrative of Reason (re)constructed in the Western context, there is still the intention to seek alternative explanations of the natural capacity of human reason.⁵²⁷

In the face of intense critiques which sublimate the applicative narration of the Western model of reason, there is a need to discover a new approach of understanding our reason in the context of intercultural interactions. This new approach identifies that a philosophy is never the singular representation of *a priori* knowledge. Rather, it is a construction through various elements of theoretical thought aligned with sagacious viewpoints so that it emerges more as an encounter of inter-philosophical discourses rather than an independent body of *a priori*, analytical and critical knowledge.⁵²⁸ Instead of describing an intense crisis of the appreciation of reason as the faculty of thinking, I would rather take another strategy which argues that such sublation of the grand narrative of reason in the Western context does not fully negate the fact that we use reason as human beings. Reason is the natural human capability to think. Therefore even though there has been a harsh critique of the grand narrative of reason, one must inevitably accept that reason is still here and applied in the critique itself. As far as this application of reason is concerned one should always be reminded that the crisis of the authority of Western epistemology still preserves reason as the indispensable thinking faculty. The end of philosophy still is not identical to the abandonment of reason. Rather, the sceptical viewpoint about Western philosophy emphasizes the idea of refining reason as the one and only higher faculty of thinking. Even the sceptical or deconstructive criticism concerning the need to revise the concept of reason shows an effort to save reason necessarily.

The revision of the concept of reason in this section implies a re-interpretative approach to the concept itself. This reinterpretation regards past analytical approaches which influentially affect our understanding of the concept of reason. Among many critical and analytical discourses of reason, one can mention John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* or David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, and the famous defense of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁵²⁹ These major philosophical works and others since reveal the fact that "*logos*" is still in function in order to lead our thought closer to the Truth. In spite of being aware of the problematic

⁵²⁷ Sandywell 1996: 1ff.

⁵²⁸ Van Binsbergen 2003a, 2008b.

⁵²⁹ Sandywell 1996: 9.

matters concerning the concept of reason, in this section I take into account Kant's detailed analytical and critical approach to the concept of reason. It is not my intention to disregard other great philosophers in this context. Kant's critical approach to the pure reason, I think, is one indispensable culmination of the analytical elaboration on pure reason among other philosophers. This culmination brings Rationalism and Empiricism together in an inter-connective explanation of pure reason. Thus the following paragraph is how Kant defines his critique for clarifying reason in order to avoid any tendency to reduce it into a confined framework of "ism."

In *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR), Immanuel Kant offers his critique on the employment of reason as a regulative principle for knowledge in general. He argues that reason is the constitutive principle for thinking. By constitutive principle of thinking, Kant conceives of a one-to-one reflection between a concept and reality as if a concept were a theoretical representation of the things-in-themselves. If one assumes this correspondent reflection, then one mistakenly puts reason as the sole faculty of knowing. The reason does not necessarily "supply" an object for a concept. A concept is necessarily an image of an object, but this image is a virtual representation of such an object and not an identical reflection of it. This is why reason has the regulative function because it arranges principles or rules for thought. This principle or thought necessarily serves the unity of knowledge (CPR A 306/B 363).

For the sake of that unity, Kant defines two connotations of reason in the broad sense. First, reason is the part of the higher faculty of knowledge distinguished from understanding and judgement (CPR A 131/B 169). In this way, reason guides our mind to yield a syllogistic inference. Secondly, reason is placed after sense and understanding, which are the lower faculties of knowledge.⁵³⁰ In this position, reason unifies thought. Based on the purpose of the unification of knowledge, Kant distinguishes two models of the thinking process through reason. The first is the bottom-up movement which Kant conceives that our thought starts with the sense, then proceeds with understanding and ends up with reason. This is the model of the empirical approach which is the *a posteriori* knowledge. Reason in this approach is the higher form of knowledge which manages the understanding of material things under the regulation of the principle of thought.⁵³¹ This empirical knowledge presupposes the work of reason as the highest faculty of thought so that the empirical becomes intelligible under the comprehension of the unity of knowledge. The second one is the top-down movement of thought. This movement starts with the distinction between the spontaneity of reason and the understanding and the receptivity of the sense. This process regards "the objects exclusively under the light of ideas." Thus this is the

⁵³⁰ See Caygill 1995: 348; cf. in Max Mueller's translation of CPR (1966) the codification is CPR A 131/B 170.

⁵³¹ CPR 1966: 224.

rational approach or the *a priori* knowledge which determines our comprehension of a concept, but not an object.

The *a priori* and the *a posteriori* knowledge as the result of reason aim at the unification of the manifold of knowledge. Both are the effort to reveal the unconditioned from the conditioned knowledge. Given the presupposition of the unconditioned for the conditioned, reason guarantees the systematization and unification of conceptual knowledge. Here, the function of reason is to “secure the unity of the rules of understanding according to principles.”⁵³² These may be the principles of logic or of transcendental deduction. These principles manage the conception of the object accordingly. For Kant, reason in this sense is one step ahead of the function of understanding.

Nevertheless, Kant always reminds us about the misconception of the use of reason. The use of reason cannot determine the existence of the speculative object outside the experiential realm. The need of the unconditioned does not immediately confirm the existence of the Absolute. If a purely deductive inference of the existence of the absolute occurs, one necessarily falls into a trap of the transcendental illusion. Kant considers the transcendental illusion as subjective thought applied in objective reality of the things-in-themselves. Thus the unconditioned, the soul, the world and God, here appear as the regulative principle rather than it constitutively confirms the true existence of the absolute.

This distinction between the unconditioned as the regulative principle and that as the proof of the existence of the absolute is inevitable in Kant’s account. The objective existence of the absolute belongs to the realm of things in themselves or the *noumenon*; while the experiential existence of an object to the appearances of the things in themselves or the *phenomenon*. Kant argues that reason can yield the objective conception of the absolute. According to him, the *noumenon* is itself beyond the framework of the experiential time and space. Kant argues the problem of knowing through a metaphysical discourse of the absolute or a scientific theory concerning the Truth. The metaphysical discourse and the scientific theory are the regulative explications of reality in itself or the Truth. Furthermore, such *a priori* knowledge also considers the presupposition of the spatial and temporal framework within which our cognition yields the forms for a concept besides the matters. Given these regulative qualities, *a priori* knowledge does not necessarily prove the existence of non-sensible reality such as the soul, the world and God, or the unconditioned.

Kant’s argument here indicates precisely the problem of knowing which is not realized either in the school of rationalism or that of empiricism. Both schools mistakenly insist that reason can achieve true knowledge of the object either through the syllogistic inference or through a generalized one. Despite the fact that both schools

⁵³² Caygill 1995: 348 cf. CPR A 302/ B 359, CPR 306 - 308/B 363-365.

have their respective methodology and principles of thought, both still fail to recognize that reason cannot constitutively supply proof for the true existence of the object in itself. The insistence of arguing that a concept is really the true representation of an object is also categorized as the transcendental illusion, made by our reason.

As far as the regulative quality of reason is concerned, one should consider, therefore, that understanding, as the preceding phase, is the first faculty which deals with the phenomena or the appearances of things-in-themselves, but reason is the continuation of this thinking process which manages the cognitive image produced in the previous step. Kant believes reason applies principles of logic and syllogistic deduction for the sake of formulating the unconditioned from the conditioned cognition. While understanding is associated with the experience of the object, reason deals with the arrangement of the systematization and unification of thought under such principles of thinking. In Kant's account, understanding deals with the appearances of things in themselves or the phenomena which are the results of sensible apprehension. Understanding then follows the categories, and consequently under these principles this thinking faculty manages the image of the appearance. Such experience unfolds the limitation of this thinking faculty so that understanding necessarily shifts the in search of the unconditioned from the conditioned cognition under the realm of reason.

Nevertheless, the process of knowing does not exclusively belong to the function of reason. In the beginning of CPR, Kant acknowledges the indispensable function of sensation as our sensibility and intuition even though they are the lower faculty of knowing which are related to the capacity of receptivity. These faculties are indispensable in so far as they are the first dispositions towards an object. The receptivity of an object or the *a posteriori* or empirical intuition of our sensation is followed by an *a priori* one which will arrange the received sensations in accordance with the categories of cognition.

This first receptivity of our mind occurs under the presupposition of space and time which intuitively appears as the external and internal framework for thought. Kant takes into account that space is the external form of the appearances of noumenon. The phenomenon becomes intelligible because of this essential externality. Space is not like colors which are dependent on our seeing faculty. Meanwhile, space necessarily precedes all cognitions of objects. It is so essential that even our subjective apprehension can disregard the intuitive space. Otherwise the representation of things-in-themselves gives no meaning at all. Considering the signification of the presupposed space Kant writes that:

*“we shall understand how the form of all phenomena may be given before all real perceptions may be, in fact, a priori in the soul, and may, as a pure intuition by which all objects must be determined, contain, prior to all experience, principles regulating their relations.”*⁵³³

⁵³³ CPR 1966: 26.

Space in this sense does not only appear in the experiential realm, it is also becomes the necessary condition which externally influences our mind to perceive the appearance of the existence where by this perception will be managed under the categories of understanding. Kant mentions this *a priori* quality of space as the ideality of space.

This signification of the necessary presupposition also formulated for time. This internal condition for thought also cannot be disregarded for the sake of our cognition of existence. Time is the quality which precedes the experiential aspect of our thought. Without this *a priori* necessity, our apprehension becomes internally nothing. Thus, according to Kant, it is given as “a pure form of sensuous intuition.” There is only one dimension of *a priori* time, and consequently the different phases of time or the successive are only the part of the one. Again Kant asserts that this formal condition makes our subjective intuition of the phenomena internally possible. For this explanation Kant writes:

*“Time is the formal condition, a priori, of all phenomena whatsoever. Space, as the pure form of all external intuition, is a condition, a priori, of external phenomena only. But as all representations, whether they have for their objects external things or not, belong by themselves, as determinations of the mind, to our inner state, and as this inner state falls under the formal conditions of internal intuition, and therefore of time, time is a condition, a priori, of all phenomena whatsoever, and is so directly as a condition of internal phenomena (of our mind) and thereby indirectly of external phenomena also.”*⁵³⁴

Here Kant also asserts that our intuition to the external phenomena also requires this internal form of the first cognition. In other words time makes the phenomena intelligible and this intelligibility is necessary for the first phase in the process of knowing. Despite suggesting time as an *a priori* form, Kant reminds us that time together with space which serve as the internal and the external aspects of our cognition cannot reach an objective condition and that there is “something that remains when abstraction is made of all subjective condition of intuition.”⁵³⁵ The *a priori* of time and space is required to the extent that these formal qualities determine our cognition to the experiential world, for example the cognition of different spatial phenomena or of change. In other words, the presupposition of time and space makes our cognition of the spatial and temporal world “real.” This ‘reality’ is the empirical condition of our cognition by means of sensation and intuition. Receptivity of the mind should be considered as something real rather than a presumption that such experience of the spatial and temporal world is merely an illusion. Though this reality is limited to the part of the empirical and not into the Absolute, Kant still considers time and space as

⁵³⁴ CPR 1966: 31.

⁵³⁵ CPR 1966: 30 cf. 32.

prerequisite for the *representation of ourselves as objects*. He explains this conditioned requirement as:

“If either I myself or any other being could see me without this condition of sensibility, then these self-same determinations which we now represent to ourselves as changes, would give a kind of knowledge in which the representation of time, and therefore of change also, would have no place.”
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In other words, the temporal and spatial conditioning indispensably determines the existence of the self in the experiential realm first, before one understands it under the categories of quality, quantity, relation and modality.⁵³⁷

My exploration of the transcendental aesthetic or pure intuition of temporal and spatial form for *a priori* knowledge aims at the assertion that the theory of knowing tends to disregard the signification of this initial process of thinking. By doing so, the contemporary North Atlantic philosophical discourse only concentrates on the regulative function of reason, that is, about the theoretical production of a concept. By going back to Kant’s account of the function of the lower faculty of mind and the transcendental aesthetic, I conceive of the signification of this presupposition. This presupposition of empirical or *a posteriori* form of the mind for the *a priori* knowledge does not only reveal the *material* source of the regulative function of reason, but also the assertion that one cannot yield theoretical knowledge unless one considers this receptive part of the mind as constitutive and as the regulative function of the mind. In other words, receptivity to that extent determines the application of the principles of thought as the next step. Otherwise one would fail to conceive of the concepts of the things-in-themselves.

Kant in this sense synthetically combines the empirical approach with the rational one.⁵³⁸ His account is empirical in so far as his of the function of sensation, intuition and understanding as the “lower faculties of mind” reveals a close interaction between the subject and appearances of an object. To that extent, the apprehension of the object is attached to the transcendental aesthetic, which consists in paradigmatic time and space, the external and the internal framework of thought intuitively conceived in order to make thinking possible. In this limitation of the lower faculties, our mind can produce *a posteriori* knowledge. Meanwhile the rational approach appears in his theory that these appearances of the object or the phenomena are not the true representation of the object in itself. It is the task of understanding to arrange the appearances according to the categories of thinking. Consequently, one cannot claim that the appearances are the object itself. The appearances necessarily indicate the conditioned aspects of the object. In the further phase of thinking, it is reason that has the task to regulate the

⁵³⁶ CPR 1966: 33.

⁵³⁷ CPR 1966: 62.

⁵³⁸ CPR 1966: 36.

cognitive images and the concepts abstracted from the understanding of such appearances in accordance with the principle of transcendental deduction or the principles of logic. Here the regulative function of the mind takes over the higher faculty to seek the unconditioned aspect of the object in itself. One has to be critical of the proposition that claims the identification between the unconditioned and the noumena or the things-in-themselves, as if the unconditioned were the reflection of non-sensible existence. Given the arrangement of concepts by means of the principles of thought, reason provides the *a priori* knowledge of the existence of noumena. Yet, this knowledge connotes a methodological approach to the things-in-themselves rather than the postulation that the noumena necessarily exist.

In other words, Kant suggests a comprehensive theory of critique. The critique to reason should not discard the lower faculties of mind. Reason cannot jump at the conclusion of the existence of objects without the support of these faculties. The support is concerning the clarification of the cognitive images by means of the categories of thought. Later, the advanced arrangement by means of the principles of thought or of scientific methodology transforms the regulated cognitive images into the concepts. It is true that the concepts provide the abstraction of the unconditioned from the conditioned. The conditioned framed by the intuitively *a priori* paradigm of space and time explains the necessity of the unconditioned as the ideality of the regulative function of reason. Given this regulative ideality for *a posteriori* and *a priori* knowledge, our reason can obtain an ordered arrangement of thinking. This arrangement secures “the unity of knowledge.”

It seems that with Kant’s explanation of the regulative ideality of reason that concepts have a vacuous image.⁵³⁹ The arrangement of concepts by means of method or principle of thought does not infer that the concept is empty and therefore it is meaningless. The content of the concept does not directly identify the existing object. The content is the form, not the matter of the object. The form is the arranged image of the object. This arranged image brings the object the common sense. It is something that we can apprehend *objectively*. Moreover, when this arranged image is employed in a propositional judgement, the relation of the concept makes the content of such a proposition intelligible.

For example, “all leaves of the tree are green.” This proposition neither informs that all leaves of the tree are *actually* green, nor that all leaves of the experiential tree are green. Both the subject and the predicate of the proposition are intelligible, or objectively understandable because of the affinity of the predicative term “green” with the subject “all leaves of the tree.” “Green” belongs to our sensation. It means that “green” is not the true color of all the leaves; instead it is the function of our senses, especially our sight. It is our sensibility to identify the appearance of color as the

⁵³⁹ Parsons 1999: 63.

conditioned aspect of the object. In other words, our sensibility discovers the experiential approach to an object; in turn this experiential side of cognition yields the *a posteriori* knowledge about leaves, trees and greenness. Yet, Kant reminds, early in the CPR, that “experience tells us what it is, but not that it must be necessarily as it is, and not otherwise.”⁵⁴⁰ The experience of leaves, trees and greenness is not necessarily an indication that such a *a posteriori* knowledge is identical to the things-in-themselves, about the real leaves, trees and greenness. Instead, our understanding of such an experience leads us to the higher level of cognition or a theoretical one. This is the *a priori* knowledge about the proposition “all leaves of the tree are green.” This proposition implies a general truth about conceptions and the constellation of them. This general truth makes the conception of leaves, trees and greenness, common sense in so far as they are accepted as the meaningful representation of objectivity. Thus, principles of thought arrange the relation between the main concepts: the subject and the predicate. This arrangement is to secure the unity of thought itself. Thus, although the *a priori* knowledge mainly postulates the regulative capacity of pure reason, and it does not constitutively represent the true existence of the noumena, this theoretical knowledge is still something. Moreover, pure reason posits the necessity of the unconditioned which becomes an indispensable presupposition for the capacity of reasoning.

The example above also articulates the problem of knowing in accordance with the Western philosophical discourse. Knowing in this sense is not only the intention to perceive an object, but it is also the arrangement of the representation of the perception by means of principles of thought. This arrangement includes the empirical approach to the appearance of the things-in-themselves as the initial phase of knowing, and after this phase, what we know is “independent of all experiences”⁵⁴¹ in so far as it is no longer about the correspondent correlation between sensuous capacity and the appearance as such, nor is it the intuitive apprehension of the phenomena. Instead, the higher capacity of thinking implies the management of the cognitive representation by means of categories (by the understanding) and logic (by pure reason). The problem of knowing then concerns the independency of a concept. A concept is not only excluded from the experience of phenomena, in order to guarantee the unconditioned presupposition of its common sense, but it is also individualized from other concepts. The independence of a concept of all experiences and other is necessarily required as the unconditioned foundation for the concept itself to be intelligible.

Deleuze and Guattari argue this independency of concept by saying that a concept basically contains a combination of multiple components. Given this content, a concept implies a ground which affects the intelligibility of it. The multiple components of a concept are cross-cutting so that a concept is a representation of wholeness, yet it is

⁵⁴⁰ CPR 1966: 1.

⁵⁴¹ CPR 1966: 2.

the fragmentary whole.⁵⁴² These French philosophers suggest the significance of the relationship between (among) concepts in order to affirm the intelligibility, and more importantly, the existence of the concept. By taking into account the discourse of “I” as the subject who exists in front of the other, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the understanding of a concept requires the reciprocal presentation between concepts as it is between “I” and the other. The representation of I necessarily affirms the presentation of the other so that reciprocally I as the knowing subject *experience* my self-identity and my existence.

It is precisely regarding the independency of concepts that lays the problem of knowing. Reason as the higher faculty of thinking treats concept as the simple and singular representation of knowledge as if the concept were the synthetic judgement in accordance with the regulative ideality. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the ideality of the singularity and the simplicity of the concept take a viewpoint that ignores the relativity of concepts. A concept contains three inseparable components according to these French philosophers. They are *the possible world, the existing face and the real language or speech*. These components associate a concept with a field of experience which presupposes the determination of the sensory world as a condition. A concept in this sense is expressed as a face before a possible world of the other concept. The face and the possible world of the other concept have their forms through the usage of the real language and speech.⁵⁴³

These components show that a concept is not only inseparable or individual. It is also an event of becoming and with this becoming the concept always subsists in connection with other concepts. And it is indispensable that a concept also presupposes a connection with the experiential field otherwise the sensory world could not be intelligible through the use of concepts. This is a significant given the fact that the event of knowing is often attached to the faculty of reason more than with sensibility. This attachment seeks the theoretical explanation of the cognized object by means of methodological and logical principles of thought. The aim of this explanation is to provide the unconditioned as the fixed preconditioned for a knowing process. This is the reason why Deleuze and Guattari disagree with the view that a concept should be the representation of the unconditioned which embodies the indivisible unity of such cognitive image. Both philosophers remind us that a concept necessarily embodies two complementary sides. Given the internal components, a concept presupposes an interconnection with the other ones. This interconnection offers the concept an extension to infinity. Concepts are always being created and they create each other.⁵⁴⁴ The other complementary side is that the emergence of concepts and their interconnections do not make concepts internally fractured as if inwardly a concept does

⁵⁴² Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 15-17.

⁵⁴³ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 17.

⁵⁴⁴ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 19.

not embody integrity. A concept instead inwardly shows consistency or endoconsistency. By given this internal consistency a concept involves in a zone of possible worlds, or “a threshold of indiscernibility.”⁵⁴⁵ Deleuze and Guattari assert these complementary sides by saying that:

*“The concept is therefore both absolute and relative; it is relative to its own components, to other concepts, to the plane on which it is defined, and to the problem it is supposed to resolve; but it is absolute through the condensation it carries out, the site it occupies on the plane, and the conditions it assigns to the problem. As a whole it is absolute, but insofar as it is fragmentary it is relative.”*⁵⁴⁶

A concept subsists for the sake of the emergence of other concepts besides itself. This emergence brings concepts as an assemblage which occupies a plane together. The plane of the concept includes the referral context or the experiential field. This plane acknowledges the empirical as well as the rational approach to the event of knowing. I will return to the discussion of the foundational explanation of the complementary sides of the concept. Meanwhile, the complementary approaches necessarily indicate that the problem of knowing leads to the foundational issue of knowing itself. It is the presupposition of negativity which necessarily arranges the process of knowing by means of principles of thought.

7.1.2 The presupposition of negativity

Whoever studies Western sciences or philosophy should be able to think systematically. At Western universities, professors and instructors teach their students the regulative principles of reason as a prerequisite for the study of sciences and philosophy. It is Aristotle who postulates the regulative principles of reason referred to for this purpose. Such regulative principles are the principle of identity, of contradiction and of the excluded third.⁵⁴⁷ Even Heidegger once mentioned the principle of identity as “the highest principle of thought.”⁵⁴⁸ He employs this title in order to concentrate on the implication of the principle of identity. The implication is that “everything is *the same with itself*.” The focus on “*the same with*” in this sense reveals what Kant seeks about the unconditioned from the conditioned. Moreover, the unconditioned prerequisite of thought does not represent the content of what “the same with” is referring to. Instead it is the regulative path of thought so that one can provide the unity for systematic and theoretical thought.⁵⁴⁹

The principle of identity is followed with the one of contradiction, (or it is preferred to mention it as the principle of non-contradiction for the sake of its

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 21.

⁵⁴⁷ Maritain 1937: 159; cf. Liang Gie 1998: 157-158.

⁵⁴⁸ Heidegger 1957/1969: 23.

⁵⁴⁹ Heidegger 1957/1969: 25.

employment in scientific thought).⁵⁵⁰ The formulation of the principle of contradiction is that “no statement can be both true and false”. From this principle one can refer to the principle of the excluded third (middle) which asserts *it is impossible for a thing to be and not to be at the same time and under the same aspect.*⁵⁵¹ This principle then draws the application of the negative form of the regulative principle. It is to posit that A cannot be the same with non-A at the same time, and under the same aspect. The negative here is applied in order to establish the self-identity of being. Moreover, this self-identity also connotes regulated reasoning which draws an inference of argument to be true. Given the regulated reasoning the unconditioned integrity of truth, the principle of identity is equipped with the principle of contradiction in order for the determination of the unity of being in itself.⁵⁵² In this respect, one can understand the reason that Kant postulates the unconditioned as the regulative principle of thought. The unity of the reasoning is secured with these two principles of reasoning.⁵⁵³

In other words, the Aristotelian principles of thought are equipped with the implication of negativity in order to establish the unity of the reasoned thought or the truth value of the theoretical knowledge. The implication of negativity in this respect can be considered as the primary reference in the empirical and theoretical reasoning as if it were the primary regulation for thinking activity. Given this primary regulation by means of the negative, one can also infer the presupposition of negation insofar as it necessarily determines not only the unity of being, but also the individuality of being in itself *theoretically*.

In this respect, inspired by Ricoeur’s critique of negativity which I will explain in the section 2, I would like to propose three types of the negative for this presupposition. The first is the negative as one of the logical operation applied in a judgement. The negative functions as the separation between concepts so that there is a disconnection between subject and the predicate of a judgement. For example, “the subject A is not the predicate B.” Given this disconnection, the negative separates the comprehensive and extensive properties of the each concept, that is, the subject and the predicate. The other logical operation is the affirmative function which explains the comprehensive and extensive connection between subject and predicate. Ricoeur mentions this type of negativity as “the primal negation” which determines how our perceptions sense things by means of a proposition “this is not that.” At the level of perception the negative operation provides the objectivity or the clarification for the

⁵⁵⁰ Liang-Gie 1998: 157.

⁵⁵¹ Maritain 1937: 159 cf Copi & Cohen 1990:293.

⁵⁵² Cf. Heidegger 1957/1969: 26.

⁵⁵³ Cf. the supreme principle of syllogism, that is the principle of triple identity and that of the separating third, Maritain 1937: 176

experience of finitude so that it provides a first foundation for the second type of negativity.⁵⁵⁴

The second type of the negative is the existential negative. This type of negative is a consequence of the first type. With this type, I look at the implications of the negation in order to clarify and to distinguish the individuality of being. Ricoeur notes that the experience of finitude affects the comprehension of being. The result is that given the existential negativity, the clarification and distinction of self-identity of being is obtained. This existential negation also changes “*forms into things with their durable properties and their accidents.*”⁵⁵⁵ Thus the existential negativity constructs self-identity of being by means of positing the properties of it. This (re)construction brings being materially built up through concepts. It means, on the one hand, the construction of concept is “*the method*” to conceive knowledge about being. While on the other hand, concepts also determine the intelligibility of being by postulating the properties: attribute or accidents or categories of the concept as if a concept were a material representation of being. In this sense, being is transformed into “*forces and their constant relations, to living beings as organized individuals and to psychisms.*”⁵⁵⁶

This existential negativity in this sense determines the conception that being is in itself materially unique and irreplaceable. Meanwhile, the determination of individuality alludes to the negativity provided by the representation of the other as well besides the internal establishment of individuality. The external negativity, if I may say, is an indispensable intervention that helps me to clarify internally my individuality. The result is the distinction of my self-identity. The problem according to Ricoeur in this sense is that the negation is “*flow from the very moment of the Absolute which limits itself and denies itself by determining itself so as to surmount its negation in the thought of its other.*”⁵⁵⁷ In other words, the second type of negativity implies the existence of the other as the negating thing to my experiential self in order to maintain the distinction of the conceptual representation of “I”.

The allusion to the distinction of the conceptual existence of I reveals the third type of negativity. I prefer to refer to it as the essential negativity in order to characterize the synthetic unity of the process of thinking. The distinction of conceptual existence determines the Self as an intelligible and meaningful existence which is undifferentiated and undetermined. Such existence for the Self is metaphorically expressed with “the Same”. According to Heidegger, the purpose of thinking regulation is to presume the Same as the ground for the thinking process. Furthermore, he holds that by means of the same then being as subject or object belongs to this common ground. In turn, under the light of this common ground the experiential level of the

⁵⁵⁴ Ricoeur 1965: 316.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Ricoeur 1965: 316.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

subject and the object becomes intelligible.⁵⁵⁸ This common ground in this sense appears as the universal which provides the synthetic unity of theoretical or *a priori* knowledge. In other words, by the representation of the Same, the negativity in this sense dissolves the experiential subject and the object and transforms them into *a priori* knowledge, that is, conceptual representations. These conceptual representations, arranged in accordance with the categories and the principles of thought, embody the unconditioned properties of being which indicate the undetermined and undifferentiated prerequisite for the sake of the intelligibility of being.

The presupposition of negativity does not resolve the problem of knowing. The unconditioned or the Same necessarily appears more as regulative rather than a corresponding proof that universal representations exist. It is the transcendental illusion, according to Kant, if one regards the universal representation as the proof of the true existence of things-in-themselves or the *noumena*. Nevertheless, to some extent this transcendental illusion is necessarily required if one considers a ground for the thinking process; as if the triads of metaphysics, the soul, the world and God *really* existed in order to secure our theoretical thought. To that extent this pseudo-existence undermines our belief that the objects out there *really* exist in reality. Consequently, a decisive question may arise: “do the things-in-themselves” or the noumena *really* exist if one negates the appearances of the noumena and after that one accepts the unconditioned as the essential property of the things-in-themselves?”

One has to reconsider that the function of the three types of negativity discussed above in order to respond to this question. These negativities are presupposed as far as the intention to yield clear and distinct knowledge of the nature of existence is concerned. This intention is to conquer doubt and transform it into the recognition of things by means of sensibility and understanding. At last, reason will establish the intelligible self-identity of things by means of concepts. Nevertheless, the presupposition of negativity ignores the interconnection which constructs concepts and which concepts are constructed among themselves. Again Deleuze and Guattari argue about the independency of a concept which secures the intelligibility of self-identity. They write:

*“Concepts are centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others. This is why they all resonate rather than cohere or correspond to each other.”*⁵⁵⁹

Their point is to indicate the interconnection or the resonance among concepts which suppose the clarity and distinction of the individual concept. From my perspective, this proposition not only identifies the resonance among concepts, but their argument also implies the resonance of things-in-themselves, the *noumena*. In other

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Heidegger 1957/1969: 27.

⁵⁵⁹ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 23.

words, as the French philosophers have postulated, the concepts are equipped with the cognitive bridge which brings them in relation with the things-in-themselves.⁵⁶⁰

This relationship, however, necessarily regards the experiential fields so that a concept can be meaningful for our rational explication of the things-in-themselves. The resonance of the experiential fields in the designation of a concept makes us consider the position of the knower, the subject. The third type of negativity, the essential one, transforms the experiential subject into the transcendental one in order to maintain the unity of the subject itself.⁵⁶¹ Nevertheless, as far as the position of the transcendental subject is concerned, the position of the knower actually is put in relation to the experiential field. Thus, the presupposition of essential negativity *as a matter of fact* saves the experiential subject instead of negating the experiential field by means of positing the unconditioned property for the subject.

In other words, this transcendental subject is no longer distant from the experiential object (in the sense that an object is never regarded as truly transcendent from the knowing subject) in the process of knowing insofar as this knowing subject is only a *virtual* representation. It is the virtual to the extent that the conceptual subject *becomes* the experiential one in order to *know* things. The emergence of the experiential or the sensible side of the knowing subject is necessarily indispensable. Given this correlation between the concept and the experiential field, and given the emergence of the essential property of a concept so that it is able to respond to the resonance of the experiential field within itself, one should accept Deleuze and Guattari's arguments that "becoming is the concept itself."⁵⁶² A concept never appears as purely individual and singular, just as it is idealized by the presupposition of the essential negativity. A concept requires the dynamic correlation with the experiential field so that it enables it to appear intensively, at least, as a virtual image which is closer to the representation of things-in-themselves.

In the field of epistemology it seems that the problem in the production of knowledge by means of the presupposition of the negativity remains, instead of saying that the problem is resolved.⁵⁶³ Meanwhile, the presupposition of negativity in the field of ontology faces quite a different situation. Paul Ricoeur is one of the contemporary philosophers who have argued about the presupposition of negativity in this ontological field as implied in the three types of negativity discussed above. The logical, existential and essential negativities are an inherent part of the distinction of the self-identity of our existence.⁵⁶⁴ The negativity in this sense necessarily invokes the otherness of the other. By this proposition, I conceive that the clarity and the distinction of the concept

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 46.

⁵⁶² Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 110.

⁵⁶³ Cf. the critique about the end of epistemology by Postmodernism in Sugiharto 1996: 67-78.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Kelbley in Ricoeur 1965: xvii; see Ricoeur 1965: 297.

determine the universal representation about the concept of the self. The subject in this sense is the thinking subject experienced in a certain representation of “a conceptual personae,”⁵⁶⁵ which according to Deleuze and Guattari is the Cartesian “cogito”, the thinking “I.” The appearance of the conceptual persona brings the clarification and distinction of the self-identity of I and that of the transcendent others. According to Ricoeur, Sartre’s existentialism enhances the separation of “I and “the Others”. It brings this conceptual ontology of the self in a distinct opposition.

The distinction of I and the other is a result of the negativity presumed in the reflection in the ontological field. Negativity, says Ricoeur, is:

*“... the desire for clarity amid my own reservations regarding philosophies which, since Hegel, have made negation the proper activity of reflection, or which indeed identify the human reality with negativity;...”*⁵⁶⁶

Negativity is the starting point for reflection on the existence of the Self and that of self-identity. My existence and self-identity becomes clarified with the empty representation. My being in this sense exists over the absolute nothingness or nihilism. This reflection makes me realize that my self-existence and identity becomes meaningful. For the sake of knowing this meaningfulness the power of negation transcends my knowledge of the self to the level of transcendence. This transgression into the level of transcendence escapes my finitude from my experiential limitation in knowing (because of the limitation of the senses and emotive capability). As a result, my knowledge of my existence itself is clarified and distinguished by means of my reason. In other words, my thinking of self-existence determines my existence. Reason plays a significant role in order to acknowledge the ontological conception of my existence.

The negation of the experiential self leads me to the recognition of the ontological concept of the self. When this conceptual self is confirmed and acknowledged as “being,” the self is no longer an ‘empty representation.’ In this sense, negativity as the essential functions guarantees the self as being against nihilism, the insignificance of being which make our existence meaningless. Absolute nothingness is the enemy which haunts our existence, and in this sense the negation of such nothingness preserves our meaningful existence by means of the emergence of the ontological concept “I.”

What kind of nothingness or nihilating acts is the enemy which haunts the existence of the self? Not all forms of nothingness are meaningless. Ricoeur while criticizing Sartre stresses that the type of nothingness is:

*“neither death, nor madness, nor nonsense, nor even this active negation of being-there which constitute freedom. It is rather the vanity of freedom itself, the nothingness of a bound freedom.”*⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁵ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 62.

⁵⁶⁶ Ricoeur 1965: 305.

Such kind of meaningless freedom yields an unbearable anguish which makes our meaningful existence in vain. The negativity removes the vanity of freedom and it secures the unity of self-existence.

Despite securing my unity of self-existence, the negation of the experiential, sensible knowledge of the self still leaves a fundamental problem for existence. The problem is related with the tension that the signification of the universal concept of I is against the experiential self, the concrete expression of the self in a certain context. The experiential self is always submerged under the authority of the universal self which determines the meaningfulness of existence. Existence is meaningful insofar as it embodies the non-viewpoint that “I am not what I am” and “I am *a* knowledge of “What I am.”⁵⁶⁸ Then the questions may arise, “What is the signification of the experiential self?” and “Does it signify *really* something independent from the determination of the universal Self?”

This problem arises insofar as the negation of the experiential side of my selfhood implies an imposition of the sensible and the empirical into the scheme of the Same. I *know* my selfhood is real as far as its submission under the regulative signification of the undifferentiated and the indeterminate Self is concerned. The existence of the experiential self is determined by the regulative signification of the unconditioned Self, or the Man, so as my experiential manhood is preserved in order to be meaningful. In other words, the meaningfulness of my selfhood obtains only by means of emptying the experiential and sensible side of my selfhood.

According to Ricoeur, on the one hand, for the sake of avoiding nihilism the transformation of the experiential self under the regulative signification of the unconditioned Self is required. On the other hand the meaningfulness of my selfhood excludes my manhood experienced in a specified context. The true existence of my selfhood is secured yet nothing to be said constitutively concerning the real existence of my selfhood. Once *the Self* is established, it appears as the regulative rather than constituting the true existence of the self. The universal self necessarily *appropriates* the appearance of the experiential selfhood. The appropriation of the experiential self into the scheme of the universal self connotes that even my self experientially known by means of my sensibility emerges as the other for this conceptual self or the Same. Thus for the sake of meaningfulness, the unconditioned Self is the prerequisite so as my experience becomes intelligible.

On the one hand, the movement of transcendence, from the experiential I to the conceptual, pass over my limitation of being a self. On the other hand, this transgression also makes myself into the not-I representation. In other words, I become “the other” for the sake of maintaining a meaningful and intelligible self. Ricoeur underlines this presence of the Self as the Other which replaces my existential self. He writes:

⁵⁶⁷ Ricoeur 1965: 299 cf. p. 319.

⁵⁶⁸ Ricoeur 1965: 312.

*“It is not surprising: I transcend my point of view only by imagining this empty meaning of the signified thing, fulfilled by another presence, given to someone other than me.”*⁵⁶⁹

This replacement transforms my existential selfhood as the other for the conceptual persona. The “I” signifies the unconditioned as if I were the true existence.

Let us consider this unconditioned concept of I, or the conceptual personae, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s account. Both philosophers discover that the conceptual personae is no longer the representation of the experiential I. *“I am no longer myself but thought’s aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places.”*⁵⁷⁰ The conceptual persona has replaced the position of my experience. Yet, the Same or the conceptual persona emerges as something rather than the fixed and completed representation. The conceptual persona is itself becoming insofar as this conceptual persona is dynamically filled by another representation other than the experiential self in accordance with the intention of the thought to provide sufficient explanation of my being. Nevertheless, this movement “spread across a plane” myself discovers that the explanation is not a singular theoretical vision about me. This signifies that my experiential self is explicated through a series of concepts which are somewhat close to the characterization of my being. In other words, my experiential self is appropriated within the scheme of serial concepts of being which manage my self in order to be intelligible.

The presupposition of negativity, precisely the essential negativity, yields the signification of selfhood in a paradox. On the one hand, the intelligibility of my selfhood is secured under the regulative signification of the unconditioned Self, the Same. On the other hand, my selfhood in the experiential level is appropriated under such regulative unconditionality of the Same, hence my sensible selfhood is negated so that it no longer belongs to the Same, but it emerges as the other. In other words, in the knowledge of my selfhood, I recognize internal differentiation⁵⁷¹ rather than the integrity for my being. It is as if my selfhood were unified and appeared as belonging to the singular representation of the conceptual persona. Instead, my selfhood is differentiated in itself. My being embodies ambiguity with two different directions. I am one, I belong to the Same, and I am a Man so that I am intelligible to myself. At the same time, I am the other which is completely distinguished from my intelligible I, the theoretical ego. The sensible, empirical or experiential selfhood in this respect tends to be negated for the sake of the intelligibility of I as a Man. Given this dualistic approach of understanding the Self vis-à-vis the self, one arrives at the substantial problem of knowing. This problem is the presence of the otherness of the intrinsic Other or that

⁵⁶⁹ Ricoeur 1965: 313.

⁵⁷⁰ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1999: 64.

⁵⁷¹ Deleuze 1968/1994: 28. Deleuze argues the singularity of I instead of the intrinsic differentiation, something which distinguishes itself.

“something distinguishes itself within.” The otherness of the other indicates not only indicate to the external other; it also reveals the experiential self as another, when one reflects on the internal differentiation of the presupposed singularity of the Self.

7.1.3 The otherness of the experiential selfhood

Despite the fact that my selfhood is clarified and distinguished in accordance with the Same, in the epistemological domain, the identity of my selfhood at the ontological level is another thing. Since the experiential self appears as the other for my theoretical self, the tendency is quite obvious that even such internal difference should be negated for the sake of the unity of the singular representation of the Self. The result is the oblivion of difference, which is, according to Heidegger, refers to the disappearance of difference in the realm of thinking.⁵⁷² More profoundly, Deleuze argues that the difference of the other is identified by the essence, so it is realized by accident. These accidents mark the peculiarity of things (*propria*) and determine what classification or to which “class” it belongs (*communis*).⁵⁷³ In other words, one recognizes the difference of the other by means of the identification in the essence and the expression through accidents. Consequently, identification in the essence will exclude any different representations. The experiential selfhood is characterized by the conditioned, while the theoretical Self is characterized by the unconditioned. This difference between the internal sides of selfhood is sufficient enough to place both in a contradictory opposition. Once the contradiction is established between the Self and the self, then the Self is maintained for the sake of the representation of “a harmonious concept and an organic representation” of things.⁵⁷⁴

The oblivion or disappearance of the experiential self raises at least two problematical consequences in the ontological field. The presence of the experiential self is indispensable as the other side of the Self in so far as the disappearance of it affects the understanding of the contextual self as the frontier for the thinking process itself.

1. The first consequence is the absolute representation of the Same, the Man. The Self or ‘the Man’ is in itself the unconditioned, indeterminate, and undifferentiated. These properties are beyond any contextualization or particularity. The universal is never appropriated into the scheme of the particular otherwise it will lose the regulative signification for thinking. This necessary implication of the regulative signification can be accepted if one considers the universal in the epistemological field of scientific justification. Nevertheless, the implication of the universal into the particular scheme of the ontological experience of the self is impossible to do.

⁵⁷² Heidegger 1969: 45, 50.

⁵⁷³ Deleuze 1994: 30.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. the specific difference in Deleuze 1994: 31.

The rejection of the experiential self and the appropriation of the particular context into the scheme of universal ontology affect the understanding of the *real* side of the self, as well as the objects-in-themselves. The *real* side here denotes the phenomena of the noumenon, the appearances of the things-in-themselves or being. The experiential side of the self initiates the first association with the noumenon by means of perceiving through the phenomena. The result of this initial contact is a disposition to the phenomena and it will continue with an awareness of the contextual setting of the phenomena where the noumenon is implied. The awareness of the contextual existence of the self and the world alludes to the understanding that such things-in-itself do not only make a material appearance, but also immaterial as well. The immaterial appearance here connotes the source or the ground of existence which virtually affect the epistemic vision of the world including the self. If one ignores this epistemic vision which signifies the origination of the body of knowledge, then such a body of knowledge no longer embodies ontological reason, but a regulative adjustment in the behavioral approach. Although regulative signification of knowledge should necessarily be separated in order to avoid the speculative reasoning of the transcendental ontology of the metaphysical grounds for thinking, according to Kant,⁵⁷⁵ one would be better to consider the implication of such regulative signification in the realm of the understanding of our existence.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that such regulative signification offers a transcended ground for thinking as the “empty universality.” Furthermore, they write:

*“Transcendence may be entirely ‘empty’ in itself, yet it becomes full to the extent that it descends and crosses different hierarchized levels that are projected together on a region of plane.”*⁵⁷⁶

The citation above has to do with their account of the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of philosophy. Both insist that “thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth.”⁵⁷⁷ This metaphorically means that the contextualization of thought, even though this is the transcendental theory of being is bound to any particular place, or “a region of plane.” These French philosophers indicate that for the Universal, the Same as the unconditioned signification of thought, undetermined representation of the meaningful functions as if it has become the metaphysical ground of all kinds of particular minds. The Same itself originated from Greek philosophy and such regulative concepts of thought and were later developed by English, German, and French philosophers by means of applicative concepts such as: “the democratic state,” “the market,” “human rights,”

⁵⁷⁵ Caygill 1995: 349.

⁵⁷⁶ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 89.

⁵⁷⁷ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 85.

“modernity,” “the Modern Man,” among others. Philosophy is also reterritorialized by means of concepts and figures as “the schools” like scholasticism, monotheism, Catholicism, or capitalism have produced.⁵⁷⁸ In other words the absolutism of the Same beyond all contextualization and particularities is another reduction to a certain plane of thought, the reterritorialized milieu of thinking. The universality is filled by certain concepts and figures from a particular region of thought.

2. If this “Modern Man,” or “Modernity,” for example, is referred to by a region of thought outside the North Atlantic region, it means that the regulative signification of this contextualized universality replaces a local signification of individuality. This is the second consequence of the knowledge of the self in the ontological field. One has to be reminded that the oblivion of the experiential self interrupts a bond with a contextual setting. This interruption affects the contextual origination of the selfhood, whereas the fact that this contextual origination supplies the meaningful signification of the existence of the self besides that of knowledge production. If universality ignores the contextual origination, it does not only replace the origination, but also imposes its standard on to the local epistemic vision of the world. The result is that the local content of meaningful signification is under threat of being wiped out. The removal of local content is for the sake of applying the regulative signification of the Universal within a particular context of local knowledge. Consequently, such removal also indicates the uprooted self-identity of a local signification of selfhood. In the realm of behavioral standards, such uprooted self-identity affects the confused employment of such Universality in a particular context. This confusion does not bring an order of behavioral arrangement even in the structural and systematic domain of society.⁵⁷⁹

The effect of the imposition of the Universal and the Man on to the local epistemic vision of the world reconstructs not only the appearance of modern society in a locality outside the North Atlantic region, but also withdraws the core signification of selfhood which is conceived in the local worldview. The universality replaces such meaningfulness of self-identity with nothing, but a regulation of true knowledge by means of the scientific method of justification as if such methods were enough to lead locals to the knowledge of the truth itself, as if the local one were insufficient.

In sum, the absolutism of the Universal in fact appears as the reterritorialization of the conceptual persona in a certain context, in the North Atlantic “plane of thought.” This reterritorialization brings with it the contextual signification of being which originated from this region. The effect of this contextualized content of the Universal

⁵⁷⁸ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 101, 104ff.

⁵⁷⁹ For example, a commoditization of almost every aspects of life renders this kind of confusion. Cf. Fardon, van Binsbergen & van Dijk 1999; van Binsbergen & Geschiere 2005.

standardization of the true knowledge represents how the systematic and structural interest of the region imposes its thought over all other regions. Deleuze and Guattari uncover the real intent of North Atlantic theoretical knowledge. They note:

*“However, it is difficult to believe that it is the rise ‘of philosophy and the mutually inclusive sciences’ that accounts for this privilege of a peculiarly European transcendental subject. Rather, the infinite movement of thought, what Husserl calls Telos, must enter into conjunction with the great relative movement of capital that is continually deterritorialized in order to secure the power of Europe over all other peoples and their reterritorialization on Europe.”*⁵⁸⁰

The real face of the transcendental subject, the Same or the Man is the reterritorialization of Europe’s privilege of capital and power over all other subjects. In this sense any local knowledge systems, including the African, Asian or Islamic systems of knowledge, are categorized as esoteric or *gnosis*, rather than accountable and accessible theories of the world or *epistémé*.⁵⁸¹

The establishment of the transcendental subject, the Man necessarily results in the disappearance of the experiential self which affects the contextual signification of the self. The uprooted self-identity from its context appears as the serious consequence of this dissolution of the empirical self. The effect is substantive. There is no other standard of individuality except the Western accounts of the conceptual persona or the Man. The corollary of this is either the hegemony of self-identification or the exclusion of the undesired representation from the arena of true identification and realization of the power and the capital representation by means of violence.⁵⁸²

Furthermore these problematic topics reveal the fundamental quest of the establishment of the individuality of the knower by means of the conceptual persona either at the individual or collective level. Such conceptual persona secures the individuality of the knower as far as the intelligibility of the transcendental subject is concerned. Thus, the establishment of the Man personally guarantees my knowledge of selfhood. Meanwhile ‘the Democratic State’ or ‘the Civil Society’ is the ideal representation of the collectivity. In other words, the appropriation of such transcendental subjects transforms my individuality and the collective representation into the level of common sense. Given this common sense, my knowledge of selfhood and the social representation are meaningful. This meaningfulness is indispensable in the light of the signification of being.

Nevertheless, the establishment of individuality through the transcendental subject, as Deleuze and Guattari indicate, is not merely by means of the viewpoint of logical connection of subject and object, because such a viewpoint “gives a poor

⁵⁸⁰ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 98

⁵⁸¹ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 93, 94-95. Even Deleuze and Guattari mention these non-European philosophies as pre-philosophical which subsist alongside Greek philosophy.

⁵⁸² Cf. van Binsbergen 2003a: 464.

approximation of thought.” Hence, the thought of the individuality of the knowing subject should overcome such a connection, even Kant, according to these thinkers, goes beyond the regulative signification of thought.⁵⁸³ In the respect concerning the contextual signification of the ontological concept, any response to the fundamental quest of the individuality of the subject should reconsider the presupposition of thought itself. This is not for the sake of regulating the thinking process, but for the comprehensive signification of being from the viewpoint of the epistemic vision. With this in mind, then Ricoeur and Deleuze, in their respective accounts of being propose affirmation as the epistemic vision to understand our existence. I provide their accounts of affirmation below.

7.2. Ricoeur: Primary affirmation (*L'affirmation originaire*)

Affirmation as the substantial subject in Ricoeur’s philosophy is associated with his philosophical style, that is, his preference of asserting “yes” instead of “no,” or joy rather than anguish.⁵⁸⁴ Given this character of philosophy, Ricoeur chooses affirmative existence rather than the negative. He chooses being over nihilism. By coming to this conclusion Ricoeur includes the historical selfhood besides the transcendental Self into his reflection. The purpose of this is to indicate primary affirmation as the power to interconnect “theory and praxis” as it is “impossible to set up a lasting and deep opposition” between them,⁵⁸⁵ or the theoretical and experiential selfhood. This interconnection reveals that Ricoeur presupposes affirmation rather than negativity or nothingness as ‘the epistemological foundation’ of human existence.⁵⁸⁶ This presupposition of affirmation is an effort to go beyond the establishment of the individuality of selfhood by means of negativity. Rather, it posits openness, intentionality towards the world, or correlation among individuality in whatever form of its manifestations.⁵⁸⁷ In other words, the primary affirmation postulates a relationship as the determination of being. I will return to this argument shortly.

Meanwhile, how does Ricoeur come to the conclusion of this primary affirmation when he starts with his reflection on being? In responding to this question it is indispensable to mention Ricoeur’s account of selfhood. On the one hand, he accepts the idea that the cogito, ‘I’, is the ideal representation of selfhood which provides integrity or unity of being. On the other hand, he argues such unity of the Self by positing “the shattered cogito.”⁵⁸⁸ His account of the shattered cogito underlines the distinction of selfhood in experiential and theoretical realm, whereas that such both

⁵⁸³ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 85.

⁵⁸⁴ Ricoeur 1965 : chap.6; 1990; cf. Perez 2002: 396.

⁵⁸⁵ Ricoeur 1965: 5.

⁵⁸⁶ Perez 2002: 399.

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. Ricoeur 1965: 307.

⁵⁸⁸ Ricoeur 1990/1994: 11ff cf. Perez 2002: 396.

levels are complementary to each other. Even though the experiential self is always considered the conditioned aspect of selfhood, the contingent, a philosophical reflection on the experiential side is not just a starting point in order to arrive at the unconditioned aspect or the transcendental subjectivity. Ricoeur employs anguish as the focus of his philosophical reflection on the experiential side. By reflecting negative emotion, the anguish, he implies that both sides of our existence reveal an intention to affirm the existence of our being from the historical viewpoint rather than to negate the undesired affection or other contingency of being.⁵⁸⁹ Ricoeur opens his essay “True and False Anguish” by emphasizing that:

*“Philosophical reflection does not go astray when it concerns itself with poignant feelings. On the contrary, it is on solid ground as long as it directs the inquiry, interrogates the feeling, defines its implicit intention and, by means of this critical test, raising feeling to the status of truth.”*⁵⁹⁰

The poignant feeling, anguish, is the deepest expression of sadness, and it reveals a multiple relation with other negative affections such as despair, anxiety, unhappiness, grief, and misery. This extreme sorrow appears as a response to an internal condition of the self and the surrounding external situation. The internal condition of the self, firstly, refers to death as something which threatens our bodily existence with physical nihilism.⁵⁹¹ Secondly, the other internal anguish is a distressful response against a psychotic disorder, or psychism, which threatens our mental sanity.⁵⁹²

Both death and psychism endanger our cognition of selfhood insofar as they can affect the experience of being the other even for my recognition of self-identity. In other words, this internal anguish alienates my selfhood from my recognition of the unity of the Self or the transcendental subject. Ricoeur writes:

*“Thus, anguish springs from the very depths of my inner conflicts and from what might be called the fragility of the human psychism which redoubles the contingency of life. But the contingency of life was anguishing only through the mediation of death; the fragility of the psychism is a direct source of anguish, for what makes me afraid is an unknown and, as it were, buried visage of myself, the possibility of not recognizing myself, of being other, of being literally alienated.”*⁵⁹³

Ricoeur emphasizes the effect of internal neurosis on my experience of the unity of the Self. One knows the unity of selfhood as if it were completely integrated within. Yet this knowledge of the self confronts the fact that such unity of the Self implies the multiplicity of subject,⁵⁹⁴ which signifies that the experiential self as another is separated from the transcendental subject.

⁵⁸⁹ Ricoeur 1965: 13.

⁵⁹⁰ Ricoeur 1965: 287.

⁵⁹¹ Ricoeur 1965: 289.

⁵⁹² Ricoeur 1965: 292.

⁵⁹³ Ricoeur 1965: 292.

⁵⁹⁴ Ricoeur 1990/1994: 16.

The position of the shattered cogito is something that frightens our mental sanity and threatens our integrity of selfhood. Nevertheless, the experiential self encounters an inconvenient situation about which Ricoeur describes as “the boredom of civilization.”⁵⁹⁵ Such a situation occurs in the middle of the prospective progression of society by means of developing qualities of life through scientific and technological methods. Even though the prosperity of society is well maintained, in this sense freedom is the sine qua non for such societal progression, the boring situation is inescapable. Ricoeur writes:

*“By creating zones of freedom or at least areas of life organized apart from public order, from political and social security, the growth of civilization leaves man to himself, a prey of boredom; man who is less and less equipped to counter the dangers secreted by his psychism. To create leisure is very often to hand man over to the inanity of comfort, to a sort of civilized idleness, and, in the end, to his own vacuity, to his lack of purpose. The error of Narcissus is not far away.”*⁵⁹⁶

In other words, Ricoeur emphasizes the condition of total emptiness that is experienced internally by the empirical self. Such emptiness signifies the lack of a meaningful purpose in life, so as the preservation of life is something aimless. The experience of vacuity becomes inescapable for any selfhood. This negative condition cannot be overcome solely by putting it against the transcendental subject where the dialectic is concluded with the triumph of the transcendental subject as the subject of synthetic judgement. Ricoeur does not theorize that the experiential subject will dissolve in his philosophical reflection on metaphysical anguish.

Instead of disappearance the experiential self or the historical one, Ricoeur maintains this historical side of selfhood in order to escape the nothingness of meaning implied by the reconciliation by referring to the triumph of the transcendental subject. He writes:

*“A frightening possibility is discovered by anguish: what if actual history did not have meaning; what if Hegelian reconciliation were but a philosopher’s contrivance? The nothingness with which the threat is announced is a nothingness of meaning, at the very level of ‘spirit,’ a nothingness of meaning at the core of this presumed meaning which was to give purpose and design to mental hygiene and to cure Narcissus.”*⁵⁹⁷

The avoidance of the nothingness of meaning is the reason that the historical selfhood is as substantive as the ideal Self. The reflection on anguish historically experienced by any selfhood indicates the ambivalence of human achievements in the growth of the quality of life. The ambivalence signifies both the positive and the negative elements of human progression. This ambivalence of the growth of civilization signifies that the anguish confronts the level of experience with the theoretical self. In

⁵⁹⁵ Ricoeur 1965: 292.

⁵⁹⁶ Ricoeur 1965: 293.

⁵⁹⁷ Ricoeur 1965: 294.

other words, the anguish leads us on a search for the reasons of life. In the face of death, evil situations, the boredom of society, mental disorders, personal failures, the fragility of our body, or the unintended, and pointless life, this authentic anguish brings us to the meaningfulness of life rather than leading to deconstructive life. In other words, the experience of metaphysical anguish, the suffering of the just, inspires the power of hope, the vitality of life itself.⁵⁹⁸ In this respect, the philosophical reflection of anguish holds the affirmative side within the destructive experience. Since death is something apparent in our life and the most nonsensical, our minds, by virtue of this power of affirmation, are capable of determining the meaning from such annihilating events.

What does affirmation imply regarding its determinate power to yield meaning in spite of whatever tragedy has occurred? Ricoeur does not intend to soothe a situation of unrest or desperate people. He offers a profound signification of the experiential, sensible selfhood, our body, when one proceeds with philosophical reflection on the phenomena of life. The body embodies finitude of the self, yet it signifies “openness onto.”⁵⁹⁹ The limitation of the body on the one hand implies a negative reflection of the self. It is the “the Hegelian presupposition” of philosophical reflection that the negative will identify the human being *individually*. The body, in this respect, is the conditioned aspect so that it presupposes essential negativity. By this essential negativity, the self overcomes any viewpoint which makes the self distant with the conditioned reality. Nevertheless, the method to withdraw from the experiential sides of my selfhood does not totally exist in the ‘place-of-no-where’; rather my selfhood appears relative to any contextual, temporal and spatial, setting for the sake of intending a meaningful existence. Ricoeur writes:

*“In other words, I am not wholly defined by my status of being-in-the-world: my insertion in the world is never so total that I lose the aloofness of signifying, of intending, the principle of expression. This aloofness is the very root of reflection on point of view as point of view; it is what allows me to convert my ‘here’ from an absolute placement into any place whatever, relative to all the others, in a social and geometrical space in which there is no privileged emplacement. Henceforth, I know that I am here; I am not merely the Nullpunkt but I also reflect on it: and I know at the same time that the presence of things is given to me from a point of view, because I intended the thing in its meaning, beyond all points of view.”*⁶⁰⁰

Here, Ricoeur emphasizes the signification of my point of view that my experiential self is bound to a certain context in order to be able to take a distance from reality by transcending myself to the theoretical Self. The signification to this extent is the relationship between the sensible and the transcended self so that my existence as an individual being is recognized. This is the reason that Ricoeur recognizes the *a priori* knowledge of my selfhood as a reflection “*on point of view as point of view.*” The

⁵⁹⁸ Ricoeur 1965: 301, 303; cf. Perez 2002: 399.

⁵⁹⁹ Ricoeur 1965: 307.

⁶⁰⁰ Ricoeur 1965: 309.

reciprocity of the experiential and the transcendental, the praxis and the theory, is an indispensable method for understanding my being. My experiential selfhood as another is simultaneously “the not-I par excellence,” the Universal, yet for such a transcendental Self, the universal is also “the not-this par excellence,” the sensible expression to which one ascribes meaning.⁶⁰¹ This is then referred to as the correlative double negations. The negation or the finitude myself ‘opens’ the way to conceive of my transcendental Self (my selfhood is the “not this”), but at the same time the universal Self negates itself so as the sensible self becomes meaningful (my selfhood is also the not-I).

Furthermore, Ricoeur posits these double negations as “the transcendence as negation of negation.” With this phrase Ricoeur is referring to the finitude of being. The limited body should be overcome in order to make it “open onto” the unconditioned plane on which my selfhood becomes distinct and in virtue of this my self becomes intelligible. The openness onto the unconditioned plane reminds me that the negation of my selfhood is never something total or a radical negation. The negation of the experience of finitude brings about the will to life for my selfhood, something that affects my reason for living. This is what Ricoeur calls the denegation of the negation of my finitude.⁶⁰² This denegation is different from an annihilating act. Denegation implies the primary affirmation which constitutively pertains to the reciprocal trajectory of both experiential and theoretical life. While an annihilating act signifies the negation of limitation in order to establish self-individuality. It is for the sake of self-individuality that the theoretical self annihilates the conditioned and the sensible self and turns it into an ‘insignificant another.’

Moreover, if one thinks of being, the experiential self and the transcendental Self from the viewpoint of primary affirmation, then one no longer understands selfhood (or generally known as being) merely as “a thing.”⁶⁰³ Ricoeur argues that existentialism’s reflection on nothingness, mainly by Sartre, misleads us about the comprehension of nothingness as the nihilating acts, which lies at the very core of being.⁶⁰⁴ Alternatively said, Sartre postulates negativity as ‘the most primordial of all modalities.’⁶⁰⁵ These nihilating acts, according to Sartre, establish that my selfhood ‘is not something’ and that something ‘is not’ mine. In this respect, one has to depend on these nihilating acts in order for the self to escape meaninglessness. This capacity of nihilating acts alludes to freedom. It is by virtue of freedom human reality is possible to “secrete a nothingness

⁶⁰¹ Ricoeur 1965: 313.

⁶⁰² Ricoeur 1965: 318.

⁶⁰³ Ricoeur 1965: 324.

⁶⁰⁴ Ricoeur 1965: 319; cf. Perez 2002: 399.

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. Perez 2002: 399, Heidegger 1959

which isolates it.”⁶⁰⁶ Hence, negativity, by means of the actualization of freedom in Sartre’s account, becomes the ontological characteristics of human existence.⁶⁰⁷

Nevertheless, according to Ricoeur, this existential negativity or the experience of negation has more to do with explaining the experience of negation than establishing the primordial modality of our existence. Instead of constituting the primordial modality, the experience of negation *actually* should bring about the passage from objectivity and the transcendental subject to the experiential one.⁶⁰⁸ In this respect, again Ricoeur emphasizes that the negation of something for the sake of the intelligibility of my selfhood and vice versa is the reification of my selfhood into “*a thing*.” The reason is that existentialism fails to grasp that my being does not merely belong to the *factual*, “the mundane outside of me and in me.”⁶⁰⁹ My being *really* belongs to the *arkhé* or the ground which explains the reciprocal juxtaposition of both experiential (*the factual*) and transcendental (*the objective*) characters of my selfhood. If one manages to be conscious of the origination of our being, one arrives at the modal ground of our existence, despite the fact that to arrive there one must take a complex route of thought in order to arrive at the understanding of the primary affirmation.⁶¹⁰ Such the modal ground is primary affirmation, which also reveals the existence of being in its full sense through the experiential element of being. The deliberation of experiential element of being is part of the practical knowledge which takes into account a judgement to achieve a specific intention in life. In turn, this deliberation of practical judgement also pertains to a sagacious knowledge. Ricoeur believes: “*we must reachieve a notion of being which is act rather than form, living affirmation, the power of existing and of making exist.*”⁶¹¹

7.3. The Deleuzean affirmation

Ricoeur suggests that philosophical reflection necessarily considers the experiential phenomenon of the selfhood. The theoretical approach to the Self should not negate the experiential self insofar as this empirical side of the selfhood reveals the capability to identify signification even though the experience of the self is negative like anguish. This capability connotes the internal power of being to express the meaningfulness of

⁶⁰⁶ Ricoeur 1965: 319.

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Perez 2002: 399.

⁶⁰⁸ Ricoeur 1965: 316, cf. Perez 2002: 400.

⁶⁰⁹ Ricoeur 1965: 324.

⁶¹⁰ Ricoeur 1965: 327. He writes “... *and this explains the necessity of this complex train of thought: to discover human transcendence in the transgression of point of view, and negativity in transcendence; then to discover in this negation a double negation, the second negation of point of view as primary negation; then to discover primary affirmation within this negation of negation.*”

⁶¹¹ Ricoeur 1965: 327, 328; Cf. In other citation, Ricoeur writes “*humans are constituted by an original; positive impetus rather than a negation of being or nothingness (as in Sartre).*” See in Perez 2002: 402.

life. According to Ricoeur, such an internal capability to yield the signification of life is called primary affirmation. This account of internal power refers to the core of Nietzsche's philosophy, that is, the will to power. It is the will which does not seek the establishment of power, or the conquering power. In this respect, one should regard another Nietzschean approach to this subject which comes from Gilles Deleuze's account of affirmation.

Deleuze reminds us, when we set out to study Nietzsche's philosophy, we should take some precautions against misinterpreting Nietzsche's central concepts such as the master and slave relationship, the Will to Power, eternal return and the Overman. It is important not to think of the Nietzschean slave as someone "who finds himself dominated by a master, and deserves to be." He also points out that one should avoid understanding the Will to Power as "a will which wants and seeks power." He also warns should not conceive of the eternal return as "the tedious return of the Same." And his last advice is that one has to stop "imagining the Overman as a master race."⁶¹²

If one manages to avoid these tendencies of misinterpreting Nietzschean basic concepts, one will be able to recognize the Will to Power or force as an event which signifies "various relationships in a proposition or a phenomenon." Deleuze writes:

*"Here we must rid ourselves of all 'personalist' references. That one that ... does not refer to an individual, to a person, but rather to an event, that is, to the forces in their relationship in a proposition or a phenomenon, and to the genetic relationship which determines these forces (power)."*⁶¹³

In other words, the force is not the establishment of individuality of the self. Deleuze argues that if one perceives the force as the capability of individuation or 'the will that wants and seeks power,' then one will conceive of it as a negative force and the lowest rank of the capability to determine the self. Meanwhile if one thinks of force not with the paradigm of individuation, but with that of the correlation between the selves, one finds out that the force has another side, which is affirmative. The affirmative force regards the determining capability as 'the power that wants in the will.'⁶¹⁴

There are two tendencies of the dynamic relationship in the force, affirmation and negation. Both can appear in the operative of logical connection. Affirmation is the operative which conjoins a subject with a predicate, one is the part of the other. Meanwhile, negation distinguishes the correlation between a subject and a predicate as if the substantive components of a proposition were separated for the sake of their respective individuations. This division affects the individuation of the terms of the proposition, whereas such an individuation is placed in the context of a logical connection, that is, the distinguishing relationship. The power of negation distinguishes the subject or the predicate as the established elements in the determining correlation.

⁶¹² These four notifications are in Deleuze 1962/2002: xii.

⁶¹³ Deleuze 1962/2002: xi.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

Deleuze calls this establishment of individuation by virtue of the power of negation as the reactive force. The other force, affirmation, is the active one. To think presupposes these two forces insofar as it conveys the need 'to create.'⁶¹⁵ Thus the exploration of affirmation in Deleuze's approach to Nietzsche's philosophy focuses on the elaboration of the reactive and active forces. Yet before discussing these forces, it is necessary to explain the five constitutive terms in Deleuze's philosophy. They are 'force,' 'internal difference,' 'unity,' 'anti-dialectics' and 'becoming.' These terms reveal the epistemological foundations for understanding affirmation in his philosophical account.

7.3.1 Five constitutive terms related to Deleuze's account of reactive and active force

Before one proceeds with the exploration of the reactive force discussed in Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* it is better to consider some of the constitutive themes of Deleuze's philosophy that are associated with the exploration of the reactive and active force.

The first constitutive term in Deleuze's philosophy is **force**. Deleuze defines force as the capability to "appropriate the thing, to exploit it and to take possession of it, or to express in it."⁶¹⁶ The phenomena is the sign, the symptom of the existing force through which one tries to reveal meaning from the reality of life. The expression of force emerges in the multiple manifestations of thing. It enables variation of life-forms. Such multiple manifestations or difference or the variations of life-forms in Deleuze's argument are called multiplicity by which one can indicate that Deleuze's philosophy is pluralistic. With such pluralist ideas, Deleuze conceives that a thing has many senses, "*a thing is sometimes this, sometimes that, sometimes something more complicated—depending on the forces which take possession of it.*"⁶¹⁷ Deleuze in this respect speaks about the expression of the substance through force in the level of attributes. The Spinozian term should be understood in its association with the capability of sense to grasp such expressions. It is the task of philosophy to unmask the symptom or the sign of the expression through the senses. As philosophy discovers this symptom, there are always two interconnected series. There are the signifier, which is the dynamic expression of the substance as it appears in the phenomena of things, and the signified, which is the designation of the meaning of the substance through force.⁶¹⁸ In other words, the multiplicity or difference is not located among things, that the one is distinct from the other. The multiplicity appears internally so that being has multiple expressions which develop paradoxical appearances, or concisely it articulates the internal difference.

⁶¹⁵ Deleuze 1962/2002: xiv.

⁶¹⁶ Deleuze 1962/2002: 3.

⁶¹⁷ Deleuze 1962/1992: 4.

⁶¹⁸ Cf. Deleuze 1969/1990: 40.

The second constitutive term in Deleuze's account of affirmation is **internal difference**. The concept of internal difference challenges the individuation of beings from an atomist perception. The individuation of thing is established insofar as each thing, based on its essential difference or the specific difference, is in itself unique and indivisible.⁶¹⁹

Meanwhile, following Nietzsche, Deleuze argues such specific difference as if each being were in itself singular or univocal. It is force (Deleuze also calls it the will) which manifests in being and which takes possession of it so that being can emerge in all variations of forms of the inward and outward substance. Paradoxically, it is also being which employs forces and maintains its appearance in order to express such inward and outward forms. Despite appearing as a paradox, one should look at these forces as expressed in interconnectivity. The interconnectivity occurs in the will that commands (the possessive force) and the one that obeys (the expressive force). These wills are the sides or series of being. Deleuze describes this relationship of the two series as:

"We will not say, therefore, of the two series (the two kinds of the forces or the wills – mine) it animates, that the one is originary and the other derived, though they certainly may be originary or derived in relation to one another. They can also be successive in relation to one another. But they are strictly simultaneous in relation to the entity by means of which they communicate. They are simultaneously without being equal, since the entity has two sides, one of which is always absent from the other. It behooves it, therefore, to be in excess in the one series which it constitutes as signifying, and lacking in the other which it constitutes as signified: split apart, incomplete by nature or in relation to itself."⁶²⁰

The idea of the interactivity of the determining and determined wills presumes that both are complementary to one another. If being independent and integral exists, it will be at once suffice and lack of its complementary side. Being can be excess on the one side only, either as the signifier or as the signified. Such excess indicates a lack on the other side. If being exists only in and for itself, it will be incomplete and split apart by nature. Only by virtue of a relationship between the signifier and the signified, the two series of existence, being appears as complete and meaningful both inwardly and outwardly.

The third constitutive theme in the Deleuze philosophy is **'unity'** or **'unification'**. This term is not the derivation of the previous terms; instead it appears simultaneously as a rhizome of concepts with the previous ones. Deleuze's account of unity refers to the affirmation of multiplicity. To this extent, he defines the interconnection of difference or multiplicity which means that difference is never subsumed under the representation of the Same: identity, analogy, opposition and resemblance. This interconnection of difference is what Duns Scotus has argued against

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Deleuze 1968a/1994: 30-31.

⁶²⁰ Deleuze 1969/1990: 41.

for the absolute unity of Being, which is the singular and the Same, as the metaphysical ground of the knowledge of being. According to Duns Scotus, this metaphysical ground, Being, is univocal insofar as it is the “*single and same sense of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities.*” Furthermore, Deleuze writes about Scotus’ view of being:

*“Being is the same for all these modalities, but these modalities are not the same. It is ‘equal’ for all but they themselves are not equal. It is said of all in a single sense, but they themselves do not have the same sense. The essence of univocal being is to include individuating differences, while these differences do not have the same essence and do not change the essence of being – just as white includes various intensities, while remaining essentially the same white.”*⁶²¹

Therefore, the univocal Being as the single and the same is identified from its relationship with beings or the multiplicity, or its intrinsic modalities, which among themselves constitute individuating differences. Precisely, one defines such single and same properties of the univocity of Being from the viewpoint that Being *includes* the relationship with its modalities although the essence of these modalities is *still different*. In this way white is preserved though the intensity of it *differs* through the intrinsic modalities of white. In this respect, being remains equivocal in and for the univocity of being. This “in and for” signifies a reciprocal relationship from the equivocal being to the univocal Being insofar as this reciprocity *affirms* the unique existence of both.

From the viewpoint of Being, which is only in the realm of thought or Voice, it follows that this abstraction is necessarily neutral or indifferent to the extent that it characterizes neither singular nor universal, neither infinite nor finite, neither created nor uncreated. Based upon such neutrality, Duns Scotus makes two types of distinction with regards to difference: the formal and the modal. The first conveys a real distinction for being and Being as it is established in between the essences and senses. This real distinction preserves the univocity of being extended through the unity of its attributes and also that of God which does not miss anything of his unity. The latter signifies the establishment of being and its attributes by means of various appearances.⁶²²

Given the individuating difference and both types of distinction within the univocal Being, one can suppose that the univocity of Being means that being is multiple and have differences so it follows that Being “is one and the same sense of everything about which it is said.”⁶²³ This comprehension signifies that, on the one hand, from the viewpoint of Being, beings are distributed in the univocity of Being through the formal distinction of their respective essences. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of being, the univocity of Being *expresses* the multiplicity or difference of beings to the extent that the modal distinction affirms the variations of attributes as the

⁶²¹ Deleuze 1968a/1994: 36.

⁶²² Deleuze 1968a/1994: 39.

⁶²³ Deleuze 1969/1990: 179 cf. 1968a/1994: 39.

individuating factors of beings themselves. This is one aspect of unity in Deleuze's philosophy.

Unity in this light does not implicate the singularity of Being in which beings identify its existence by means of analogy and resemblance. In this respect unity is simultaneously the one and all, or the correlation of the One-All or the One-Many.⁶²⁴ This is the reason that Deleuze writes:

*"Moreover, it is not we who are univocal in a Being which is not; it is we and our individuality which remains equivocal in and for a univocal Being."*⁶²⁵

Multiplicity of being is not subsumed under the establishment of the Same, or Being by means of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance. One will misperceive the correlation if one draws from this idea the equality between beings and Being. Being and beings cannot be perceived as two independent epistemic entities. Nor they can be two separated substances which embody specific properties. Such conclusions are insufficient to conceive of the nature of the univocal Being and the equivocal beings. Therefore, one should move to the second aspect of unity in Deleuze's account of unity. This second aspect Deleuze takes from Spinoza's ethics.

Spinoza distributes being into three constitutive elements or the triad. These are substance, attributes and essence.⁶²⁶ Together, these elements are related to each other by virtue of an event called expression. The correlation of the expression among these triad elements is presented in the following propositions:

"... essence, insofar as it has existence, has no existence outside the attribute in which it is expressed; and yet, as essence, it relates only to substance."

"... substance which expresses itself, the attribute which expresses and the essence which is expressed."

*"Expression is inherent in substance, insofar as substance is absolute infinite; in its attributes, insofar as they constitute an infinity; in essence, insofar as each essence in an attribute is infinite. Thus infinity has a nature."*⁶²⁷

The triad here presents the 'expression' of a constitutive power that inherently reveals the nature of these epistemic identifications of being. The first proposition reveals that these epistemic identifications attain their respective existences by means of correlation. Each feature explains the existences of the others besides itself. Deleuze explicates the correlation by means of the second and third proposition. It is the 'expression' which becomes the explication of the identities of these epistemic features of being. The reason is not to explain that such features exist so that this explanation would turn into a transcendental illusion. The aim is to suggest the expression of each epistemic feature to explicate the nature of Being and its relationship with being. Spinoza does not acknowledge the existence of dualism that occurs with Cartesian

⁶²⁴ Deleuze 1968a/1994: 37; 1968b: 16.

⁶²⁵ Deleuze 1968a/1994: 39.

⁶²⁶ Deleuze 1968b/1990: 27.

⁶²⁷ Deleuze 1968b/1990: 28 cf Spinoza1955:45ff

philosophy. Instead the philosopher employs these three features in order to describe the unification embodied in Being as the substance or the Absolute. The unification within Being includes being as its attributes.⁶²⁸ It must suffice in this part to show that Deleuze inscribes affirmation and negation in the correlation between Being, the absolute substance, and beings, the attributes.⁶²⁹

These types of correlations are not the same logical operation which reveals positive and negative connections of thought. Rather, Deleuze proposes that negation no longer represents privation or individualization of Being and beings, which derives the opposition between Being against beings. But rather, he holds that both 'exist' only by means of an analogical comparison and not by identification. Given this alternative approach of negation, Deleuze also explains that real distinction of things presupposes affirmation as a new logic that is free from opposition, privation or individualization, and analogy. The logic of affirmation explains that the real distinction of things is the acknowledgement of the diversity of things or the One-Many. The logic of affirmation is formulated as '*Non opposita sed diversa*,' 'not opposition but diversity.' Such diversity is retained by means of the distinction of attributes, not in the substance.⁶³⁰ Hence affirmation in this respect explains that unity requires the correlation between the substance and the attributes in the form of expression. Such kind of correlation or expression preserves the identity of the attributes as the differences, for the sake of the Substance. The attributes no longer appear as the decoration of the Substance. Instead, they do *really* exist in order to maintain the existence of the substance. About this understanding concerning the univocity of Being, Deleuze writes:

*"With Spinoza univocity becomes the object of a pure affirmation. The same thing, formaliter, constitutes the essence of substance and contains the essences of modes."*⁶³¹

This second aspect of unity from Spinozian expressionism is that unity presupposes the viewpoint of multiplicity. The attributes which express the substance and through which the essence is expressed represent the pure affirmation of life or life's multiplicity. Given this affirmation of life, Deleuze rejects the notion of the dialectic. The affirmation of attributes in the univocity of Being signifies that of life, as it is metaphorically revealed by Dionysus, the gods of feast. Thus, Deleuze employs Nietzsche's interpretation of the tragedy.

The forth constitutive term in Deleuze philosophy is his **anti-dialectic**. Background is the common conception of the Hegelian dialectic, in which the antithesis

⁶²⁸ For the explication against the Unity of Being, refer to Deleuze 1968b/1990: 32-37. The arguments on these pages are against the Cartesian philosophy of unity which conceives the unification of dual substances: Being and beings with the same attributes such as rational, teleological, goodness, etc.

⁶²⁹ Cf. Deleuze 1968b/1990: 53ff.

⁶³⁰ Deleuze 1968b/1990: 58-61.

⁶³¹ Deleuze 1968b/1990: 67.

appears in opposition with the thesis in order to yield a synthesis. This epistemic operative of thought presupposes what Deleuze calls the *dependency of the role of the negative* in such a cognitive connection.⁶³² The role of the negative treats a force as an object to the other. A force is against the other in order to maintain the individuation of the triumphant Force, the Same. The nature of the dialectic is the opposition and the contradiction between the same and differences, through which the Unity turns out the prevailing One. These implications of the dialectic, the negative by means of opposition and contradiction, discovers the tendency of North Atlantic philosophical texts, that sets things up in terms of the dualism between “suffering and life,” or “finite and infinite” in a sort of contradictory relationship. This opposition then is resolved with the transformation of this dualism into the unity which is the One, or the justification of the Right and the Truth. In another work *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze together with Guattari, assert this tendency which with the use of the dialectic reduces philosophy into inconclusive discussions. Such discussions measure truth value through opposable propositions, selections which are considered wiser than others or are “fixing their respective share of the truth.” In this case, rival opinions appear as indispensable in order to achieve the higher opinion, the objective, transcendent and universal knowledge. Given this higher opinion, the lower one, the subjective, immanent, and particular knowledge is negated and is subsumed under the justification of the objective.⁶³³

In other words, the unity is the *individuation* of the objective, transcendent and universal (textual) Self, the Same, the theoretical. This individuation excludes the subjective, experiential self or the sensible others by means of contradiction and opposition. From Nietzsche’s viewpoint, according to Deleuze, this individuation negates “primitive unity, the will and life itself” which includes the subjectivity of the rival opinions. Moreover, it preserves only *the appearance* of the theoretical Self as if this were the guarantee of the justification of the Right and the Good.⁶³⁴ Regarding this individuation of the textual, the objective Self, or the conceptual persona, metaphorically speaking, Nietzsche describes the dialectic as “the speculation of the plebs, as the way of thinking of the slave.” It also represents the triumph of “the contradiction over the concrete feeling of positive difference, of reaction over action, of revenge and ‘*ressentiment*.’” This triumph is not the real sense of the will to power; instead it is the representation of superiority and the recognition by “the One” of the

⁶³² Deleuze 1962/2002: 8, 195-197.

⁶³³ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 79-80

⁶³⁴ Cf. Deleuze 1962/2002: 11, especially Deleuze’s critique to the binary opposition between Dionysus and Apollo. The first mythical figure metaphorically represents the affirmation of life, the celebration of difference, of the ‘*Diaspora*’. Meanwhile the latter embodies the principle of individuation, of the reconstruction of the beautiful appearance. Deleuze writes “*Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of the eternity of the phenomenon.*” on this page.

superiority of the other.”⁶³⁵ Hence, in Deleuze’s account, the dialectic represents the mind of the slave who sees the power only as the object of recognition of the conceptual persona. Power is a means to the individuation of the objective self, whereas the objective self is the embodiment of revenge or *ressentiment*, a power to overcome life rather than to affirm it. Instead of being indifferent, objective property, the appearance of the conceptual persona alludes to the content of the slave reaction. Deleuze writes it is “*the stake in a competition and therefore makes it depend, at the end of fight, on a simple attribution of established values.*”⁶³⁶

What then does it mean to be against the dialectic in Deleuze’s thought? Apart from his Nietzschean metaphors, the consequence of the affirmation of multiplicity within the comprehension of the univocal being is his opposition to the Hegelian dialectic. The affirmation of differences demands a consistent viewpoint of the epistemological process of thought, that such process preserves life as the expressions of the multiplicity itself. The dialectic as the thinking process denies life insofar as the expression of the subjective, sensible and empirical persona is inherently within life.⁶³⁷ Despite the fact that life itself embodies both experiential and theoretical selves to incorporate the experiential side into the objective, the conceptual persona will confuse the establishment of the unconditioned insofar as the experiential side is regarded as the conditioned and the contingent, rather than a permanent representation of our thought. The individuation of the objective and conceptual persona as the result of the dialectic refers to Kant’s insistence that the conditioned should be subsumed under the representation of the unconditioned self. The unconditioned in this light *always* deduces the signification of the conditioned. The conceptual persona determines the meaning of the experiential selves; otherwise the experiential selves do not have their respective meaning. Given this meaningfulness of the sensible, subjective self, the individuation of the unconditioned by virtue of the dialectic is the *condition sine qua non*. Hence, the individuation of the objective and the universal Self is the determining paradigm of signification of the conditioned self.

Nevertheless, to negate the signification of the sensible self in itself and to subsume it under the representation of the Same consequently acknowledges that life in all diversity of manifestations is dispensable or insignificant. To be against the dialectic in Deleuze brings back the experiential self, the sensible into the thinking process insofar as our mind implies the involvement of experiential knowledge in order to grasp the meaningfulness of being. The experiential self in this sense has its own logic which in the first place includes the unity of the sensible and the theoretical, or the “primitive unity” of the will to know. The will to know or the will to power in this sense alludes to a comprehensive vision of life, an awareness of multiplicity as well as unity of life, the

⁶³⁵ Deleuze 1962/2002: 10

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Cf. Deleuze 1962/2002: 19.

interdependency of the One-Many. It is interesting that Deleuze following Nietzsche does not oppose the metaphors, the Dionysian type of self or the experiential one, against the Apollonian one or the theoretical. Rather, Deleuze affirms both as part of tragedy, the process of growth in life. Dionysus and Apollo in this light appear as the antithesis to each other, thus, such antitheses should necessarily be transformed into unity.⁶³⁸ In this respect, Deleuze does not want to fall into the trap of the dialectic to reject the antithesis for the sake of the triumphant Self or the Same. The alternative to the dialectic is to affirm both sides: the experiential and the theoretical. Both sides connote the affirmation of the correlation between them, rather than to establish the individuation of the One and to resolve the signification of the experiential selves or the others into the determining paradigm of the One.

The affirmation of the multiplicity of life and the preservation of the correlation of the sensible and the theoretical self allude to the **fifth constitutive term** in Deleuze's philosophy that is '**becoming**'. Necessarily the thinking process within the comprehensive vision of the primitive unity indicates that even in the form of concept, being presupposes 'becoming.' For Deleuze, the concept of 'becoming' comprises two realms. In the realm of epistemology, Deleuze and Guattari discover this presupposition in their delineation of 'concept' in the context of their alternative account of philosophy. A concept neither consists of the singularity of reference that is perfectly correspondent with reality outside it. Nor does such reference transform the concept into the objective which is indifferent to any *phenomena*. Nor is it only regulative which maintains the intelligibility of the phenomena that it represents. Rather, a concept, according to these thinkers, inherently contains multiplicity, the interconnection of a series of denotations and connotations. A concept in this light implies interconnection with other concepts; its components contribute internal and external consistency or it is inherently heterogeneous and inseparable; and a concept comprises the accumulation and condensation of its components to the extent that each component is an intensive feature (intensive ordinate) which is pure and simple singularity. To that extent, whether a concept can be generalized or particularized, it depends on how a concept shares its variable values or indicates a constant function.⁶³⁹

Given this epistemological explanation, a concept is then understood as 'becoming.' A concept simultaneously *becomes* absolute and relative. It is absolute insofar as a concept condensates its components; it occupies a site (or fixed position) on the plane of immanence and it resolves the problems it faces. A concept is also relative in the sense that a concept reveals its intensive features and extensive correlation with other ones on the plane of immanence which defines it.⁶⁴⁰ In other words, we *know* something not because of a concept projects a true representation of the noumena

⁶³⁸ Deleuze 1962/2002: 12.

⁶³⁹ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 19-20.

⁶⁴⁰ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 23.

through its phenomena. We *know* to the extent that the concept provides a comprehensive vision which intensively and extensively explicates a *real* thing as an image of interconnecting elements in a plane of the intelligible world. For example the concept of a grass lawn *expresses* a relative image of the interconnection of its intensive features, such as plant, wild, rhizome, green, spreading, covering, etc. Therefore, it relates extensively to other plants and things associates with a lawn that contributes to a plane of the aesthetic experience of a lawn. A ‘grass lawn’ is an absolute concept insofar as it clarifies its own position which provides a certain image of phenomena in our thought which individually clarifies “a type of grass.” Thus, a concept is both individual and has an inter-relational image.

Deleuze writes:

“Concepts are centers of vibrations, each in itself and every one in relation to all the others. This is why they all resonate rather than cohere or correspond with each other. There is no reason why concepts should cohere. As fragmentary totalities, concepts are not even the pieces of a puzzle, for their irregular contours do not correspond to each other. They do form a wall, but it is a dry-stone wall, and everything holds together only along diverging lines. Even bridges from one concept to another are still junctions, or detours, which do not define any discursive whole. They are movable bridges.”⁶⁴¹

The metaphors, such as pieces of a puzzle or a dry-stone wall indicate the event of ‘becoming’ for concepts, in order to explain that concepts are not meant to compose a proposition. If concepts are parts which build a proposition, one may be confused that they are the exact representative of the possible world. Rather concepts to the extent should be seen as the lines between dry-stones in a wall which individually neither contribute correspondence nor a projection of the possible world. Each line is connected to the other ones, in a dynamic conjunction or detour in order to represent a comprehensive vision of an image. This connection shows that concepts link themselves as compositions of an image rather than a proposition in a certain signification of a text. These links in turn affect the internal and external consistency of the concepts that they together present themselves in a comprehensive correlation, one with the others.⁶⁴² Given this dynamic explanation of concept as connective, linking and internally consistent, one can no longer think in order to find out a referential establishment of an individual representation of thing through concept. Rather thinking implies becoming; thinking a concept is always becoming something else which is a creation of an image which detours to thought and revives it.⁶⁴³ In short, the idea of becoming in the realm of epistemology revives concepts as extending images of the manifestations of life rather than a representative of a possible world, a defined representation of an individual thing.

⁶⁴¹ Deleuze 1991/1994: 23.

⁶⁴² Cf. Deleuze 1991/1994: 91.

⁶⁴³ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 42.

To that extent, the epistemological signification of becoming affects the realm of ontology, the concept of “I” in its relation for conceiving the existence of it.

In the realm of ontology, Deleuze employs the idea of pure becoming in order to explain the nature of our being. Such an idea has to do with the flowing of time, past, present and future. Deleuze relies on Heraclitus’s understanding of time and explains it in the light of the idea of becoming in the epistemological realm. Especially in *The Logic of Sense* (1969/1990), Deleuze starts with the Platonic dualism, the idea (the intelligible) and the matter (the sensible). In this dualism, he uncovers the hidden implication of simulacrum in the event of pure becoming. The pure becoming implicates the matter as the simulacrum to the action of the idea and not to the model or the copy of it. The matter is not the copy of the idea, but an action of the expression of it. This is why pure becoming reveals the unlimited side of the limited things through the explicative role of language.

On the one hand, language describes my being in a limited contextualization of time and space: yesterday, today and tomorrow, here and there. Language in this sense eludes a fix individuation of being. On the other hand, it exceeds these spatial and temporal limitations. The succession of time and place are no longer the limiting factors for my being, but it transcends the limitation to the unlimited expression of my being, or the unlimited becoming. Language helps being with the inclusion of temporality and spatiality, by uniting in a reversal of movement yesterday to tomorrow, or here to there, or being active and passive in the signification of self-identity in a certain context and text.⁶⁴⁴ To this extent, language provides us with dual functions which reveal the multiple sides of being. Being is simultaneously individual through self identification, the proper name and a multiplicity which includes the reversal movement of temporal and spatial succession.

This *interactivity* of individuality and multiplicity affects the awareness or the knowing (*savoir*) of being as pure becoming. The awareness of becoming in the ontological realm brings us the affirmation of being as becoming. Unless “being is affirmed in becoming,”⁶⁴⁵ as Deleuze proposes in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962/2002), one can hardly be aware of the signification of existence. What is the reason for this affirmation of becoming in being itself? As I have elaborated on in the account above, this proposition refers to the other constitutive terms, the multiplicity of being as the modal expression of the Substance and the One: that “the one is the many” and “unity is multiplicity.”⁶⁴⁶ These ideas constitutively show how this identification is possible through the awareness or knowing (*savoir*) of the considered opposition (as if unity were against multiplicity). This identification is possible or it appears in our common sense by virtue of the intensive and the extensive expression of the force:

⁶⁴⁴ Deleuze 1969/1990: 2-3.

⁶⁴⁵ Deleuze 1962/2002: 23.

⁶⁴⁶ Deleuze 1962/2002: 24.

'becoming.' The force is affirmative in Deleuze's thought insofar as it enhances the interconnection rather than individuation. The force reveals the affirmation of unity and multiplicity by referring back to the idea of life. If one understands life as the affirmation of both unity and multiplicity, then life will open itself in the event of becoming.⁶⁴⁷ In this sense our ontology is never fixed and individualized in accordance with the representation of the Same. Rather, our being is dynamically explicated by means of incessant becoming. Deleuze equipped his philosophy of affirmation by revealing becoming as the affirmative force. By doing so, Deleuze does not eliminate the negative insofar as a denial of negation will entrap him in the reactive force. In order to avoid this trap, he still provides us with further explanation of the affirmative and negative force. Deleuze transforms the expression of such forces with the idea of the becoming-reactive for the negative force, and that of becoming-active for the affirmative one. He is still aware that these forces are in correlation one to the other, therefore it is not possible to separate their exploration in the following subsection.

7.3.2 The Becoming-active and becoming-reactive

The reason why these forces of 'becomings' are correlated to each other is that both forces belong quantitatively and qualitatively to the body, the active and reactive of the body. A reflection on the body discovers these forces, one as superior, the active, and the other as inferior, the reactive. Both forces are irreducibly to each other so as that both are compose hierarchically a plurality of phenomenon in a unity or the body. The active force occupies the higher place which is the commanding capacity to do or not to do, while the reactive force fills the lower which is dominated and obeys in order to follow the dominant one. These forces are not identified separately as contradictory forces of the body. Rather one distinguishes both forces insofar as the active is in apposition to the reactive, or both are in correlation to one another. Deleuze describes the correlation as follows:

"In a body the superior or dominant forces are known as active and the inferior or dominated forces are reactive. Active and reactive are precisely the original qualities which express the relation of force with force (normal fonts are mine). Because forces which enter into relation do not have quantity without each of them having at the same time, the quality corresponding to their difference in quantity as such. This difference between forces qualified according to their quantity as active or reactive will be called hierarchy."⁶⁴⁸

The forces are distinct, therefore hierarchical, insofar as each of them characterizes their own function as the commanding or the obedient. These functions are distinguished less because of their respective characterization of an individual force than for their correlation. In other words, their correlation determines the identification of each force, while the functions differ among each character and these multiple

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Deleuze 1962/2002: 35.

⁶⁴⁸ Deleuze 1962/2002: 40.

characters do not exclude each other in order to preserve their respective characteristics. In this sense, one can also infer that each force quantitatively differs from the others. Meanwhile, the active and reactive are irreducible because their difference implies the quality of force.⁶⁴⁹ In this sense, the distinction of force cannot exclude the expression of force for the quality of themselves. These qualities differ and are not reduced one into the other. Instead, each pertains to its side.

If one considers the active and reactive forces in Deleuze's philosophy, it is inevitable to refer them to the primary correlation of the forces, rather than to regard them from the viewpoint of the individuation of each force in the binary opposition. The idea of forces appears insofar as they emerge in relation to one another. That forces always emerge in relation implies a source of such forces internally within the body. Such a source is the will to power. Deleuze deliberately applies Nietzsche's terminology in order to explain that forces, the active and reactive, do not come from outside the body. The dominating and the dominated capability should emerge from within the body, the will to power. Moreover, Deleuze writes that:

"Forces in relation reflect a simultaneously double genesis: the reciprocal genesis of their difference in quantity and the absolute genesis of their respective qualities. The will to power is thus added to force, but as the differential and genetic element, as internal element of its production. The will to power must be described as the genealogical element of force and forces."⁶⁵⁰

This citation indicates that the will to power is neither a tendency to occupy everything by means of the realization of power, nor is it a will to exercise power to occupy a certain status as the individual, through individuation or justification of such position (to be the Right and the Good). The will to power is the differential and genealogical elements of the forces. It yields the forces both quantitatively as the dominant and dominated, and qualitatively as the active and reactive. In this sense, both quantitative and qualitative properties of forces are regarded from the perspective that these forces are *in correlation*. Given this perspective, the force the will to power could refer to the genetic ground on which one should consider correlation or interconnection as the ontological foundation of being.

Thus, the body metaphorically signifies that the correlation is the nature of being. The body reveals this correlation by means of the will to power, the internal capability to express the affirmative understanding of life. The forces the will expresses are the comprehensive correlation of the subject to the manifestations of life. In this manner of expression, the active and the reactive forces discover the inherent capacity of 'becoming.' Given this realization of becoming, both forces "need something that goes beyond them,"⁶⁵¹ that is affirmation and negation. As I have explained previously,

⁶⁴⁹ Deleuze 1962/2002: 44.

⁶⁵⁰ Deleuze 1962/2002: 51, 53.

⁶⁵¹ Deleuze 1962/2002: 54.

'Becoming' is the extending images of the manifestations of life and it is the expression of multiplicity through attributes. Affirmation and negation in this light reveals the quantity and quality of the expression of the body. The quantity of the expression of the body refers to difference, the embodiment of multiplicity in each body, while the quality reveals the awareness (*savoir*) of the multiplicity itself and that the multiplicity presupposes the correlation. The active and reactive forces, according to the scheme of 'becoming,' turn into the becoming-active in order to reveal affirmation and the becoming-reactive to negation.⁶⁵²

Furthermore, becoming-active for affirmation and becoming reactive for negation unmask the coexistence in the origin of the will of power. At the same time both emerge, as an individual side or as the inverted image of the other. Thus, affirmation reflects the becoming-reactive or the negation. Affirmation in becoming-active embodies the face of contradiction and opposition. Conversely, the negation in becoming-reactive affirms the difference and turns it into an object of affirmation. By turning upside-down the qualities of forces, the affirmation becomes negation and vice versa in the acknowledgement of the individuation in such correlation.⁶⁵³ Being maintains its individuation in the correlation of becoming by virtue of the expression of the will to power. Being becomes individual since affirmation or the becoming active differs itself. This differentiation is possible due to the inversion of affirmation into the image of negation. Individuation distinguishes the singular by means of negation of the other. Meanwhile, being maintains its individual if and only if it correlates with others. Being *negates* with its correlation its individuation and *affirms* the difference or the multiplicity. This is why becoming-reactive realizes the affirmative side of force. Deleuze writes:

*"an inverted image of the origin accompanies the origin; 'yes' from the point of view of active force becomes 'no' from the point of view of the reactive force and affirmation of the self becomes negation of the other."*⁶⁵⁴

The becoming-active or affirmation and the becoming-reactive or negation in this sense are the expression of being where its ontological foundation is the correlation or the interconnection. Both are the expression of the origin, in metaphorical terms, the body and the will to power (inherently in the body) as its genealogical element of the forces.

In this light, Deleuze implicitly proposes an alternative account of ethics. With individuation inverted through the image of affirmation, the negation emerges as the principle of behaviour. For the individuation of selfhood, the concept of the self becomes 'function' insofar as the concept of the self internally expresses the intention towards the other.⁶⁵⁵ The function has its element, that is, the functive. This functive

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Deleuze 1962/2002: 55-56.

⁶⁵⁴ Deleuze 1962/2002: 56.

⁶⁵⁵ Deleuze & Guattari 1991/1994: 117.

element of individuation indicates the correlation in the experiential realm. The experience of correlation is the domain where the concept of the self fully attains its meaningfulness through interaction with the other concepts of the self. The justification of the Good and the Right apply on the plane of immanence; it is where the correlation lies as the ontological presupposition of being. On that plane, being does not attain its individuation by virtue of transcending itself in order to be similar with the One (through identity, analogy, opposition, and resemblance). Instead, being experiences its existence through its involvement in the plane of correlation where it maintains its respective existence as the manifestation of life.

7.3.3 The Pure Affirmation of life and the Principle of Affirmation

So far I have discussed the forces of becoming-active or affirmation and of becoming reactive or negation. Deleuze always mentions the affirmation of life rather than just affirmation. By affirmation of life, Deleuze conceives of an ontological ground which presupposes life's worth in itself. The affirmation of life is the immediate appreciation of life as the essence of being. Being does not presuppose the One as its ontological and epistemological ground.

This presupposition of life is Deleuze's critique of the constant tendency of modernity to maintain that the dominant force which drives the development and preservation of being is reactive. The reactive force in this sense is part of nihilism or the zero tolerance of life. Life is not something that deserves appreciation. Nihilism is the vision that depreciates life, degrades life as something that has no value in itself. Life is understood to be dependent on superior values or a higher entity which regulates being in an authoritarian manner. Nihilism in this respect appears in the will to nothingness. According to Deleuze, the will to nothingness or nihilism and the depreciation of life is fiction, insofar as such a will treats life as a symptom and an appearance which has nothing valuable in itself.⁶⁵⁶ The fiction is misinterpreted as the higher values which determine signification of existence to being. For Deleuze, such higher values are no more than the denial of life. He writes:

“Previously life was depreciated from the height of the higher values, it was denied in the name of these values. Here on the contrary, life remains, but it is still a depreciated life which now continues in a world without values, stripped of meaning and purpose, sliding ever further towards its nothingness. Previously essence was opposed to appearance, life was turned into an appearance. Now essence is denied but appearance is retained: everything is merely appearance, life which is left to us remains for itself an appearance.”⁶⁵⁷

If life has no meaning in itself, something contingent and fragile, then one has to construct an imaginary foundation which holds the existence of being. Such a

⁶⁵⁶ Deleuze 1962/2002: 147.

⁶⁵⁷ Deleuze 1962/2002: 148.

foundation is fixed in the transcendental realm as the regulative idea for the existence of being. The intention to keep such a foundation or the will to nothingness turns life into the unreal, the particular, and the reactive. Life is an embodiment of reactive force which contains the negative and reactive nihilism. This reactive force is not identical with the negative will since the latter expresses the becoming-reactive, the correlated image with (and simultaneously, the inverted one of) the becoming-active or affirmation. Meanwhile, the reactive force is the response of the weak, or the slave, to the powerful. The powerful in this sense refers to God, as the true power. The will to nothingness drives the resentful weak to seize and to conquer the powerful in order to attain the authoritarian regulative. In this light, the resentful man takes over God's position as the sole regulator of life. Man "puts himself in God's place" because he "wants to be alone with his triumph and strength." To be against God and to seize His place in order to be God himself is the goal of the reactive force carried out by the revengeful man.⁶⁵⁸ In Lacanian psychoanalysis, man's attitude towards God is ambivalent. On the one hand, man obeys God's law; on the other hand, he tries to vanquish Him by means of his rebellion. The goal of the rebellious man is determined. He either wants to replace God and His authoritative power over human beings or to become a God himself.

The reactive force leads the weak man to establish his own values such as "adaptation, evolution, progress, happiness for all and the good of community; the God-Man, the moral man, the truthful man and the social man."⁶⁵⁹ One should consider these values as the absolute signification of the Right and the Good under the name of the One. By doing so the reactive force replaces the other systems of values. Hence, the place of God is occupied and filled with the face of the revengeful man. Thus, according to Deleuze, the will to nothingness creates two types of life. First, it creates a type of life which gains victory by defeating the real essence of life. This metaphorically signifies man's attempt to rebel against God insofar as His higher values are regarded as a tyrannical order. Second, it creates a type of life that removes the place of God, where the multiplicity of values, His values, are appreciated and accommodated, with the absolute standard of the weak-man's higher values.⁶⁶⁰

In light of this critique one can understand the reason why Deleuze is against Hegelian dialectics. Dialectics is an epistemological mechanism of the will to nothingness, the reactive force. Dialectics apply opposition and contradiction for its logical operation in order to establish the synthetic unity of the transcendental subject. According to Hegel, dialectics fails to perceive opposition as a type of relation between different subjects. It misinterprets opposition (and contradiction) as the resolution for the individuation of substances. In this light opposition and contradiction are regarded

⁶⁵⁸ Deleuze 1962/2002: 150.

⁶⁵⁹ Deleuze 1962/2002: 151.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

as the real distinctions of being and a composition of a hierarchical structure of being. Nevertheless, Deleuze proposes opposition and contradiction only as one of the differential factors in the interconnection of the forces. In this sense, opposition and contradiction are merely some appearances or the symptoms of the interconnection of forces.⁶⁶¹ They never project the real establishment of being individually. Therefore, Deleuze attempts to bring the position of symptoms and appearances back to their respective places. Symptoms cannot emerge as the essence and the essence cannot be reduced to the symptoms. In this light, the essence of being life is recovered from being only a symptom of existence. Life is valuable and real in itself and it does not represent the fictitious imagery of beings through weaknesses, struggles and sufferings. Life is not the moment for the rebellious man to replace the true higher values which affirm life with the egocentric standard of such revengeful individuality. Life also does not represent the occupation of the position of God in order to conquer others to impose the standard value of the resentment of the weak on others. Deleuze claims:

“But I am no longer man or species being, I am no more the essence of man than I am God and the essence of God.”⁶⁶²

The problem stems from a misconception; it is confusing what is appearance and what is the essence. The replacement of God by man reveals the deep confusion of the fiction and the real. The real essence of being is life and metaphorically such essence is embodied in God.

In turn, what is the signification of the affirmation of life in Deleuze’s account of man? The restoration of the value of life or the appreciation of life as the essence of being is the affirmation of life. The affirmation of life is inherently in the nature of man. Deleuze argues that what constitutes a man and his world is the emergence of forces in general, most especially the becoming-reactive. One should critically perceive that Deleuze does not mention the reactive force as the form of the becoming-reactive. One also should keep in mind that his account of “becoming-x” is an assertion that ‘x’ has the opposite other, say ‘-x’ and that they are interconnected with each other so that by virtue of this interconnection they clarify the individuality of each other. This is the reason Deleuze writes his account:

“Now, such a becoming of forces always requires, as its terminus a quo, the presence of the opposite quality, which in becoming passes into its opposite.”⁶⁶³

The becoming-reactive amplifies the presence of affirmation as the becoming-active. Then what constitutes a man and his world is the interconnection of the forces expressed by the will to power. In this light, becoming-reactive alludes to becoming-active and vice versa. Health exists if one presumes becoming-sick as its opposite. Weak alludes to

⁶⁶¹ Deleuze 1962/2002: 157.

⁶⁶² Deleuze 1962/2002: 160.

⁶⁶³ Deleuze 1962/2002: 167.

strong so that the strong man realizes the becoming-weak is also part of his nature. So that, Deleuze continues:

“Each time that Nietzsche speaks of active men, he does so with the sadness of seeing the destiny to which they are predetermined as their essential becoming There is therefore a human activity, there are active forces of man; but these particular forces are only the nourishment of all forces which defines man and the human world. In this way, Nietzsche reconciles the two aspects of the higher man, his reactive and his active character.”⁶⁶⁴

The affirmation of life is the identification of the interconnecting forces; hence within the interconnection there is the transmutation of values or the conversion of values. Becoming-reactive converts into becoming-active, the reaction into the action, for *“negation must first become a power of affirming.”⁶⁶⁵* Now it is the task of the Overman to realize this interconnection of forces both in the body through the will to power and in the world. Metaphorically, Deleuze mentions three actions which have to do with the affirmation of life. They are to laugh, to play and to dance. For the affirmation of life, one needs the ability to laugh, even if one’s life has suffering. The ability to play discovers the affirmation of chance and its necessity in life. The last, to dance is the ability to affirm becoming and *“the being of becoming.”⁶⁶⁶* Therefore, the affirmation of life in this light unmasks the understanding of the nature of life for the existence of the human being. The understanding of the nature of life is the ability to perceive that life in itself is comprised of values and that no value is greater than life. Life can neither be replaced by any higher values which justify the Right and the Good, nor can life be reduced to the reactive force which only depreciates it.

Life contains the transvaluation or transmutation of values, not the change of value, since *“a change in the element from which the value of values derives.”⁶⁶⁷* Such transvaluation of values, the becoming-active to becoming reactive and vice versa, indicates how the appreciation of life should be realized. It shows that one cannot fully experience life unless one discovers that life is not one-sided as indicated by the triumph of the transcendental subject the One. Life is not characterized by impermanence and the contingent because of the perception of the senses and the use of reason. Meanwhile, the pure side is the One which is permanent, authentic, and unchangeable. One does not need to transcend life in order to attain the Truth or the Good by virtue of the representation of the One. Life is always multiple, in addition to univocal, at least, in the expression of the experiential and the theoretical sides of being. Life presumes the exchange of such sides of being insofar as it is not only knowable through reason, but it can also be experienced by the sensible. Sensibility and reasonability are the complementary sides of life.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Deleuze 1962/2002: 170.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Deleuze 1962/2002: 171.

Given this multiplicity and unity in life, Deleuze does not eliminate the will to nothingness by holding only on to the will to power. Despite the fact that nihilism depreciates life until zero tolerance, nihilism through the will to nothingness also indicates the quality of the will to power. For Deleuze, the will to nothingness or negation *becomes* “the *ratio cognoscendi* of the will to power in general.”⁶⁶⁸ It signifies that nihilism as the will to nothingness is the reason why values are known for our being. It affects the individuation of being by means of referring being to the appropriation of the theoretical representation of the Transcendental Subject. Concerning this, Deleuze writes:

*“If nihilism makes the will to power known to us, then conversely, the latter teaches us that it is known to us in only one form, in the form of the negative which constitutes only one of its aspects, one of its qualities.”*⁶⁶⁹

Nihilism brings the will to power to recognize the known form of life, just one side of life, which draws the individuation of life but that is not a comprehensive vision of life.

Meanwhile, the will to power also discovers the unknown side of life. It is the unknown insofar as life contains the experiential side which does not always correspond with concepts or terms. Life in this light implies the undefined elements of being. Given the known and the unknown, the definite and indefinite elements, the will to power reveals affirmation as its quality and treats affirmation as the “*ratio essendi*.”⁶⁷⁰ Affirmation of life is the “*ratio essendi*” insofar as the will to power appears as the reason for the existence of all manifestations of life, both the unknown and known and the indefinite and definite elements of life. The affirmation of life brings a comprehensive vision of life as a whole.

Ratio cognoscendi and *ratio essendi* allows the will to power to realize its affirmative will. This concept of affirmation does not refer to the one as the logical operation. Affirmation in logical operation is the contradiction or contrariety of the negation, there is no implication of negation for the affirmative function in a proposition. Thus one should not identify the affirmation of life with the operation of affirmation in a proposition. The affirmation in a proposition cannot include negation, ‘not,’ but the affirmation of life presumes the negation as the necessary inclusion.⁶⁷¹ The becoming-active or affirmation cannot eliminate negation insofar as it will be the reactive forces which establish the individuation of the authoritative power in the representation of the One. The affirmation of life includes negation in order to maintain the interconnection of multiplicity and unity; to describe the unification of beings and Being without the inscription of beings into the theoretical representation of the One or

⁶⁶⁸ Deleuze 1962/2002: 172, 173.

⁶⁶⁹ Deleuze 1962/2002: 172.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Deleuze 1962/2002: 178-179. He mentions provocatively the logical affirmation as the affirmation of the ass.

Being. In other words, affirmation of life in this sense is the epistemological foundation for knowledge and experience of life as such.

Then, Deleuze describes this interconnection with his terms ‘transmutation’ or ‘transvaluation’ of values in order to explain the conversion of negation into affirmation.⁶⁷² Given this explanation, one should distinguish the affirmation of life from logical affirmation. According to Deleuze, affirmation of life contains two negations. One negation immediately follows the affirmation of life while the other negation precedes affirmation immensely.⁶⁷³

Firstly, the after-affirmation negation is a destruction of the construction of the true value systems which degrades life. A construction of values becomes significant if and only if it serves to carry out interconnection among all the manifestations of life and between the manifestations and life as such. If a construction of value is established by means of the appropriation to the representation of the transcendental subject, for the sake of obtaining individuation, then the submersion of life under the authoritarian representation of the One is inevitable. The result is the triumph of the construction of hegemonic values, one system of values, which are regarded as the Right and the Good, above all the others. Given this immediately ‘after-affirmation negation’, the affirmation of life still embodies the appreciation of multiplicity and the perpetuation of the inclusive representation of unity. The multiplicity of value constructions still deserve its place without being replaced by a superior one.

Secondly, the before-affirmation negation explains the destruction of the preceding attempts to establish individuation of the reactive force in the form of the representation of the transcendental subject. This avoids the appearance of the authoritarian tendency of the transcendental Subject. The avoidance is the reminder that such an appearance would only serve as a replacement of the authoritarian power by the same but with another face. The preceding negation is the awareness demonstrated by the slave’s rebellion against its master that reveals the authoritarian face of the slave-to-be-the-master. The slave will exercise the hegemonic power of the master *when* it occupies the master’s place. Thus the initial awareness of being the authoritarian power anticipates the emergence of a new authoritarianism which may be more severe than the previous one.

In other words, the affirmation of life necessarily needs the after-affirmation negation and the before-affirmation negation in order to maintain the power of affirming which is “the mode of being of affirmation.” Deleuze believes that the affirmation of life is the primary quality and the representation of the autonomous power of being. If negation represents such a quality and autonomous power, it will establish the independence of the nihilism which leads being to the depreciation of life through the reactive force. It is nihilism through its independent power Deleuze intends to escape.

⁶⁷² Deleuze 1962/2002: 176.

⁶⁷³ Deleuze 1962/2002: 177.

The independent power of nihilism puts life in the lowest place which has no meaning at all. Deleuze finds that the realization of the negative of individuation only affects the denial of life. Life will not have its own value to be appreciated, if one does not treat it to be dependent on the authoritarian power of the reactive representation of the One. Deleuze is concerned with asserting the primary affirmation of life. The primary affirmation of life will provide the negative a proper position. The negative will no longer be the depreciation of life, rather its new position as a power of affirmation or the mode of affirming life as such.⁶⁷⁴

To summarize the theory of the affirmation of life and the principle of affirmation which Deleuze proposes in his book, I will now briefly characterize his theories. His account of pure affirmation becomes the ontological ground of our understanding of being. The account of pure affirmation is distinct from logical affirmation and psychological affirmation. Logical affirmation is the relation of terms in a proposition without the application of the negative. Psychological False affirmation is the mentally burdened acceptance of negative occurrences as if one were born to suffer the pains in life without complaining or without revenge; as if one had a strategy to preserve life, to put up with the suffering and to deal with the pains of life, or to bear the grievance about the burdened life. The psychological affirmation necessarily holds the reactive force, the negative response by means of revenge, hatred, and rebellion. This is why the logical and psychological affirmations in Deleuze's distinction of the types of affirmation is regarded as false. In other words, both false affirmations are the logical and behavioral tendencies to expel the negative by the negative power or the reactive one. As the result, both false affirmations above hold the negative. They indicate the triumph of the negation of life over the power to affirm life. Meanwhile the third type of affirmation or the pure affirmation of life has two indispensable implications. First, is the implication of the negative, of "saying no" in the affirmative sense. The pure affirmation of life neither eliminates the negative, nor lets the negative proclaim itself as the sole ruler of life. The affirmation of life provides the negation an assertive sense of being. In this sense, the negation 'becomes the power of affirming,' and the affirmation of life is the capability:

*"to evaluate from the perspective of a will which enjoys its own difference in life instead of suffering the pains of the opposition to this life that it has itself inspired."*⁶⁷⁵

The second implication is that the pure affirmation of life extends beyond the limits of opposite attitude against life. Life becomes an event of creation. To create a new form of life through the arts is the teleological destination of being in life. The creation is the event of becoming; it brings back the power to value life in all manifestations. Beings in this light are neither self-identification, nor resemblance, nor

⁶⁷⁴ Deleuze 1962/2002: 178-180.

⁶⁷⁵ Deleuze 1962/2002: 185.

analogy, nor opposition to the One. Rather they assert the interconnectivity of the One-Many. In other words, the pure affirmation sets being free from mere acceptance of what happens in life and the pretension of being strong by appropriating itself to the higher values (such as in morality). The pure affirmation of life also sets being free to let life create the possible expression of life in any kind of manifestations. This is the inclusion of the undefined, unknown aspects of life, the mysterious sides of life which are waiting to be expressed through the appreciation of life as such.⁶⁷⁶ In other words, these two implications posit the significant idea of being. First, affirmation is not only the capability of being or the power of existence to reveal the comprehensive vision of life. "The affirmation is being itself" Deleuze points out so "affirmation has no object other than itself." Second, affirmation as the primary affirmation is becoming.⁶⁷⁷

One can infer from this proposition that being is becoming. The proposition that being is affirmation explains the intention to seek an epistemological foundation for ontology other than the negation. The presupposition of negativity has maintained the individuation of the transcendental subject. Nevertheless, this universal representation implies the appearance of the hegemonic and the authoritarian power of being. The universality of being leads to nihilism. Nihilism despises life. Life is no longer seen as being significant, but as merely the contingent, fragile and nothing. The universal being is, as Kant has indicated, the empty place which is easily occupied by the representation of the authoritarian subject. Moreover, the presupposition of negativity only keeps the known and definite side of Being and it reduces Being to the realm of matter. The result is that Being is rational and material. Meanwhile the undefined and unknown side of Being is removed and it is categorized as irrational and spiritual. Now if one considers the presupposition of affirmation, it will be clear that such ontological grounds affect our understanding concerning the comprehensive expression of Being. Being is the self-affirmation of its sides, which are also the ones revealed in life. This is because of the inclusion of Being, to cover the unknown and known, the defined and undefined and the positive and negative. This is the reason that there is no reduction of being as a consequence. Beings in themselves are the expression of the transcendental (the known, defined, rational, metaphorical animus) self and the experiential (the unknown, undefined, spiritual, metaphorical anima) one. Meanwhile the event of becoming in beings reveals the creativity of being. The creativity of being in this respect does not have to do only with an imaginative and talented expression of mind in order to describe or explain life from according to an inspiring approach. Therefore, one can find out that in forms of arts: a painting or a poem, one uncover a new form of imagination. Creativity is articulated. According to Deleuze creativity in the framework of interconnectivity also signifies an event of becoming so that a knowing subject and the meaningful object which the knowing subject perceives transforms into an

⁶⁷⁶ Deleuze 1962/2002: 185-186.

⁶⁷⁷ Deleuze 1962/2002: 186.

interconnected image of life. A work of art, for an instance, projects complementary images produced by artist and a perceived object into a complex representation of being. In this sense being does not appear as a monolithic representation. Nor it is a bunch of multiplicity. The image of being indicates the interconnectivity of an agent and its object. Being is simultaneously interconnected unity and multiplicity. To that extent, Deleuze continues: “Becoming *is* being, multiplicity *is* unity, chance *is* necessity,”⁶⁷⁸ Such event of becoming facilitates expressions of the revealed manifestations of life and the unrevealed expression of the manifestations of life. This event is not zero movement rather it is dynamic and maintains the unique emergence of life at all levels.

In other words, “Becoming” is the complete change of one side of life into the other. This change is associated with a transmutation occurs for both in the interconnectivity of the One-Many, positive-negative, life and death, joy and sadness. These sides transmute to each other. It is the will to power which initializes the transmutation so that the complete change is the affirmation of the expression of becoming. The change does not negate such expressions and replace them with something totally new. This is why Deleuze writes “*the transmutation that relates the negative to affirmation in the will to power.*”⁶⁷⁹

7.4 An account of affirmation in North Atlantic philosophical discourse

To end my discussion on the principle of affirmation in this chapter, I will present a table of the alternative approach of the North Atlantic philosophical discourse. The table compares Hegelian dialectics that has inspired the progress of philosophy in the North Atlantic and an alternative approach of the account of affirmation developed by Deleuze and Ricoeur.⁶⁸⁰

	Hegelian Dialectics	The alternative account of Affirmation
Ontological ground	Individuation of the One, The Same	Inherent interconnection within the unification of the One-Many, that is, life itself.
Epistemic ground	The primary negation (including The logical affirmation, the false affirmation) the reactive force in individuation of being for the sake of justification and establishment of the Right and the Good	The pure affirmation or the primary affirmation (also from Ricoeur). This presupposition holds two negations: the after-affirmation and the before-affirmation. Both negations are applied for maintaining

⁶⁷⁸ Deleuze 1962/2002: 189.

⁶⁷⁹ Deleuze 1962/2002: 193.

⁶⁸⁰ Summarized from Ricoeur 1965, Deleuze 1962: chapter conclusion, 1968a, 1968b, 1991.

		interconnection of the One-Many and the unique emergences of the One-Many
Principle of thinking	Principle of Identity, principle of contradiction and the excluded third. Analogy, resemblance, and opposition	Eternal return, the return of the affirmation in the expanding interconnection of the One-Many. Transmutation and transvaluation that relates the negative to affirmation in the will to power.

Table 1: The comparison between Hegelian Dialectics and the alternative account of affirmation.

The table shows that the account affirmation is an attempt to provide an alternative approach in the North Atlantic philosophical discourse about existence, knowledge and behaviour. The theory of the primary affirmation in Ricoeur and Deleuze clearly indicates that life in itself deserves to be the virtual ground for an ontological viewpoint. In this light, one can theorize life as the essence of Being and expressed in the attributes of the substance, beings or all manifestations of life. Life as the ontological ground requires thinking that is includes aspects of life. This is inevitable insofar as life cannot be reduced just to ‘something material, rational,’ or which can be justified as the Right and the Good.

Meanwhile, life contains the dark and the bright sides, the unknown and known. Each side of life deserves to emerge as the manifestations of it. The pure affirmation is the epistemological foundation for the knowledge of life. Pure affirmation maintains the interconnection of the sides. By indicating that interconnection is an inherent part of life, one can also theorize that the ontological ground for being is also interconnection. In other words, life is interconnection itself. The interconnection of the One-Many, as the manifestations in the unification of Being, generates the principle of thought of eternal return and the transmutation or transvaluation of Being and beings. This principle of thought will also constitute the awareness to construct behaviour in the practical realm.

If one carefully considers the table above, there is something lacking in Deleuze’s account of affirmation. Deleuze’s critique of dialectics, as a method of thought and the presupposition of negativity still retains the negative. The negative as one indicates serves the intention to expel dialectics as the old method of thought. Pure affirmation is the new theory which offers a new approach to ontology, epistemology and ethics in North Atlantic philosophical discourse. In other words, Deleuze seems to be unable to escape the presupposition of negativity, as the common ground for philosophical discourse in the region. On the one hand, this is considered as a serious critique of Deleuze. On the other hand, the tendency to keep the negative as the thinking mechanism is inevitable in the context of the cultural orientations in the region. Deleuze

and Guattari have indicated this tendency of the application of the negative and dialectics in the region.

One should regarding this tendency not be entrapped in this dialectical method in order to suggest an epistemological foundation for interculturality, which is the main topic of this thesis. In this context it is better to focus on the alternative approach in the philosophical discourse proposed either by Deleuze or Ricoeur. The alternative approach of primary affirmation or pure affirmation should be regarded as the exploration of the model of thought in the human mind. The presupposition of the negativity and pure affirmation indicate the capacity for thought in the human mind. Both should be explored more in the context of interculturality, especially in the field of the epistemological discourse of interculturality. This suggestion is significant regarding the fact that one should go beyond the issue of cultural relativism, but still uphold the uniqueness of each thinking milieu which appears among local worldviews. This seemingly contradictory intention I propose in order to maintain differences of human knowledge and to assert the interconnection of the various models of thought. Both strategies are indispensable in the context of interculturality insofar as one cannot refer only to the philosophical discourse of a certain region in order to seek the formulation of the epistemological foundation for interculturality through these strategies. Therefore, one should bring the issue of interconnectivity back to the nature of the human mind itself. The exploration of local worldviews does not only support the discovery of models of thinking, but they can also indicate the common tendency of human thought in general.

My exploration of the Eastern and Western model of cultural orientations indicates that the human mind inherently possesses two capacities: the capacity of negation and one of affirmation. The first capacity has to do with the individuation of each model of thought. To this extent, a worldview represents a typical way of thinking and a specific metaphysical mind set. Individuation is indispensable to show that a justification of the Right and the Good is more or less contextualized in a certain cultural orientation which reveals a presumption or presupposition of being. The second capacity is associated with the perspective that each individual model of thought refers to the natural capacity of human thinking. The nature of the human mind is to think and to yield knowledge. Thus the capacity of thinking in all kinds of models constitutes the nature of human beings. Furthermore, the capacity of thinking reveals the interconnection of these models of thought in their respective contextual cultural orientation. In this thesis, I focus on the elaboration of affirmation as an epistemological foundation. My intention is not to explore one side of human thought, but to highlight the natural capacity of the human mind, that is, to maintain an interconnection among several models of thought. In other words, to explore affirmation as the epistemological foundation is to discover the comprehensive vision of the natural capacity of the human mind. By revealing the natural capacity of the human mind by means of affirmation, the

interconnection among the model of thought in the context of interculturality emerges as an indispensable theme in the philosophical discourse of interculturality.

Given this explanation, I am ready to formulate an account of affirmation according to the context of interculturality in the several propositions listed below.

a. *The theory of primary affirmation or pure affirmation postulates interconnection as an inherent part of life;*

Life in itself contains, at least, two sides, the unknown and known, the defined and undefined. Therefore, one can also theorize that life in itself is interconnection. The interconnection in life posits the appreciation of life thence this appreciation is possible if one maintains that both sides are as significant as life itself. Both sides of life cannot be reduced one into the other. Each is unique in itself because of the acknowledgement of the individual representation of it. In short, individuality and the plurality of beings, as they individually or collectively emerge in all forms of cultural orientations, are necessarily included.

b. *If life in itself is the interconnection and if the interconnection signifies the appreciation of all manifestations of life-forms and cultural orientations, then it can be concluded that such pure affirmation or primary affirmation reveals the capacity of the human mind to recognize such an interconnection of life-forms by virtue of cultural orientations.*

The appreciation of life necessarily requires an epistemological foundation that includes all manifestations of it by virtue of cultural orientations. This epistemological foundation in turn yields the awareness or knowledge and experience of the plurality, as well as individuality, of life-forms and cultural orientations. Such awareness or knowledge and the experience of the interconnection can be called sagacious knowledge. It is sagacious knowledge which opens the mind to the revelation of conceiving of life in the form of the relation, i.e. joy and suffering, life and death, the rational and the spiritual realms of human beings. Sagacious knowledge also uncovers the principle of thought which regulates and maintains meaningfulness of our plural world as the individual and the collective.

c. *From the previous points: one can infer that the epistemological foundation for interculturality is pure affirmation or primary affirmation insofar as individuation and the interconnection of any forms of knowledge or the models of thought as they emerges in their respective worldviews are affirmed.*

The pure affirmation of life, as the epistemological foundation will also consider any possible manifestations of life-forms. Such manifestations should not be reduced to the established standard of living; nor the models of human mind is inscribed into the universal and justified system of knowledge. Thus the plurality of the models of thought necessarily upholds the interconnection of the models. This could be an answer to the quest for an epistemological foundation and reason for interculturality.

In turn, interculturality has to amplify the interconnection of any manifestations of life and the appreciation of life itself as the foundation for intercultural exchanges of knowledge or cultural orientations in general. They are also the reason for the sagacious knowledge in the common existence of nations in this globalizing world.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁸¹ van Binsbergen 2003a, 2008b.

Part III: Conclusion and Prospect

1. Conclusion

I began this thesis with a discussion of the prominent Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka's work on the philosophical discourse of Sage philosophy. My exploration in this local model of philosophical discourse tried to show that thinking and knowing or the production of knowledge does not exclusively belong to a certain cultural orientation, or specifically to a system of knowledge. Both activities of mind are an inherent natural ability of human beings regardless of their contextual setting. Odera Oruka points out that thinking and knowing cannot be confined to a standardized model of justified knowledge. He writes:

*"To this, my reaction is that reason and critical reflection are not monopolies or unique traits of any one given race: they are human qualities."*⁶⁸²

This is the reason why I continued my exploration in an Asian context, especially examining the Chinese wisdom texts, especially Lao Tzu's *Daodejing*, and the Sundanese pious lessons of the Sage. Sagacious knowledge offers examples of instances where reason and critical reflection show the natural capabilities of human beings. This type of knowledge relies on wisdom in order to offer a comprehensive vision of life. This type of knowledge is not merely an invention of a certain people, culture, ethnic group or region, but rather it belongs to all of humanity. It is a human trait to be able to think and to yield sagacious knowledge about life.⁶⁸³ The sagacious knowledge of life may represent

1. an attachment of knowledge production in a cultural orientation,
2. a popular sagacity, or
3. an offer a critical assessment of the individual as a response to a surrounding contextual occurrence or as a comprehensive vision of an ideal precondition of life.

The pious lessons of the Sage in the Sundanese context are the example of the attachment of knowledge production in a cultural orientation (point 1) and some lessons may contain a popular sagacity (point 2). Moreover, some of the interviews conducted by Odera Oruka with the elders in the Kenya countryside also represent the attachment of sagacious knowledge in a cultural orientation, and some of the interviews appear as

⁶⁸² Odera Oruka, 1990: 15.

⁶⁸³ Cf. Odera Oruka 1990: 21.

popular sagacity. While some of sage figures which Odera Oruka interviewed represent the critical assessment of an individual sage (point 3).

One of the ancient Chinese texts explored here is the *Daodejing*. This text demonstrates the third and last model of the sagacious knowledge offering a comprehensive vision.

From my own experience of interviewing Sundanese elders around the Bandung Area, I found the second type of individual sagacity or didactic wisdom.

Finally I made an exploration of the North Atlantic philosophical discourse of ontology and epistemology. There I found that also North Atlantic philosophers are engaged in arguments to find an ontological and epistemological foundation for knowing and thinking in the philosophical and the scientific realms. Some of these philosophers, notably Ricoeur and Deleuze, also characterize the human mind as possessing two constitutive capabilities: to *affirm* a relation of terms or proposition and to *negate* an interconnection of terms or proposition. These logical operations are in a sense logical. These basic capabilities of the mind acknowledge the natural quality of being human. Our mind in all kinds of contextual settings can think and know, perceive and conceive because of these two capabilities. To be able to affirm / negate a logical relation in a proposition is what enables us to perform critical and analytic examinations. Moreover, however, descriptive or argumentative, or explanative the quality of our reasoning is, one inevitably employs these logical operations in order to clarify the quality of our arguments.

Yet, affirmation / negation are not only the logical operative. Both philosophers I explored indicated that these functions also emerge as the epistemological foundation for thinking and knowing. By the epistemological foundation, I conceive of a necessary reference for the guidance and signification of thinking, knowing and reasoning. This reference is a virtual representation insofar as a claim to real existence of such a ground is necessarily illusive, in accordance with Kant's transcendental illusion. Despite this the virtual ground is believed as true and it is no longer contested in the realm of knowing and thinking. Thus the ground emerges as a presupposition for the realm of knowledge.

Thus, affirmation and negation, which are virtual operations of thought, although they can be illusive, are meaningful and they guide a 'way' of knowing and reasoning. This logical operation in turn can yield a specific viewpoint, a point of departure for reasoning. The operation of negation is the function to clarify being as an individual. This individuation of being is indispensable regarding the need to be an intelligible and reasonable representation of being. From this one can draw that an individual is indivisible, unique in-itself and for-itself. The operation of negativity employs in the principle of identity, of contradiction and the one of excluded middle in order to attain such individuation of the subject by virtue of concept, terms or proposition. It is with an analytical approach that one classifies substances into a series of autonomous subjects.

The individuality deserves to be independent in this light so that it can maintain the transcendental position: to be the universal. For the sake of being clear and distinct, the independent, autonomy of the transcendental subject is necessary. The necessity of the universal representation of the intelligible subject is secured with the category and the principle of thinking (which have been explained above). Deleuze discusses the four principles of the individuation of difference by comparing species and between species and their genus. Such principles are *identity, analogy, resemblance and opposition*.⁶⁸⁴ The establishment of the individual with the negative cannot be possible unless one employs these principles when one perceives a substance. In turn the individuation of the transcendental subject will determine the signification of a perceived substance. In CPR, Kant has already explained that the experiential aspect of being a substance is determined by its theoretical aspect. Reason employs the function of negation, subsequently followed by the four aspects of reason in order to determine that existence is meaningful to our apprehension.

Meanwhile the function of affirmation is the other ability of our mind to know and to reason. This epistemological foundation determines a viewpoint which concentrates on the interconnectivity of the presumably paired quality of being. This viewpoint regards substance as singular as well as plural. The substance does not consist only in the singular representation, but of the pair of both the singular and the plural. It is important to notice that this pair represents a comprehensive vision of life as the ontological ground. Life presents itself as a pair of qualities such as time and space, change and permanence, movement and stillness, empirical and theoretical, etc. Everything in life is a comprehensive representation of such dualities: dark and light, negative and positive, joy and sadness, etc. Such dualities are perceived to be having interconnectivity. One can understand that the pair of qualities provides a complementary relationship, if and only if one conceives of their interconnection as an aspect of the pairs. Therefore, one can conclude from this comprehensive vision that life as such represents an interconnectivity. It is the interconnectivity which designs an existence of being.

The function of affirmation in this interconnection implies the subsequent operation of negation. Life cannot affirm its singularity and plurality unless one includes the negative as a subsequent guidance of knowing and reasoning. The subsequent function of the negative is to provide an identification of the aspect as if it were an independent quality of life. The identification, on the one hand, is preserved as if the aspect of the quality were the individuation of a substance. On the other hand, the role of negative is to secure one aspect from its dissolution into the representation of the other side, and vice versa. Moreover, the subsequent negation prevents the disappearance of both sides into the representation of the transcendental Subject. If both

⁶⁸⁴ Deleuze 1968a: 29.

sides disappear, life has no meaning in itself. Life is despised for a fragile, changeable representation of the transcendental Subject. If one despises life for being the determined, the manifestations of life, that is, then the plurality of the representations are meaningless. In other words, affirmation necessarily keeps the subsequent negation in order to maintain the “individuality” of the quality of life which affirms life to be worthy in itself. If the individuality of qualities is maintained, the interconnectivity clarifies that the existence of both qualities explicates their respective identities. The autonomous identity of one side amplifies the existence of the other and vice versa. The interconnection is also a reciprocity embodied in life. According to Deleuze, it is Spinoza who defines this comprehensive viewpoint in perceiving life, as the pair of the One-Many. This comprehensive vision refers to the interconnection as the inevitable implication of the pair though the pair can be regarded as opposite pair which is complex⁶⁸⁵ (or *complicatio* in Deleuze terminology).

Now, which one of these functions is the significant factor that affect knowing and reasoning? One cannot isolate the function of the subsequent negation from that of affirmation in order to respond to this contest. One cannot subsume one under the other either. The best response to this matter is to perceive both functions as the basic capability of thinking in general. Each function of thought will affect particular viewpoints and preferences for the verification of the true and justified knowledge. The function of the negative also affects philosophy in the North Atlantic context and the development of the sciences in the same region, potentially even affecting regions outside of this context. The history of philosophy in the North Atlantic context shows that the intensive and extensive discourse of ontology, epistemology, ethics and metaphysics and the schools, mainstreams, branches or isms of philosophy have evolved as a linear progression of clear and distinct philosophy. The formulations of logical principles, methodologies, scientific or philosophical, justifications and verifications, theories and laws of sciences, axioms and theorems are derived from the viewpoint of the function of the negative. The result is the clear and distinct route to the achievement of Truth by virtue of the representation of the Right and the Good. Such achievement is summarized in the name of modernity.

One cannot ignore this achievement even though the function of negativity has side effects. The side effects are the waste product of the linear progress of science and philosophy. Scientists, as well as philosophers, want to delete these side effects for the sake of the Right and the Good; nevertheless they always fail to isolate these unwanted effects. Metaphorically, philosophers and theologians classify these side effects as the Evil. In fact, the evil manifests in the failure of humans to construct their environment so that it is conducive to maintaining and preserving life. The destruction of ecological environment, the horror of civilization such as total war and genocide haunts the linear

⁶⁸⁵ Deleuze 1968b: 16.

progress of modernity. Such horrors threaten the internal and the external realm of individuals. At the level of external relationships, the development of politics has changed the quality of social interaction enormously.

Social conflicts become an effective way to maintain the progress of modernity. The use of social conflicts can be politically rationalized in order to maintain certain powerful interests over a society or to take over power in a society. The progress of capitalism is nothing unless one applies the perspective of negativity to take control over the accumulation of capital. Capitalism has the power to change the traditional configuration of society and to transmute it into the standard of the modern society which accommodates the accumulation of capital as the “raison d’être.” Meanwhile the cultural and spiritual aspects of life are often regarded as non-knowledge, a *gnosis*, an esoteric knowing rather than the *episteme* or justified true belief. The progress of modernity does not allow such esoteric knowing to affect the decision making in the social and political sense. The cultural and spiritual are subsumed under the accumulation of capital. They serve as parts of a “strategy of investment” in the grand design of the economic progress of a nation.

These are the side effects of the negativity; yet to eliminate or to exclude it from the capability of thinking is impossible. Negativity deserves to be a function of the individuation of being. The individual cannot be maintained unless one applies this viewpoint of negativity in the justification of the Right and the Good. Moreover, the elimination of the negative is a worthless attempt insofar as one removes the negative by means of the negative. Consequently, such an attempt is an entrapment in the incessant circle of the negative which leads the progress of modernity to nothing. Thus, the function of the negative should be accompanied by that of affirmation. By doing this, the negative is the function to uphold the individuation of being, while the function of affirmation operates as the principle which leads progress in a way to a designed endpoint.

Therefore, the function of affirmation cannot exclude the negation. Affirmation represents the comprehensive vision of life. Life needs individuation of its manifestations through the representations of multiplicity; also it represents the unique phenomena of such manifestations. Furthermore, affirmation maintains the individual manifestations in order to be involved in the interconnection. In this sense, life becomes simultaneously permanent and contingent. One experiences life as the permanent factor of being or the essence of being which deserves to be *affirmed* in all forms of representations. Nevertheless, one can transcend from life in order to evaluate or to justify it. Life in this light is the contingent factor of being. Life is undefined, changeable, subjected to evaluation or justification and one should take control over it. It is the interconnectivity between the permanent and the contingent one experiences life as such. The interconnectivity enables us to acknowledge reciprocity between life and

its manifestations, between the manifestations as the part of multiplicity, between the unification and multiplicity.

In other words, the function of affirmation offers us a sagacious viewpoint of life. This sagacity defines the comprehensive vision about unification in life and the appreciation of the expression of life in all forms. One can say that sagacity belongs to the realm of spirituality or traditional wisdom, or the psychological attitude of a sane personality. The affirmation of life is the challenge for the linear progress of modernity. The sagacious attitude and knowledge is necessarily accompanied by the scientific tendency of modern man. The sagacious awareness that life is interconnecting should be adopted as the attitude as well as the perspective of the modern selfhood. The reason for this is not only because it can serve as the regulator of scientific and philosophical discovery for a human beings meaningful existence but also it interconnects the discovery of knowledge with life.

Is there any side effect in the function of affirmation? Nietzsche according to Deleuze analyzed the types of affirmation: the logical affirmation or metaphorically said the affirmation the ass and the psychological affirmation or the false one, and the pure affirmation of life.⁶⁸⁶ The first and the second types of affirmation are the side effect of the function of total affirmation. Both 'wrong' affirmations completely deny the negative in their respective claims of life. Nietzsche writes that these affirmations cannot say 'no,' only 'yea' to every occurrence and thing that is considered to be important for one's own purpose. This metaphor signifies two references. The first reference is the tendency to affirm its one's own interest and an attempt to draw the attention away from others for all matters that are considered to be problematic. The second one is the intention to claim that one's position is the only truth, but for the other one justifies nothing. It is "to say yes to oneself" but "to say nothing about anyone else." The second tendency leads us to the relativist position which acknowledges only the one's position, but neglects the other positions either as right (good) or wrong (bad). The first and second tendencies are similar: both are the self-centered affirmation of one's position. In this light, these false affirmations are the absolute negation of the others. The pure affirmation of life gives place to the negative as a required function in order to pass over the limitation of self-centrism and to get involved in the interconnectivity. The subsequent negation operates as a denial to the absolute negation of others. Diversity or multiplicity is affirmed, but also the interconnection among diversity and multiplicity and between the One and Many is affirmed.

The philosophers I explored in this thesis have brought us to the sagacious awareness of life as such. Nishida Kitaro's account of the foundation of thought in the West and East is not far from Deleuze's philosophy of affirmation of life and Ricoeur's theory of primary affirmation. Nishida indicates two models of foundation: the

⁶⁸⁶ Deleuze 1962/2002.

affirmation qua negation, and the *absolute negation qua affirmation*. The first indicates the presupposition of negativity as it is posited by Ricoeur and Deleuze. The latter refers to the theory of the pure affirmation of life and that of primary affirmation. These philosophers do not exclude one model from the other; rather they highlight these models through explicative approaches in order to project a basic capability of human beings to think. Then, given these explications it is clear that one can infer that there is an epistemological foundation in thinking interculturality through these intense reflections on the basic human ability to reason and to know.

Along with the philosophers, I also identify the local sagacious knowledge of the Sage. My exploration to *Daodejing* and the Sundanese didactic narrations of the Sage uncovers the affirmation of life as an epistemological foundation and the interconnection which is life as such as the ontological ground. The Sundanese proverb: “*opat kalima pancer*” or “the fourth and the fifth is the expanding centre” does not only signify the Sun or the *Mandala* which both symbolize the expansive power of a king or a feud. This symbol also represents the affirmation of life which theorizes the centre as the unification of the One and Many, the centre and the compass directions. My interpretation of the symbolical proverb is that the core functions as the intermediary middle which connects compass directions. The centre in this sense affirms the multiplicity of life-forms and connects them so that one life-form is a part of the other. Another Sundanese compound word is “*silihwangi*” or “mutual dignification.” The element of this compound word is the term ‘silih.’ This word refers to the equality of being, between human and non-human representations. This equality is achieved if the interconnection is maintained between these creatures. The interconnection provides the ‘*raison d’être*’ for the affirmation of life. In this light, both ‘*opat kalima pancer*’ and ‘*silihwangi*’ preserve the individuation of being. These proverbs do not eliminate the unique expression of being in multiple forms of life-manifestations. This is the function of the negative which accompanies the affirmation of life. In other words, the affirmation of life and the negativity as the epistemological foundations do not dissolve individual representations of life-forms or subsume individuals into the authoritarian representation of a powerful subject (thereby transforming them into totally dependent and worthless subjects).

An avoidance of such dissolution of the unique representation of life-manifestations is also uncovered from the passages of *Daodejing*. Verse 2 of the second chapter of the book clearly mentions the interconnection of the expression of life and the individuation of it.

Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;	故有無相生,	<i>gu you wu xiang sheng,</i>
The difficult and the easy complement each other;	難易相成,	<i>nan yi xiang cheng,</i>
The long and the short off-set each other.	長短相形,	<i>chang duan xiang xing,</i>

The high and the low incline towards each other;	高下相傾,	<i>gao xia xiang qing,</i>
Note and sound harmonize with each other;	音聲相和,	<i>yin sheng xiang he,</i>
Before and after follow each other.	前後相隨。	<i>qian hou xiang sui.</i>

These lines reveal the affirmation of life, the appreciation to the expression of life, the multiple qualities of life and the negativity which affects the individuation of each aspect or quality (as if each quality were an independent entity). The word game in this poetic style amplifies the application of the epistemological foundation in the linguistic approach. The role of concept in this sense is not the establishment of a denotative meaning that a concept is immediately provides a corresponding reflection of reality. The concept in this style emerges as a flexible mediation to portray life as such. A concept, on the one hand, is limited by its definition, but on other hand it is fluid and interconnects with others. Deleuze and Guattari even argue the singular representation of reality by means of a concept. A concept is the interconnection which brings a rhizome of concepts in order to reveals the rich expression of life.⁶⁸⁷ Concepts and terms are simultaneously individualized and interconnected to each other. This application in the linguistic domain affects our understanding of life. The affirmative comprehension of life is what *Daodejing* presents to us. The book advocates that one should have this comprehensive vision as the sagacious knowledge about life.

The Chinese and Sundanese knowledge of wisdom and the philosophers' arguments refer to the same end, that is, to explore a search of epistemology for interculturality. The search of epistemology is inevitable in order to propose not only an exchange of information of the specific approach presented by a local knowledge, but also for a dialogue among knowledge models and for escaping the hegemonic tendency of the one triumphant model of knowledge dominating the rest. These three main intentions of interculturality are necessary when one thinks of the interconnection of cultural orientations and the production of knowledge in the context of interculturality. This becomes the main inspiration of this thesis.

2. Prospects for interculturality

The search of epistemology for interculturality is a central concern in Wim van Binsbergen's book *Intercultural Encounters*. He writes:

"Yet the problems of interculturality, in knowledge production, as well as in living together or any other human activity, are not solved by pretending to assume the other's identity, but by finding ways of negotiating one's own identity and the other's in a jointly constructed new situation for which neither of the two identities has fully prepared either of the participants in

⁶⁸⁷ Deleuze & Guattari 1991.

that new situation – the solution, in other words, lies in creative innovation negotiating between the various inputs and building them into a new, usually ephemeral, cultural product.”⁶⁸⁸

The method of identity, analogy or resemblance does not apply in interculturality insofar as these methods only appropriate the local knowledge into the grand design of the universal knowledge. Moreover, the methods attain identification of identity which means to conform to one’s identity to be identical to the universal identity. The individuation of identity is not the best solution for interculturality. The outcome of the function of negativity only upholds the hegemonic representation of the North Atlantic model of knowledge. Thus, one should move from conforming one’s identity into the scheme of universal knowledge to the creation of a “new situation.” This new situation suggests the negotiation between the representations of local knowledge. Furthermore, this is a creative innovation or a negotiation implies a form of interconnectivity of the representations of local knowledge rather than an establishment of a fully independent identity of local knowledge production.

The creation of a form of interconnectivity necessarily cannot be carried out without referring to the construction of an epistemological foundation which will determine the viewpoint of interculturality. This construction appears as an epistemology for interculturality. In other words, an alternative epistemology is necessary. Van Binsbergen posits a non-relativist unitary epistemology to be this alternative epistemology for interculturality rather than the Universalist or relativist one. By the non-relativist unitary epistemology he refers to the fact that:

*“The unitary epistemological space I claim here is reflected in what I see as the unitary history of human science. The process of what finally emerged, in late modern times, as North Atlantic hegemony in the domain of scientific knowledge production, started out, over five thousand years ago and far away from the North Atlantic region, as a conscious endeavor of literate specialists, in Ancient Mesopotamia, to administer and improve the two main procedures for the construction of knowledge held to be vitally important to the king and the state: hepatoscopy and astrology, the two queens of Mesopotamian early science.”*⁶⁸⁹

The history of science and philosophy in the North Atlantic region and others indicates a collection and an assimilation of scientific methods, theories and worldviews, either in empirical, theoretical, metaphysical and even mystical and magical ways of thinking. This collection and assimilation has produced an establishment of the universal standard of epistemological justification upon a certain model of knowledge, while doing that, it inevitably constructs a mechanism of appropriation and even subordination of one model of knowledge into the scheme of the standard. While acknowledging the fact that knowledge is never made by a single group of literate men who administer the vested

⁶⁸⁸ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 20.

⁶⁸⁹ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 286.

interests of authoritative power either in the political or even in the academic field, van Binsbergen clarifies his intention. He writes:

“My point here is that the field within which such determination takes place is not bounded to constitute a single discipline, a single academic elite, a single language domain, a single culture, a single historical period, but that that field ramifies out so as to encompass, ultimately, the entire history of the whole of humankind. Within that maximally extended field, demarcations of relative sub-domains may be made for convenience’s sake (and let us not forget: for the sake of institutional interest, as vested in university departments, disciplines, professional organisations, etc.). There is no denying that there are enhanced degrees of interaction, mutual intelligibility, accountability and exercise of power within such sub-domains. Yet the demarcations between such sub-domains are porous, ephemeral, arbitrary, situational. Therefore, it is not possible for any producer of systematic, intersubjective knowledge (such as science) to retreat comfortably within a secluded (sub-)domain in the privileged and unchallenged enjoyment of his epistemological security. Ultimately all human knowledge construction takes place within one and the same epistemological space.”⁶⁹⁰

Thus, a non-relativist unitary epistemology according to him is a theory of truth which posits a comprehensive viewpoint of understanding of a signification of truth. This comprehensive viewpoint lies between the tensions of claims of the Universalist position and the relativist definition of truth. The first is an endeavor to establish a standard of truth regardless of its temporal and spatial contextualization. Such a claim on the one hand dissolves the virtual boundary of the definition of the specific model of a local knowledge, but on other hand this claim sends back any local knowledge into their respective ghetto.⁶⁹¹ There, they are considered to belong to esoteric thinking, classified as *gnosis*, rather than considered as an inherent part of the *episteme*, the public, justified or verified knowledge. Meanwhile the latter is the exclusive claim of a local model of knowledge. They are to be judged in accordance with their respective criteria of valid knowledge. The relativist posits that the boundary of local knowledge is impenetrable so that each local model of knowledge is incompatible to each other. The difference of type of knowledge becomes absolute in this sense so that any interaction between these types of knowledge is impossible.⁶⁹²

The suggestion of a non-relativist unitary epistemology stands between such claims above. Given this tension, van Binsbergen is trying to posit his account creatively in order to overcome the boundary of relativism, but not to fall into the trap of the Universalist which acknowledges only a single standard of knowledge. The epistemology of interculturality should not only support the unique characters of local models of knowledge, but also go beyond such a virtually limited boundary in order to

⁶⁹⁰ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 285.

⁶⁹¹ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 292.

⁶⁹² Van Binsbergen 2003a: 284-285.

maintain a dialogue among models of knowledge.⁶⁹³ According to my analysis, his position can be understood if one considers the interconnection as the epistemological foundation for the non-relativist unitary epistemology. Van Binsbergen position is neither the middle way nor is the third way, because if this was so then it would be illogical in accordance to the law of the excluded third. Thus, one should consider *really* other ways rather than the universal standard of knowledge proposed above.

This *other way* of thinking posits the interconnection in this non-relativist unitary epistemology. In my account, this epistemology could be the affirmative one insofar as affirmation of the Universalists and the relativist epistemology occurs in an intensive and extensive interconnection. The Universalist becomes meaningless unless it takes into account the position of relativist. In other words, the unitary epistemology should be a *comprehensive vision* which are comprised of the Universalist claim of Truth which is that the Truth is necessarily indifference and undetermined, and the relativist theory of Truth which is that the Truth is also contextualized.⁶⁹⁴ The unitary epistemology of interculturality acknowledges that the Truth has defined and undefined, imaginable and unimaginable elements and intelligible and mysterious sides. The Truth cannot be limited in accordance to a theorem of “a position.” The truth in this light is not an individuation of the limitless (universalism) or limited (relativism) conception. Rather the Truth is intelligible because of the possible expression of life in various forms of manifestations. In other words, the Truth is inevitably inseparable from life as such so that the Truth is the plural representation of life.

The non-relativist unitary epistemology or the affirmative one (using my own terminology) therefore is the theory of truth contextualized in life so that this theory offers an interconnection with life. Given the interconnection as an ontological ground and the affirmation of life as the epistemological foundation, the affirmative epistemology for interculturality has several characteristics.

- a. The theory of truth contains inherently the interconnectivity with life. One justifies knowledge as true if and only if one connects a justification of knowledge with life as such. The justification posits that knowledge serves life.
- b. If knowledge serves life, one reveals that knowledge is never singular, but plural. Knowledge can be rational and non-rational, logical and non-logical, defined and undefined, determined and undetermined. This is possible insofar as knowledge is a mind’s instrument to explore the expressions of life in all forms of manifestations.
- c. Knowledge is plural also in the sense that it is contextualized in all kinds of cultural orientations and it surpasses the context and emerges to be indifferent to all self-centric claims of truth. Therefore, any types of reasoning and knowing, whether

⁶⁹³ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 293.

⁶⁹⁴ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 285.

they are analytical, critical, or ideological or just popular belong to knowledge in their respective characteristics.

- d. Knowledge can no longer refer to “the justified true belief” since this definition only supports an individuation of belief to be validated in accordance to specific standards of verification.
- e. The criterion of asserting that knowledge is true or false is not the independent establishment of true knowledge from the interconnection between knowledge and life. The criteria should consider any possible factors that can reveal the plural representation of the Truth due to the interconnection of the Truth with life as such.
- f. Given that knowledge is plural and the criteria for truth are always interconnected with life, one can infer that knowledge considers various knowledge models. Interculturality in this light is an affirmation of the difference of knowledge models. Given the affirmation of knowledge models, interculturality also becomes a condition for a dialogue among such knowledge models.
- g. Therefore, interculturality does not depend solely on the comparative methods of knowledge models, but a dialogical methodology for an exploration of knowledge. The comparative methods can open the way to a dialogue, but then it is necessary that one applies the dialogical methodology for an intercultural exploration of knowledge. The purpose of the exploration is not for the sake of the truth. The intercultural dialogue between knowledge models is to serve life, to maintain and to develop the quality of life in all forms of manifestations.

These characteristics of an affirmative epistemology or the non-relativist unitary epistemology indicate the need of an alternative epistemology in the context of global encounters of cultural orientations. The globalization needs a root which is philosophically grounded insofar as the global encounters in trade and business also politics is not only the subject matter of empirical exploration or investigation. The philosophical reflection and exploration are inevitable. For the sake of this purpose then, the philosophical ground, especially the epistemological foundation is required to provide intersubjective understanding of the uniqueness of each cultural representations; otherwise globalization will only a tool of hegemonic interest to be dominant in this international encounters.⁶⁹⁵ The primary interconnection among the cultural orientations and knowledge models, the affirmation of plurality in a unitary dialogue of interculturality is one possible answer to the quest of epistemological foundation in the context of globalization. This becomes significant inspiration that affirmation provides the epistemological foundation for the philosophy of interculturality.

⁶⁹⁵ Van Binsbergen 2003a: 35, 90.

3. The principle of affirmation in a multi-ethnic society like the Republic of Indonesia

The last part of this thesis offers a proposal for a multi-ethnic society based on the principle of affirmation. What I have particularly in mind is contemporary Indonesia society, which is a multicultural and developing country. Diversity is at the heart of Indonesian society. One can see the diversity from the level of

1. performance of cultural identities to
2. that of comprehension of cultural worldview.

One can experience the cultural worldview through interactions with people who are in possession of the understanding of worldview in political, social and economical even spiritual domains. The first level (1, above) represents an explicit realization of diversity while the latter (2, above) represents an implicit comprehension of plurality. This experience of diversity in the modern Indonesian society, however, does not constantly occur in a constructive way. Instead, historical records of interaction of cultural identities, as well as the contemporary everyday social experience, have shown many instances of mass violence among cultural groups in this archipelago. One of them was recorded in a journalistic report made by a Chinese Indonesian journalist during the period of the struggle, when the formal declaration of independence around made by Pres. Sukarno in 1945 (at the very end of the Second World War) was contested, in 1946 – 1947, by the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration's (NICA, the representation of Dutch colonial government in Australia during the Pacific War) effort to reclaim the Dutch colonization of the archipelago⁶⁹⁶.

There were several records of the mass violence which had occurred against Chinese people who migrated to Indonesia. There was a rebellion of Chinese immigrants against VOC administration in Batavia in 1740 which was eradicated severely. The other mass violence against Chinese Indonesians took place in 1916, 1946-1947, 1966, 1980 and 1998⁶⁹⁷. These occurrences also unfold a complex situation of the long attempt of social and cultural assimilation of this group's identity into the local communities. The communities of Chinese Indonesians have been considered as 'strange', , by the local groups ever since the mass migration of Chinese in the second part of the 19th century CE to the Archipelago. This mass migration in 19 - 20th century

⁶⁹⁶ This journalistic report is presented by Gabriel P. Sindhunata SJ, a Jesuit Father who is still working as a columnist in Jogjakarta. He reflects a memoir of mass violence which victimized Chinese Indonesian during the struggle of formal acknowledgement independence written by Kwee Thiam Tjing or his nickname "tjamboek berdoeri" This report was issued as a book which entitled *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara (Indonesia in flame and fervor, 1947)*. Sindhunata's literary analyses and reflection of the mass violence can be read in his book *Kambing Hitam, teori René Girard (the Scapegoat, a theory of René Girard)* (2006). Due to the limitation of this thesis, I am not going into the details of this report on mass violence against Chinese Indonesian during the period. I will consider a further explication of this occurrence in the viewpoint of affirmative approach in a subsequent exploration as a post-doctoral project.

⁶⁹⁷ See Sindhunata 2006:365-366 cf Lombard 1990/2005:247, Lohanda, 2002.

CE was affected by economical and political reasons. These Chinese immigrants sought a better place for living than the Chinese mainland in the end of the administration of Qing dynasty and after. This mass migration into the archipelago was allowed by the Dutch colonial government because new plantations and mines were opened during the second part of the 19th century CE. These Chinese migrants were not fully integrated into the local communities rather they built their settlements separated from local communities and by doing so they constructed their political and economic identity⁶⁹⁸. Later in the history of colonization of Indonesia and modern Indonesia, the Chinese Indonesians are stereotypically associated with the identity of economic middlemen who worked for the colonial government or the Indonesian one after independence, and who exploited natural resources and local people in order to run their businesses⁶⁹⁹.

This complex situation implied a conflict in the pluralistic society considering the fact that the cultural identities represented there were going through an overall process of internal adjustment and external adaptation. One can also consider this process as a struggle for recognition within that society. This struggle of recognition is at the heart of the politics of identity. In this context, the participants in the local society have the option of taking recourse to violence as a shortcut towards safeguarding what they see as their own group's political interest of identity.

An understanding of violence considers a wide and deep study because violence is part of society, according to Thomas Hobbes. Regarding that the wide and deep implication of violence in the level of individual and social, my approach to violence in this context focuses mainly on a philosophical analysis (which has also represented a wide study on this topic)⁷⁰⁰ rather than a sociological or political analysis of the topic I am not ignoring a sociological, political and anthropological approaches to the practice of violence in this thesis regarding the fact that my competence is not mainly trained in these domains of social sciences. I consider the political and sociological approaches of violence as to provide a contextual setting to my philosophical analysis. Thus this thesis is a preliminary work which concentrates on a philosophical analysis on violence based on the principle of affirmation which is the foundation of the sagacious knowledge in the sense of the practical wisdom. I am planning to study more about the issue of violence which includes the sociological, political and anthropological approaches of the topic in the next research project after I complete my dissertation.

In this philosophical approach, one wants to analyze an epistemological root of the practice of violence. I assume that the epistemological root lies on a shortcut implementation of the negative operation of thought, which is guided by the principle of

⁶⁹⁸ See Lombard 1990/2005:245-247, Lohanda, 2002.

⁶⁹⁹ See Lombard 1990/2005:285-298 these are the records on several Chinese Indonesians who managed to be the powerful economic 'trade dynasty, especially on Java Island for a period of a century (1863-1961) cf. Peek Yang 1998.

⁷⁰⁰ For example: Arendt 1970. Hoffman 1989, Schroeder 1996,

contradiction and the excluded third.⁷⁰¹ One can also review how this shortcut implementation of the operation of negativity affects the understanding of violence which could be expressed either in the level of interpersonal relationship or in the level of communal interaction. As one can see from Ricoeur's and Deleuze's analyses of the Hegelian model of dialectical thought (chapter 7 of this thesis), the application of the negative operation in communal level clarifies a confrontational juxtaposition between hostile factions. Here, in accordance with the logical principle of negation, if two established positions are equal to each other and are thus juxtaposed, such as the natives and the strange, both will appear to be in possession of the same truth from the standpoint of their respective members, but of course only one group identity deserves to embody *the truth*, which is the pure representation of a collectivity while the other, the false one which also may appear as the agent of the enemy which is considered as the undesirable antonym to be eradicated. If one sees this shortcut implementation, the negative operation yields an individuation of group identity. Nevertheless such individuation of group identity leads to a struggle of recognition for that group in order to secure an established position for such group identity. The result is each group gives label either to itself or to other group. In this mechanism of labelization, each group also formulates a set of stereotype for the outside group. This formulation of stereotype comes from a bad track record of the outside group as it was mentioned in the record of relationship between these groups. The individuation of group identity, when applied consistently and extensively, leads to a total categorization of such individuation – as if the struggle of recognition of an established position were absolute. If this understanding of opposite individuals applies in the recognition of the political or economic identity, the elimination of undesired identity is inescapable. The polarization of political and economic identity which is the native against the strange affects an establishment of recognized position which deserves to represent the truth.

In chaotic situations like the mass violence referred above, and numerous later instances of such violence in the course of the post-Independence history of the Republic of Indonesia, the identification of the identity group as the truth—which group deserves to embody the true independence of Indonesia, and which one belongs to the enemy of the independence—just implements the elimination of group identity which will be labeled as the false faction without any critical review about a distinction of the true and the false identity. In the polarization of the local communities against the outsiders, the Chinese Indonesians, as an example of violent conflict in the multi-ethnic society in Indonesia, the identity of the group which represents the true legacy of independence inherently belongs to the local identity. Meanwhile the outsiders are *always* attributed as the inimical elements which are always associated with the

⁷⁰¹ Cf. van Binsbergen, 1996, 2008b

opportunist due to their self-centered attitude towards the natives for the sake of supporting their lives only.

This attribution of the true representation of the original and the false identity appears in such a linguistic expression as “*pribumi*” which literarily denotes ‘*native*’ or ‘*local*’ and “*non-pribumi*”⁷⁰² which denotes ‘*non-native*’ or ‘*strangers*’. This first expression provocatively signifies the representation of the original identity of the Indonesian community⁷⁰³. Given this stimulating identity, the natives consider that they deserve to reoccupy economic field and then other domains of life since they *embody* the ‘*true*’ in the sense of ‘*authentic*’ identity of citizenship in the Republic of Indonesia. Meanwhile the latter signifies the outsiders which do not appropriately embody the ‘*authentic*’ identity as the citizen of the Republic. This political identification is first attributed to the economic domain. The Chinese Indonesians also established themselves as economic middlemen at the village and regional level, especially on Java. Meanwhile the era of New Order managed to insert a provocative connotation to the term ‘*pribumi*’ and ‘*non-pribumi*’. This reconstruction of meaning at that time becomes pejorative. The New order managed to invoke a division within the society through separating economical interest of the Chinese and the natives. By this division the New Order could exercise its powerful control over the society and employed the military and police as its means. By this provocative classification this label of social stratification emerged as the struggle of recognition and the rebellion against the colonial or tyrannical government like the regime of Suharto and the agents of colonization/a tyranny like the New Order regime. This classification of identity according to the political interest of full control to the society marks a distinction of the Chinese entrepreneurs against the native traders or businessmen. Since the colonial time in the early 20th century CE, this economic identification of interest groups for Chinese Indonesian has been distributed in all domains of life⁷⁰⁴. Thus, Chinese Indonesian as

⁷⁰² The word ‘*non-pribumi*’ comprises of the external element of Bahasa, the prefix ‘*non*’ which comes out from English and the internal element of Bahasa, the term ‘*pribumi*’. This word becomes popular in the era of New Order when the Suharto regime distinguishes the Chinese entrepreneur from the native ones. This distinction which is once employed in the economic domain then broadens to the sociological, political and anthropological domain as a stereotype. This distinction also serves as a label of social, political and economical interest. Cf. Mulder 2000, Schwarz 1999 chapt.5

⁷⁰³ During Colonialization of the Archipelago in 19th, the Dutch Colonial Government constructed a social stratification of the inhabitants. That is too volitional an expression, as if a state could control 100% socio-political processes within its territory. The first stratification is the representatives of European nations. The second one or the foreign Orientals which are Chinese, Arabic and Indian people who migrated to the Archipelago to earn a better income from plantations and factories which were run by the Colonial Government (again, they did not remain civil servants and wage earners, but soon became the economic middlemen, especially the Chinese). The last one or the lower class is the natives, or “*pribumi*”. Thus, ‘*pribumi*’ was a pejorative classification of the colonial government. See Furnivall 1948, Sindhunata 2006:366ff, Lombard 1990/2005:247, Wertheim 1959, Mulder 2000:63, Schwarz 1999 chap. 5

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. Mulder 2000, Schwarz 1999 chap. 5; Peek Yang 1998; Tan 1979, Suryadinata 1978.

the outsiders are accused of trying to gain economic ascendance at the expense of the 'born' Indonesians. During the Dutch colonization these Chinese immigrants have become the agents of colonial government in order to exploit the natural resources and to oppress the native.

This semantic distinction about the struggle of recognition of the political and economic identity which implicitly pertains to the employment of negative operation of thinking which is applied without any critical evaluation to the employment of the function of negativity in a social context. The function of negativity is *implemented* in order to maintain the separation of the in-group from the out-group. Consequently this semantic separation could implicitly emerge as a source of violence. This separation also uncovers a way of thinking which puts violence as the potential exercise to maintain social stability in a pluralistic society. By this understanding of a source of violence one can see why the outsiders are always blamed as the source of chaotic situation in social domain⁷⁰⁵.

.Then violence according to this viewpoint of philosophical approach seems to be unavoidable because the class stratifications had become extreme as if there were no way out." Of course there is a cultural solution for the extreme labialization of group identity in the case of the distinction between the native Indonesian and the Chinese Indonesian. Many efforts have been made in order to integrate the Chinese Indonesians into the local communities since the pre-colonial era. Since then, the Chinese immigrant men have had intermarriage with women from a local community. There is also an acknowledgement that the coming of Islam in the Archipelago also pioneered by Chinese Immigrants before 19th century⁷⁰⁶. There were also religious conversions of modern Chinese Indonesian into Islam in order to facilitate a process of assimilation of the Chinese Indonesian into the local community. Nevertheless the politicization of identity differences between group identities, which the nuance of separation is still in the air today, seems to be appeared as a dead end of non-interaction among cultural orientations. The political and economic stereotypes seems become convincing as if there were a total incommensurability and untranslatability between culture; as if only violence instead of interactivity would resolves any form of conflict nowadays.⁷⁰⁷

In the framework of philosophical analysis, a question about 'how do we deal with the practice of violence notably to regard this political and economic matter from the viewpoint of an affirmative worldview where the principle of affirmation appears as central part of a knowledge system grounded in indigenous sagacity? To answer that question one cannot exclude numerous sociological, political and anthropological study of violence made by scholars such as J. Hoskins, M. Bloch, M.H. Ross, A.J. McKenna,

⁷⁰⁵ Cf. Sindhunata 2006:358-360. In this case, Father Sindhunata analyses the practice of violence against Chinese Indonesians based on Girard's literary and psychoanalytical approach of violence.

⁷⁰⁶ See de Graaf et al. 1984; Wijayakusuma, 2000.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. van Binsbergen 2008 a: 14.

Wim M.J. van Binsbergen, A. Apadurai, Anthony Giddens, Amartya K. Sen, etc⁷⁰⁸. These studies inspire a critical review on the study of violence especially on that basis the perception and conception of diversity in Indonesian society which can be rethought in a positive way.

A philosophical review of the issue of diversity against violence in the Archipelago can start with the application of negative operation of thought which, as I have explained above, is implemented as guiding principle in perceiving a struggle of recognition of group identity. As an alternative to such negative operation one can mention the affirmative operation of thought. This is the affirmative side of thought can inspire to formulate an inclusive thought if one thinks of a group identity. In this sense the affirmative thought guides our thought to perceive the implication of interconnectivity and the practice of constructive interactivity in the relationship of different identity groups with their respective interests. The awareness of this implication of interconnectivity and constructive interactivity brings us to consider an availability of way out in dealing with social conflict so that the preferential option of the practice of violence can be opted out. This kind of awareness is part of sagacious knowledge, especially as a form of wisdom of the practicality of life. Then a further question arises: “how do this sagacious knowledge deals with the issue of social conflict and to find a creative solution to the practice of violence between the hostile factions?”

The answer to the question below should be found out from the understanding of the affirmative thought, the sagacious knowledge which has elaborated in this thesis offers the principle of affirmation as an inspiration to promote an alternate way to deal with social conflict in relatively peaceful way. The principle of affirmation could not offer a total solution to the issue of violence as if the application of the principle of affirmation were the answer to eradicate the practice of violence. The explanation of the principle of affirmation can be found in the form of pious lessons of the Sundanese sagacity. These pious lessons imply especially concerning the Sundanese expressions of *pancer* or the intermediary core and *Tritangtu* or the triadic structure of life. The pious lessons enhance the idea of interconnectivity and constructive interactivity between individuals, or group identities in a community. The idea of interconnectivity is the manifestation of life. This awareness affects a way of thinking which perceives interactive relationship as a fundamental part in life. The interactive relationship can be expressed in a communal interaction. This idea does not eliminate a destructive motivation in such interaction rather, it brings into awareness that in dealing with a social conflict the life of other people has to be considered priority so that it prevents the destructive action which to take somebody's life. Given this understanding, the Sunda community has a communal deliberation (*badami*) in order to resolve a social conflict

⁷⁰⁸ Hoskins,1989, Bloch 1986, Ross 1986, McKenna 1992, van Binsbergen 1996 Appadurai 1996, 1998, Giddens 1985, Sen 2006.

and by doing so, the people prevent themselves to initiate the violent action one against the other.

The similar perception applies when a community faces a social crisis like famine or poverty. The pious lessons advocate that life of people who suffer from the social crisis should be supported first. This is why in the pious lessons there are several advocations to support the life of other people especially those who suffer from a social conflict or crisis. The realization of the support should be an action to provide enough food and other basic needs and protection. Therefore, in the traditional Sunda house or village there is always storage like a barn for rice and other food. The function of the barn or rice storage is to support the life of those who suffer.

The advocation to provide enough food and to support the life of other is realized through a ritual ceremony which is the inherent part of the pious lessons in an explicit activity of pilgrimage. The ritual is called as *Slametan*. In the chapter 2 I have explained the meaning of the Slametan which is usually celebrated by Sundanese and Javanese people, by discussing Geert's and Beatty anthropological approach to the ritual. In case the ritual of Slametan in the shrine Nagara Padang the pilgrims who do the peregrination there, after listening to the pious lessons told by the guardian of the shrine celebrate a shared meal by sitting together on the open area at the top of the shrine. By wearing a black dress and greyish scarf they can cultivate an advocation to be the intermediary, which is realized if each pilgrim involves in a communal prayer. A pilgrim can say a prayer on behalf of a fellow pilgrim's intention arised as the main intention of the ritual. The black dress and the greyish scarf signify a readiness to be an intermediary on behalf of somebody's intention.

The idea intermediary inspires a community of pilgrim about an event of sharing and of equality. The realization of the idea of sharing and equality becomes intensive when the pilgrims at the closing ritual of the pilgrimage give greeting to each other, and this ceremony appears as a spiral structure at the end of the rituals. The advocation of pious lessons and the practice of the shared meals in the ritual of Slametan remind us to the idea of "*rukun*" or "mutual association", which is according to Geertz, this idea becomes central in the understanding of the ritual in Java. One can also relate this mutual association in a community with an interactive dialogue by which one can express the affirmative acknowledgement of others. This kind of acknowledgement indicates a creative mind which develops a comprehensive viewpoint about a diversity realized in a community. That the diversity does not appear as a form of closedness but it is an invitation to engage in interactive relationship. Diversity in this sense implies the interconnectivity, which is the constitutive element of life.

This appreciation of diversity in the deep level (not in the level of decorative performance of group identity) can inspire the dynamic manifestations of cultural orientations in a very heterogeneous communities like Indonesia. This is a way of

thinking which pronounce that such diverse representations in a social reality are constitutive expressions of shareable human nature.

The signification of the pious lessons and the practice of Slametan can be compared with Deleuzean account of the pure affirmation. This account also put in the first place the deep appreciation of diversity which realized in all kind manifestations of life and the interactive relationship which is based on equality and capability to share life.

Thus, a philosophical approach in dealing with the issue of violence comes up with the idea of interconnectivity and interactive relationship as the way of thinking in responding the issue. Both concepts are the content of the principle of affirmation. Principle of affirmation in this sense opens our mind that we have a capacity to anticipate an unrest situation in order to avoid a social conflict turns into a practice of violence. This anticipation reveals the need to choose silence. Silence in this sense addresses to the non-verbal interactivity which gives priority to a interactive relationship between cultural orientations in the archipelago, rather than an imposition of group identity by constructing a verbal definition. This verbal expression pertains to the struggle to establish a recognized identity through language. Language to this extent is medium of social construction of stratification and categorization. The political and economic implication of this categorization is the establishment of closed group identity. To this implication of silence explodes the verbal definition, and by doing so silence passes over the monolithic boundary of interactivity between cultural orientations. This non-verbal action inspires people to take an affirmative interactivity than to establish the monolithic barrier of group identity.

One can learn pious lessons from the people of the village Rawabogo whose daily activities implies the realization of the interconnectivity and interactive relationship. Rawabogo villagers in general seem to represent a homogenous community which consists of Sundanese people, most of them are farmers, and their religion is Islam. If one sees more details than just looking to the villagers at a glance, one will find out that the villagers are relatively heterogeneous even they realized their Islam in various orientations, such the traditionalist, the fundamentalist or the radicalist Islam. Their economic background represents some stratification. Realizing this relatively heterogeneous structure of the village, one can understand that there is a potential conflict in the community. In dealing with this potential conflict the pious lessons do not opt out a conflict or a practice of violence from the village of Rawabogo where most of the elders and the guardians of the shrine live. One would fall into a reductive inference and wrong perception if one considered that the realization of the principle of affirmation there completely wiped out the practice of violence as a solution of a conflict there. There is some degree of negativity which practices there in order to maintain the unique representation of the community. There can be also an invocation of self-interest matter made by a pilgrim in order to gain an economical interest or to

maintain his or her influential power to others as a government officer or as an artist. This invocation hints a practice of violence even in the spiritual level as if by removing other's interest so that 'my interest' would be realized in reality. In this sense, there is a tendency to practice violence even in the spiritual activity.

There was another story of social conflicts faced by the guardians and elders of the shrine in 2007. Precisely in 22 October 2007, a group of Sundanese people from Bandung Area which was called as *Lawang Kori* came to the shrine Nagara Padang in order to have a ritual ceremony and pilgrimage to the shrine⁷⁰⁹. They wanted to celebrate the coming new lunar year according to Sundanese calendar. The feast is called as *Sawelas Ca'ang Sasih Badra* which means "the eleventh of the bright month *Badra*". In the end of the feast, some leaders of this group were interviewed by a national TV broadcast concerning the significant of the feast for Sundanese people. These leaders asserted that the feast was pertinent to the original Sundanese religion or "Agama Sunda Wiwitan". This original Sundanese religion is the important topic among the Sundanese people this day because this conception refers to the struggle of identity of originality of Sundanese culture against any external influence, which comes from the Islam radicals, to asserts that the Sundanese culture and Islam are identical, even to replace the Sundanese culture with Islam.

This pronouncement annoyed the guardians and elders of the shrine Nagara Padang. They were upset about the continuation of the pilgrimage of Nagara Padang in the future. They considered the pronouncement was exaggerated and out of context. At that year, there was a movement of the radical Islam in all over the Archipelago to influence common people and to convince them that any traditional elements involved in the practice of Islam should be considered as the element of paganism in Islam. The believers, therefore, should clean Islam from this undesired element. This social and cultural background affected the mind and the heart of the guardians and elders. They regarded that the group of *Lawang Kori* only pronounced their interest and they did not consider the consequence of the pronouncement for the continuation of pilgrimage and other cultural activities in the village. The guardians and elders resolved the conflict with the group of *Lawang Kori* in a deliberative dialogue. The guardians and elders decided that they would not involve in any kind of traditional celebration held by this group if the group wanted to celebrate a ritual in this shrine in the future. The fact, this group came back to the shrine to have a similar ritual in the next year. They did not include the guardians and elders to guide them in their pilgrimage, although the guardians and elders would still accept them as the pilgrims who needed an accommodation during their pilgrimage.

It is important to see how the guardians and elders dealt with this potential social conflict between the traditional and the radical Moslems in the village. They made a

⁷⁰⁹ I attended this celebration as a participant of the pilgrimage and an observer since this event occurred in the middle of my observation to the shrine Nagara Padang.

quick movement in the village of Rawabogo. They had a deliberative dialogue with the head of village, the local representative of the Assembly of the Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, or MUI). This deliberative dialogue decided a celebration of the *Eid Al-Adha*, the feast of the sacrifice (also it is a holiday for a Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca), around the government facility at the village at 20 December 2007.⁷¹⁰ Thus, this celebration of the Islam holiday was an attempt to explode the suspicion of the Islam radicalist regarding the existence of pagan elements in Islam in Rawabogo.

The main point of the realization of the principle of affirmation through the practice of interactive dialogue and in the village is that the society would prefer to maintain that the life of other people (either the strange or the fellow villagers) should be taken as the priority. In order to realize this priority, the villagers prefer to have some serial of deliberative dialogue (or *badami* in the Sundanese expression) than to express an aggressive attitude against the other faction. Especially the elders and guardians of the shrine prefer to negotiate a relatively cooperative solution for a social conflict than to choose a practice of violence.

One may perceive this deliberative interaction as a political movement to secure the villagers' (mainly the elders and the guardians) identity against the radicalist intervention to the village. From the viewpoint of the struggle of recognition this perception may be politically correct. Nevertheless this viewpoint reduces the capacity to solve the social conflict only in the framework of a political recognition of the established position (cultural identity) made by the villagers. The practice of deliberative interaction should be perceived from a constructive approach by promoting the idea of interconnectivity as the awareness of the nature of life which has to be the first thing to defend.

By maintain these profound ideas, the guardians remind a pilgrim to apply proactively an affirmative attitude towards others while he or she realizes its intention of occupying others position so that he or she does not forget about the responsibility to support the life of others, which can be human or non-human. Pak Undang once said that actually one cannot have a praying session in the pilgrimage if one has a bad intention to hurt his or her fellow people⁷¹¹. By doing so a pilgrim affirms the interest of the others, and he or she maintains the dynamic comprehension that life is shareable.

⁷¹⁰ The Head of village, Cecep NA Prawira told me this story in the interview at 19 January 2008.

⁷¹¹ In the interview at 5 September 2007, Pak Undang said to me: "*Aya ogé kieu, urang munajat di Nagara Padang. Batur ambek ka urang. Urang munajat didinya, di Nagara Padang. Nuhunkeun sabab saréat ti Nagara Padang panerangan, ka nu nitih di Nagara Padang: Abdi munajat didieu nuhunkeun disalametkeun abdi jeung batur, nu ambek ka abdi ulah jadi ambek, abdi sing salamet, batur sing salamet. Ka udaganana kitu. Lamun urang nékadkeun hayang ngabahayakeun apan ulah ka Nagara Padang mereunan. Pan Nagara Padang nagara caang jeung merenah, ari lamun mengkol ka dinya ulah asup ka Nagara Padang, kudu ka nagara nu poék.*" (My translation: "If while we want prays at Nagara Padang, we realize that a friend is mad to us, we should be gratitude and pray for ourself and our friend who mad at us so that his or her emotion should not harm us, and we and our friend become saved. If we want to hurt other people, we should not go to nagara

The lesson learned from the Rawabogo villagers on the practice of the deliberative interaction (in form of dialogue and negotiation) is a preliminary explanation of the realization of the principle of affirmation. In the next project I want to explore how the inspiration of the principle affirmation can affect a preferential option of preventing the choice of destructive and massif violence as the only way out of the social conflict in the Archipelago.

By providing pious lessons of the realization of the principle of affirmation from the context of the elders and guardians of the shrine Nagara Padang and the Rawabogo villagers, I would like to suggest the idea of an affirmative collectivity, about which I want to elaborate in the next project. I consider this idea in order to contest

- the struggle of recognition of the authentic embodiment of the citizens of the Republic which is separated from the *false* or wrong representation of citizenship.
- And because of this struggle of the politics of identity, a preferential approach which consider humanity only as a means rather than an end in itself. This approach cannot be functioned unless one implements violence in many forms and in all domains of life.

The idea of an affirmative collectivity is based on the realization of the interconnectivity between self-identities or interests. On the one hand the principle of affirmation acknowledges the interest in order to assert a recognized position of a community in the middle of social interaction, on the other hand, this interest of identity recognition should maintains interactivity between such cultural orientations. This comprehensive realization addresses to an open mind which tries to find out many kinds of solutions for social conflicts in order to respect the unique embodiment of identity of each faction. Furthermore, the understanding of interconnectivity as the nature of the life and of the practice of interactivity in social arena demonstrate the deep appreciation that accepts the diversity of Indonesian group identities as such. By doing so, these group identities are capable to realize an involvement in the web of life which metaphorically signifies the interactivity between life manifestations.

Meanwhile, the idea of affirmative collectivity is different from the spirit of collectivism. The former promotes the comprehensive appreciation of group identities from the basic level such as a cultural identity for individuals to the advanced level such as a political or economic identity in a structure of a society. Meanwhile the latter looks upon individuals as only a tiny element which can be *always* imposed to oblige the collective. Such collectivism refers to the conception of the false affirmation, according to Deleuze. As the result, the spirit of collectivism inadequately embody the respect of any kind of the manifestations of life. Meanwhile, the idea of affirmative collectivity rests on the acknowledgement of the realization of human dignity. If then the realization

Padang. Nagara Padang is the place to get an illumination. If our purpose is otherwise, we should go the dark place”).

of dignity for group identity can be achieved, then one can initiate a further steps to negotiate an alternative approach which reconsider the tendency to carry out a practice of violence as something inescapable. This reconsideration promotes a deliberative dialogue between the representations of cultural orientations in the archipelago. Nevertheless one should note that the practice of deliberative dialogue does not wipe out totally the practice of violence from a community. The practice of violence is always potential in the middle of social conflict. The principle of affirmation cannot remove the violence because if this happens, the principle of affirmation itself becomes the practice of violence. The principle of affirmation which is underlying principle for the idea of affirmative collective has to limit itself to handle down a social conflict, or at least to avoid a escalation of social conflict into a destructive action of violence. It inspires a community to have broad alternatives of strategy or resolving an existing social conflict. The strategy can take a long time or it might be exhausted because of a deep separation of the hostile factions. By making this deliberative interaction a way of life, which is inspired by the principle of affirmation, one discovers an admonition to move from the choice of the destructive action of mass violent as the solution of social conflicts in order to realize that even the hostile factions can have the capacity to deal with social conflict in a constructive way of thought and life. This capacity alludes with the sagacious knowledge.

Summary

Philosophy represents not only a tight discipline of systematical thinking, a discourse of dialectical arguments and critiques, logical reasonings as well as a deep contemplation and reflection of being in order to achieve the clear and distinct knowledge and the Truth. Philosophy also realizes wisdom as a theoretical and practical explanations and reasonings of life. Wisdom also offers some deliberations concerning better approaches to current problems by means of activating human virtue in dealing with our (destructive) infirmity.

Both understandings of philosophy indicate that this abstract discipline covers not only knowing, thinking and reasoning but also exploring ways of life, deciding preferences and taking action as realizations of desired (rationally considered) approaches to life. The expression of visionary and pragmatic thought is inherent capability of human mind regardless cultural or educational backgrounds.

These theoretical and practical thoughts presuppose an object as “a point of departure” and ‘an aim’. This object does not always correspond with ‘sensual or conceptual representations of reality’. Though the object is considered virtual rather than real, the point of departure and aim consequently determine the way of thinking. This object formulated in a paradoxical pair consists of ‘*being*’ and ‘*nothingness*’.

In turn our thought creatively constructs a necessary framework or a paradigm in order to understand the nature of existence which signified in the paradoxical pair, being and nothingness. This framework comprises of a pair of opposite operation, that is, affirmation and negation. This pair does not provide a match correlation with the paradoxical pair, *being* and *nothingness*. The affirmation does not correlate with being, while the negation with nothingness. The decisive role of the framework of opposite operation is as an instrument to order our thinking and reasoning, insofar as our thought appears in a recognizable and reasonable form.

On the one hand, some thinkers, like Nishida Kitaro (1970), argue for a contextualization of this framework of opposite operation in a certain region or in particular cultural orientations. This is why one could name European, Asian or African way of thinking. Even this way of thinking is associated with philosophy, thence it appears as Western philosophy or Eastern philosophy. This contextualization can correspond with a unique representation of thinking according to their respective regions. Nishida attributes the preference of absolute affirmation to Western philosophy whilst the preference of absolute negation to Eastern philosophy. The first he posits as ‘the absolute affirmation qua negation’ and the latter ‘the absolute negation qua affirmation’. The first framework of operation maintains the individualization and the autonomy of being as subject and it secures being from vain nothingness or nihilism.

Thus, the western philosophy substantively implies the operation of negation rather than affirmation according to Nishida. The latter framework maintains the interconnectivity of being and nothingness. Nothingness according to the Eastern religious belief refers to being insofar as they clarify each other. This interconnectivity maintains the shareability and interdependence of any representations of being and nothingness. In this sense, the Eastern philosophy implies the operation of affirmation rather than negation according to Nishida.

On the other hand, some contemporary discourses and debates argue for the implication of the framework of negation and affirmation in the realization of human capability of thinking. This framework is actualized without any contextualization to certain cultural orientations. In other words, the framework is shareable and it constitutes basic capability that one regardless her education background or literacy can think, know and reason.

Both the contextualization of the preference of framework and the shareability of the framework of thought are explored in this current work. My exploration intends to realize the implication of interconnectivity which constitutes the capability of thinking both in contextualized and shareable form of interculturality. This implication of interconnectivity is what I called the principle of affirmation. My elaboration covers three different contexts: the context of *Sundanese* philosophical thought of sagacity, of philosophical correlativity between being and nothingness as it actualized in the poetic verses of *Daodejing*, and of the Ricoeur's argument of *l'affirmation originaire* (1965) and the Gilles Deleuze's pure affirmation (1962/2002). These contexts explain the unique approaches of cultural orientations to the nature of interconnectivity conceived in the principle of affirmation.

Therefore, my exploration of the idea interconnectivity passes over the limit of contextualization of cultural orientations into the context of interculturality. One can indicate the principle of affirmation as the realization of interconnectivity or interactivity in the Sundanese conceptions of '*Tritangtu*', '*pancer*' (both explicate the idea of being intermediary), and in the Sundanese adages like '*cangkang reujeung eusina kudu sarua lobana*' and '*dunya sakitu legana heurina ngan ku dua jalma lalaki jeung aweue*'. The preference of affirmation as an ontological and epistemological ground of thinking of being in the argument of Paul Ricoeur and Gilles Deleuze, the 20th century French philosophers reveals the interconnectivity or interactivity between thinking subjects, between knowing subject and the idea of time and Truth, and between the thinking subjects and life.

The principle of affirmation as the realization of interconnectivity or interactivity becomes an ontological and epistemological ground of interculturality. The intercultural encounter brings about the interconnectivity and interactivity as a philosophical discourse and a wisdom, a theoretical approach, and a practical realization to strengthen human virtue and to avoid destructive intention of human frailty.

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