

The Nuance of Affirmation

The Epistemological Foundation of Sundanese Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

One who learns and reads Western Philosophy is familiar with the Decartes' proposition '*cogito ergo sum*'. This proposition becomes ontological and epistemological reason of our existence. Nevertheless, one can also explore another reason of existence, not only this Cartesian proposition considered the universal. A nuance of affirmation implied within a local tradition of wisdom can be the other ontological and epistemological reason. Therefore, an exploration the nuance of affirmation in Asian tradition of wisdom is necessarily discovered this alternative reason of existence (1). One can discover such alternative reason from a local worldview and philosophical narration in a local tradition of wisdom (2). This article observes the worldview and philosophical narration of Sundanese people. The observation offers a further interpretation to the Sundanese worldview and philosophical narration. The purpose of this interpretation is to formulate the nuance of affirmation as it is implied in the local system of knowledge. A principle of affirmation is derived from the interpretation of the system of knowledge (3). The interpretation also becomes a further invitation to explore and to find out an intercultural understanding and dialogues of various systems of knowledge (4).

Key Words:

•Principle of affirmation •correlative thinking •Sundanese

worldview • *Tritangtu, Nagara Padang*, intercultural dialogues of knowledge

Dunya sakitu legana, heurinna ngan ku dua jalma, lalaki jeung awewe.
 (“Our vast earth suitably comprises of two: man and woman.”)
 Abah Karmo, The elder and guardian of The Sufi Shrine Nagara Padang

Readers and learners of Western Philosophy acknowledge Cartesian statement “*cogito ergo sum*” as the ontological and epistemological foundation for human being. Despite the fact that many philosophers in the West (Kant, Hegel, Deleuze, Zizek, for instances) have criticized it, the reasonable foundation of our existence prevails. This statement implies the principle of individuation which maintains the individuality of being. The individuality of being has to be secured for the sake of the clarity and distinction of our knowledge of being regardless any cultural contextualization. This implication of the statement, therefore, is presupposed to be the universal foundation of our reason to know our being. The acknowledgement of the universality of this ontological and epistemological foundation is not without a doubt whether it either encompasses or determines the content of our knowledge of being.¹

Those who doubt the universality of the principle of individuation poses a question of an alternative foundation of being instead of the universal principle. An in-depth exploration into a worldview in some cultural setting indicates not only a local cosmology but also a basic concept of existence. This basic conception also signifies an ontological and epistemological foundation. This article is a further interpretation about such ontological and epistemological foundation which is derived from an exploration of the Sundanese wisdom.

If one observes an indigenous wisdom, one can unearth a contextual worldview out of this sagacious knowledge system. Such worldview produces the cosmology and topology of life.² Such a worldview also represents how indigenous people conceive an ontology and to this extent how they perceive life. The indigenous worldview offers us an unique reasoning and apprehension of what the nature of life is, its origin and purpose for each individual and communality.

Such unique reasoning and apprehension in turn explain the tendency of the human mind towards life. The human mind represents the capacity to be sensitive to and aware of individual or communal experiences and activities occurring around a subject. This sensitivity and awareness can be summed

up with the term 'nuance'. This mental disposition projects life as a configuration of its manifestations. This configuration can be perceived at least in two points of view. Firstly, the configuration of all manifestations of life represents life as a singularity. Secondly, the configuration of life is metaphorically a patchwork of the multiplicity that embraces *the presentation* of many³ rather than *the representation* of a singularity. This elaboration will focus on the latter point of view, which explains the nuance of affirmation.

I systemize this essay in three stages of discussion. The first discussion explores living traces of the nuance of affirmation. This nuance can be traced from the wise saying either in an oral transmission or a text. I provide the wise saying of the guardian in the Sufic shrine Nagara Padang, West Java, Indonesia, and the text of the Tao Te Ching, especially chapter 2. The second stage describes the implication of the nuance of affirmation within the sagacious narratives at the Sufic shrine. The sagacious narrative in the Sufic Shrine is a significant instantiation of the Sundanese wisdom. It is significant because the sagacious narrative articulates the Sundanese worldview. The basic conception of the nuance of affirmation lies within the worldview. The last stage of discussion delineates the analysis of a basic conception of the nuance of affirmation as it is implied within the Sundanese worldview. All discussions will end with the invitation to dive into the Sundanese wisdom in order to explicate its contribution for our resolution of problematic issues of humanity.

1. Living traces

One can find the nuance of affirmation mainly in non-Western wisdom. One of the models of sagacious knowledge can be found at the Sufi Shrine Nagara Padang, West Java, Indonesia.⁴ Concerning the nuance of affirmation, the guardian of the shrine once said that it is true that “there is good and bad. Yet one has to carefully understand both. It is better if it is not too good because too much is excessive. Too bad is meaningless. If grains of rice are too many, they are empty. Too good is aimless. Be comprehensive. If it is too low one falls, as well if it is too high. Find this out within. Uncover this inside the body, perform self-management, and be aware of your conscience.”⁵

This quote describes the essential polarized pair, good and bad, as if it were a dualistic ontological worldview. Life comprises of two distinct features and both are kept conjoint. This description demonstrates how one pole avoids prevailing over the other. The hypothetical proposition, “If grains of rice are too good, they are empty,” is associated with a comprehensive mind in maintaining the existence of this dichotomy. If one

side prevails, existence will be unintelligible. In other words, one perceives the existence of the other side and vice versa. A comprehensive standpoint in this case is a precondition so that one perceives neither good nor bad, but both. If one ignores this inclusion of the polarized pair, one will fail to apprehend the deepest sense of this indigenous worldview. Thus, the comprehensive mind, which conceives the connecting pair, explicates a cosmic presentation of being.

In other words, one has to recognize a third substantive feature beside the polarized ones. The term *siger tengab*,⁶ or 'comprehensive awareness', is the third feature, which maintains both sides and simultaneously causes them to correlate. Thus the indigenous topology of existence has a triadic structure: the two polarized subjects and the comprehensive one. If this triadic structure implies power as a precondition, so that this structure can function, one can consider the third feature in this triadic structure as the comprehensive power which connects two other features. Moreover, the third comprehensive feature functions as the middle connecting position. The term *tengab*, or 'middle', connotes this connecting function of the third feature. The term *tengab* in this sense has nothing to do with the centre, which is one of several denotations for the word. If one construes *tengab* as the centre, one falls into a misinterpretation of this phrase.⁷ The idea of centre suggests centrifugal and centripetal characteristics with the authoritative nucleus binding its surroundings dependently to itself. Meanwhile, *tengab* in the Sundanese mind, connotes to the idea of connectivity rather than the establishment of an authoritative position. Another Sundanese term for this nature of connectivity *patalina*,⁸ or 'to correlate' the human being and the universe with the Almighty.

The signification of the terms above reveals the affirmative standpoint, which influences the Sundanese thought on life. Such standpoint postulates the comprehensiveness of connectivity among features in the triadic structure of life. These features are presented in equal positions within the structure.⁹ Each feature, however, performs distinct and unique functions based on its own destiny.¹⁰ The affirmative standpoint also implies a worldview of affirmation, which is the epistemic foundation for the conception the triadic structure.

For others in the world, like the Native Americans and the Pacific islanders, a similar affirmative standpoint towards the life is alive as well. Laurie Anne Whit shows that the American Indians and the Maori people always correlate human beings with non-humans. The life of a human being is interdependent with non-humans.¹¹ In other words, human beings are an

integral part of the universe. They belong to the universe. In this context, a human being presents itself among other manifestations of life. This awareness confirms the idea of biocentrism,¹² which puts life as the comprehensive reason for any manifestation of existence.

This standpoint of the Sundanese, the Native Americans and the Pacific inlanders, suggests the idea of ontological and moral guardianship.¹³ Human have a duty to preserve life. One takes the role of a guardian of any manifestation of life. In short, the preservation of life is a human obligation and responsibility. Ki Laras Maya says that human beings have this obligation as a mandate from the Almighty, that is, to make the Universe perfect, and to transform the universe to glorify and dignify the Almighty.¹⁴

The duty of the preservation of life cannot be performed unless one engages in a reciprocal connectivity.¹⁵ When human beings change a manifestation of life, surrounds simultaneously influence them. This is what is meant by the Sundanese term *patalina*. If one correlates with the Universe and the Almighty, naturally one maintains and manages the world. In turn, the glorification of the universe and the Almighty dignifies human beings. If human beings ignore this reciprocal connectivity and the obligation to preserve life, man will face inconvenient situations in life. Laurie Anne Whit writes about this unfulfilled duty of reciprocity: “Given this reciprocity of relations, however, when country is treated improperly and desecrated, the natural world becomes unbalanced and all within it are affected.”¹⁶

An unbalanced situation experienced by every representation is a natural consequence if this reciprocal correlation is abandoned. Ritual ceremonies and offerings should be done properly in order to restore the reciprocal relationship and connectivity among creatures. By doing this, life is once again preserved. The idea presented in a ritual ceremony of restoring reciprocity is that the existence of polarized features has to be maintained together with the comprehensive one. An imbalance occurs if one of these features prevails over the others. Good does not eliminate bad, and vice versa, since it will lose its significance. This tautological conception becomes a metaphor for a thinking paradigm which postulates the idea of affirmation.

The typical way of thinking also appears in the Chinese classic *Dao De Ching*, chapter 2 verse 2 explains the nuance of affirmation:

*Therefore having and not having arise together
Difficult and easy complement each other
Long and short contrast each other
High and low rest upon each other*

*Voice and sound harmonize each other
Front and back follow one another
Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing,
Teaching no-talking*

Karyn L. Lai, a scholar on Chinese classics, mentions that correlative thinking is the setting of the Chinese mind.¹⁷ This correlative thinking conceives of an associative thought of different, somewhat opposed entities. Such an associative mind articulates the nuance of affirmation. The second verse of the second chapter describes the associated polarized entities. These polarized sides are unintelligible, unless one indicates the third comprehensive character which expresses a correlative thinking. Thus, phrases in the above verse indicate two sufficient logical operations, namely reciprocity and correlative thinking. These operations cause the human mind to be able to conceive correlating sides of these two polarized sides.¹⁸ By this mode of thinking, the Chinese classics explain a unified system of cosmology, which corresponds with a comprehensive awareness of mutual interaction between binary features.¹⁹

The above description of indigenous ontological standpoints demonstrates how the primacy of affirmative thought determines a holistic conception of life. One can uncover that such conception employs specific ideas termed as *comprehensive awareness, correlative thinking or reciprocity, connectivity* and alternatively phrases like 'a part of' and 'belong to'. These terms and phrases not only provide a specific cosmology but also a postulation of the ontology and metaphysics of the One. This postulation represents an ethical approach to an indigenous knowledge of behaviour and conduct, or wisdom.²⁰ The wisdom in this indigenous knowledge implies both pure and practical reason. Yet, before going into detail, I present an overview of how this ontological conception is described in an indigenous sagacious teaching narrative.

2. The living sagacious narratives

One has to approach the sagacious knowledge from the standpoint of an indigenous ontological and ethical conception. Such an *emic* standpoint usually exists in a narrative form. This is also a time for the wise man to teach his audience about wisdom. The teaching narratives can tell about either the life of historical, legendary or mythical heroes, fables, the supernatural like gods and goddesses, or a heroic or sagacious person who is actually the

pilgrim themselves. This kind of teaching narratives explains the origin and purpose of life, which portrays the process of life to be cyclic spiral.

This model of teaching narratives can be found at the Sufi shrine Nagara Padang. The site is located at Gunung Padang or Pasir Pamipiran, near the hamlet of Rawabogo, district of Ciwidey, Regency of Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. At the shrine, it is explained how to be wise. The model employed is a pilgrim as the heroic and sagacious person. The guardian of the site assists a pilgrim so that this individual realizes its own way of life according to what is implied by the teaching narrative. The story, which will be thoroughly explicated in the next section, starts with the initial phase of life, the birth, and continues until the phase of maturity or the Sage. Uniquely, the story does not describe death as the end. The maturity of personhood is the final phase. This final phase, however, is a new beginning of a cyclic spiral of life.

Guardians of the site, who are the storytellers, actually communicate their respective intense reflections and contemplations of life. The guardians themselves live an exemplary life in accordance with their teaching. They become living examples of sagacity. This *emic* interpretation and presentation of life has complementary external factors. These external factors come with the dissemination of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam across the Indonesian Archipelago. This diverse religious heritage has been adapted and even adjusted to the indigenous conception of a sagacious life.²¹ Thus, the *emic* conception of life and the religious heritage assimilated in such a way so that they produce a specific belief about life.

Due to this specific nature, one has to unfold each phase of the cyclic spirals, so that one can investigate the proper meaning derived from each stage of life. The site consists of seventeen stages, which are categorized into three phases of life. The first phase consists of the birth and childhood; the second phase is adulthood, and the last one is maturity or sagacity. This categorization conveys its own basic principles of behaviour. The pilgrim should follow carefully what he has been told. The process of internalisation occurs when the pilgrim also has time to meditate on his life and to contemplate on his life in the future. The guardians will uphold the pilgrim's prayer with complementary praying sessions either at the guardian's house or in a meditation stage. During this praying, the guardian will consult with the ancestors whether the intercessions are granted or refused ceremony. Moreover, the pilgrim has a fortified volition to practise the noble principles of life through daily conduct. The journey home is a realization of sagacious selfhood.

3. The logical formulation for the nuance of affirmation

As mentioned above, the specific belief about life provides a paradigm, which produces some basic conceptions such as the triadic structure of life or *Tritangtu*, the comprehensive worldview, and a comprehensive awareness. These are both ontological, epistemological and ethical theories of life.

The triadic structure of life comprises the self (the human being), the universe and the Almighty. These features or subjects of the structure correlate with each other within and mutually in order to maintain life. This is what is meant by a comprehensive mind. The Sundanese ontological worldview conceives presence of these three features of life. Life does not represent a singular or universal metaphysical presupposition or the One. Life is in its essence and substance plural, consisting of three distinct features. These three features construct a comprehensive moment of becoming one. This comprehensive moment is called *ngahiji*.²² This moment resembles the mystic union that the self correlates with the two other features. Such an experience of unity is also the norm for daily affairs. Thus, the experience of becoming one includes the practical domain, theoretical knowledge, as well as the mystic union. In other words, one can see that the Sundanese depend on this triadic conception when they suggest a better resolution for problematic affairs. One cannot set aside the correlation of the self and others, which in this case, includes human and non-human presentations. This correlation determines which way to take in dealing with daily affairs.

A comprehensive worldview from the Sundanese point of view is essential in theorizing the indigenous affirmative paradigm. The affirmative thinking paradigm employs the correlative thinking as its logical operation. One cannot detach this indigenous worldview from such operation. The correlative thinking functions within three thinking stages:

1. Firstly, the explanation of plurality, which comes from the diversity of presentations.
2. Secondly, the differentiation of distinct subjects, which determines the uniqueness of each presentation. This differentiation of presentation is categorized into two polarized sides, which is necessary to establish the existence of each presentation. Each presentation can neither pervade the others nor be occupied by the others. The notion that the polarized features always remain in their respective position is essential in the Sundanese system of knowledge. A dynamic correlation between them belongs to the third

thinking stage. This is the comprehensive mind, which always finds out ways of correlating these unique features.

3. Thirdly, *papat kalima pancer*,²⁴ this phrase denotes the four compass points, the fifth point or the nucleus and the high noon. The first term, *papat* refers to the four compass points symbolizing the universe or *Mandala*.²⁵ While the two latter, *kalima pancer*, should be read as a compound term. This compound term connotes *tengab*. *Tengab* symbolizes the comprehensive mind conceived by the self. This comprehensive mind shows a correlative thinking for the polarized sides. In other words, *tengab* performs a connecting role, so that the polarized sides are always correlated. In this sense, *tengab* does not denote the centre.

Pancer denotes the high noon. The connotation of the high noon is a moment of illuminating all compass points without any shadow. One can clearly see everything as illuminated by the sun. One can also perceive the landscape as a harmonious composition. This is the explication of the meaning conceived by the guardians. If *tengab* is conjoined with *pancer* then this repeated connotation postulates a comprehensive awareness of the most appropriate to the *emic* interpretation of the term. If one translates *tengab* with centre the comprehensive worldview cannot be unfolded. Moreover, the comprehensive worldview underlies the conception of connectivity when one perceives the universe or the *Mandala*. All compass points are intelligible because they are interlocked by the comprehensive worldview. The connecting middle can be analogized as human awareness or conscience. From the Sundanese standpoint, awareness or conscience should be the proper connotation for *hate*, *batin* or *jiva* in Sundanese lexicon. Pak Undang confirms: "The middle is the one which never lies inside us, or our conscience, our heart."²⁶ If the middle is manifested inside us, this is our soul which never lies; the middle is always like that."²⁷

If the connecting middle or the comprehensive point of view is characterized by connectivity, its analogy, the human conscience and awareness, expresses such quality as well. This analogy connotes a comprehensive conscience and awareness.

The comprehensive awareness is also a constitutive understanding in the term *Pancer* or the high noon. *Pancer* also symbolizes the essence of the Almighty or the supernatural authority.²⁸ Such essence unifies every presentation under its authority. The Almighty connotes the lightening up of the landscape so that it connects the compass points, which

symbolize the unification of life. In this context, explication of the *emic* interpretation of the Almighty supports the idea of the connecting middle or a comprehensive worldview. One can draw an analogy between this quality of connectivity of the Almighty and the quality of human comprehensive awareness.

The three stages of thinking are the basic ontological, ethical and epistemological conceptions. They sum up the nuance of affirmation in three logical steps:²⁹

1. It is the acknowledgement of a diverse manifestation of life. This awareness also signifies the presupposition of multiplicity within *Tritangtu*, the triadic structure of the ontology of Life. The three aspects, human beings, earth and the heavens, are reciprocally experienced inwardly; alternatively, they refer associatively with the interaction of the mind, affection and volition.
2. In this sense, there is an assertion that life always comprises of two distinct and polarized entities and the connectivity or the connecting middle presentation. The assertion is inevitable if one thinks of the diversity of the individual presentations, or of the plural expressions of the One. Moreover, a clear distinction will define a particularity of self-identity. For example, a man is distinct from a woman. A classification is made for the plural presentations. The man occupies one side, the woman the other. The clear distinction of these sides implies the negative logical operation so that contradictions obtain. Only one side is true. Consequently, the prevailing one will synthesize the opposite. This mode of thought has been employed into the logics of identity and the principle of the excluded third.³⁰
3. The three, the two polarized entities and the connecting middle, together explain the model of apposition of the One.³¹ The One, in this sense, implies a diverse manifestation of life. The apposition of the One is the ontological presupposition, which underlies the epistemological and ethical aspects of life. Moreover, the apposition of the dualistic presentations is a comprehensive review. The review is made after the idea that one side clarifies the existence of the other and vice versa. The negative logical operation of the pair does not demonstrate a complete thinking process. The teaching narratives of sagacity on the site prove this comprehensive worldview.

4. Open Ending

The explorative approach concerning the nuance of affirmation shows how the indigenous worldview of life is not merely an alternative. Such worldview has been the paradigm for centuries. I do not approach the topic based on historical data, this is not a historical study. This study is to disclose the human capability to perceive and to conceive a worldview as well as a way of life based on affirmation. This explorative study argues that an analytical approach based on intercultural encounter is necessary.

Globalization has disclosed inevitable dialogues among the members of civilizations. It is impossible to say that there *is* a hierarchy of civilized people. It is unclear which indigenous community can be distinguished as *primitive*, while the other is civilized. A study of the indigenous wisdom indicates an equality among world civilizations. It is, therefore, worthwhile to mention Wim van Binsbergen, a Dutch specialist on Intercultural philosophy. His argument:

“Remarkably, traditional wisdom not only may appear to be complementary to modern technology and science – it may also be argued to be based on parallel and similar modes of thought. And apart from highlighting ancient local forms of competent and efficient interaction with the force of nature, these ancient wisdom traditions must be recognised as empowering peripheral local communities and reducing their vulnerability and dependence vis-à-vis the encroachment of a global capitalist economy and ideology.”³²

This is an invitation to start a dialogue between members of the indigenous philosophies, the North Atlantic model of philosophy and the rest. Such dialogue will consist of interactive comparisons of indigenous' ontological, ethical as well as epistemological theories.

If one could proceed a further dialogue, one will see that both knowledge systems complement each other,³³ and need to be explained by each other. This mutual understanding not only annuls the relativist account of a singularity of a knowledge system, but also the employment of the hegemonic presumption of the knowledge system, that is, only the western model of knowledge represents the truth.

End Notes:

¹ Epistemological and ontological questions concerning universality and its association

- with modes of thought see Wolsterstorff, N. (1970); Horton R. & Finnegan R. (eds.) (1973); Budick S. & Iser, W., (eds.) (1996)
- ² Robert Wessing, "Symbolic Animals in the Land between the Waters, Markers of Place and Transition", *Asian Folklore Studies* 65 (2006): 205-39; Jakob Sumardjo, *Simbol-simbol artefak Budaya Sunda, tafsir-tafsir pantun Sunda* (Bandung: Kelir, 2003).
- ³ Laurie Anne Whitt, "Indigenous Perspective," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jameison (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2002).
- ⁴ For the description of the social and cultural background of the Sufi shrine, see my research report: Stephanus Djunatan, *Pola Rasionalitas dan Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Worldview Budaya Sunda berdasarkan situs Nagara Padang, Gunung Padang, Desa Rawabogo, Kecamatan Ciwidey, Kabupaten Bandung* (Bandung: CCRS FF and LPPM UNPAR, 2008).
- ⁵ Transcription of my interview with Pak Undang see Djunatan, 120; for my English translation see Stephanus Djunatan, "Sunda: The account of Affirmative life, The Mythological Worldview of the Contemplative Site Nagara Padang, West Java, Indonesia", Paper Presented at The 2nd Annual Conference for the International Association for Comparative Mythology (IACM), Ravenstein, the Netherlands, 19 – 21 August 2008), 25.
- ⁶ The term *siger* in Sundanese denotes 'crown' or 'corona', a bright circle in the sky. This denotation symbolizes perfection or dignification of the individual who wears it or who is attached to it. Such bright circle also symbolizes a comprehensive awareness, which enables the mind to conceive a triadic structure of life. For the denotation of the term and its interpretation see RA Danadibrata, *Kamus Basa Sunda* (Bandung: Kiblat, 2006); Jamal Wiratakusumah, "Siger Tengah", *Jalan Politik Sunda?* KOMPAS (26 July 2008); and Djunatan, *Pola Rasionalitas dan Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Worldview Budaya Sunda berdasarkan situs Nagara Padang, Gunung Padang, Desa Rawabogo, Kecamatan Ciwidey, Kabupaten Bandung*.
- ⁷ Current Sundanese scholars always associate *tengah* with the centre. Such interpretation affects an incorrect conception of the nature of life, the human being and the universe. This interpretation agrees with anthropocentrism, the human being as the sole reason for the entire existence. The Sundanese conception of life as the triadic structure of life, however, does not connote anthropocentrism. The Sundanese triadic structure presumes that life itself is the reason for existence, i.e. biocentrism. Cf. Jakob Sumardjo, *Simbol-simbol artefak Budaya Sunda, tafsir-tafsir pantun Sunda* (Bandung: Kelir, 2003); Jakob Sumardjo, *Kbayanah Pantun Sunda, sebuah interpretasi* (Bandung: Kelir, 2006); Anne Whitt, "Indigenous Perspective."
- ⁸ Ki Laras Maya, "Ngama'naan falsafah sarta ajén-inajén kamanusaan Sunda dina nata diri, nata raga keur habirupan" (Bandung: unpublished paper, 2008), 16-7.
- ⁹ The Sundanese term for this equal position is *sapajajaran*, see Danadibrata, *Kamus Basa Sunda*; Djunatan, *Pola Rasionalitas dan Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Worldview Budaya Sunda berdasarkan situs Nagara Padang, Gunung Padang, Desa Rawabogo, Kecamatan Ciwidey, Kabupaten Bandung*.
- ¹⁰ Ki Laras Maya, "Ngama'naan falsafah sarta ajén-inajén kamanusaan Sunda dina nata diri, nata raga keur habirupan;" also Pak Undang's standpoint in Djunatan, *Pola Rasionalitas dan Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Worldview Budaya Sunda berdasarkan situs Nagara Padang, Gunung Padang, Desa Rawabogo, Kecamatan Ciwidey, Kabupaten Bandung*.
- ¹¹ Anne Whitt, "Indigenous Perspective."

- ¹² Definition of biocentrism: “the life in all its manifestations has ends in itself or intrinsic value,” see Andrew Brennan and Yeuk-Sze Lo in <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/>.
- ¹³ Anne Whitt, “Indigenous Perspective;” Ki Laras Maya, “*Ngama'naan falsafah sarta ajén-inajén kamanusaan Sunda dina nata diri, nata raga keur babirupan.*”
- ¹⁴ Ki Laras Maya, 25
- ¹⁵ Anne Whitt, “Indigenous Perspective,” 10.
- ¹⁶ Anne Whit 200, 11.
- ¹⁷ Karyn L. Lai, “Classical China,” in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jamieson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2002), 22.
- ¹⁸ Karyn L. Lai, 22.
- ¹⁹ Karyn L. Lai; Robert Wessing, “Spirits of the Earth and Spirits of the Water: Chthonic Forces in the Mountains of West Java,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 47 (1988): 43-61.
- ²⁰ The *emic* approach coins with the *etic* one. The *emic* approach is the way internal agents think of or critically reflect on cultural aspects; whereas the *etic* approach is an exploration conducted by external agents or outsiders into indigenous cultural aspects. See the entries *emic* and *etic* in Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, eds., *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1996). For the employment of these anthropological terms in a philosophical account see chapter 15 Wim van Binsbergen, *Intercultural Encounters* (Berlin: Lit, 2003).
- ²¹ Rachmat Subagya, *Agama dan Alam Kerohanian Asli di Indonesia* (Jakarta: CLC, 1979), 22ff.
- ²² Ki Laras Maya, “*Ngama'naan falsafah sarta ajén-inajén kamanusaan Sunda dina nata diri, nata raga keur babirupan.*” and the transcript of my interview with Pak Undang in Djunatan, *Pola Rasionalitas dan Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Worldview Budaya Sunda berdasarkan situs Nagara Padang, Gunung Padang, Desa Rawabogo, Kecamatan Civatey, Kabupaten Bandung.*
- ²³ Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa, Transformasi tassawuf Islam ke Mistik Jawa*, (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 1996).
- ²⁴ This phrase is one of the meditative keywords in the shrine Nagara Padang for a pilgrim. Meditating on this phrase will lead a pilgrim's awareness to honour and dignify the universe and the Almighty. The dignification of both features in the triadic structure of life is equivalent to dignifying human beings. See Pak Undang in Djunatan, *Pola Rasionalitas dan Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Worldview Budaya Sunda berdasarkan situs Nagara Padang, Gunung Padang, Desa Rawabogo, Kecamatan Civatey, Kabupaten Bandung*, 130
- ²⁵ Jakob Sumardjo, *Simbol-simbol artefak Budaya Sunda, tafsir-tafsir pantun Sunda* (Bandung: Kelir, 2003), 5ff.
- ²⁶ Interview with Pak Undang in Djunatan, *Pola Rasionalitas dan Sistem Pengetahuan dalam Worldview Budaya Sunda berdasarkan situs Nagara Padang, Gunung Padang, Desa Rawabogo, Kecamatan Civatey, Kabupaten Bandung*, 130. My translation.
- ²⁷ Interview with Pak Undang in Djunatan, 136.
- ²⁸ The supernatural authority in Sundanese tradition is called *Gusti*. This term is not the same as the God in Judaism. The term *Gusti* is abbreviated from *Gens ti ditu na* or 'As it is in itself'. See Djunatan, 41.
- ²⁹ Stephanus Djunatan, “Sunda: The account of Affirmative life, The Mythological Worldview of the Contemplative Site Nagara Padang, West Java, Indonesia”, Paper

- Presented at The 2nd Annual Conference for the International Association for Comparative Mythology (IACM), Ravenstein, the Netherlands, 19 – 21 August 2008, 25
- ³⁰ Wim van Binsbergen, “Expression of Traditional wisdom from Africa and beyond: An exploration in intercultural epistemology,” presented as keynote address at the International Symposium 'Expressions of tradition wisdom', The Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences, The Royal museum for Central Africa and The Royal Museums of Art and History, Friday 28 September 2007, Palais des Academies, Brussel, Belgium, 13, 30.
- ³¹ Fung Yu Lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1 (New Jersey: Princeton, 1969), 31.
- ³² Van Binsbergen, “Expression of Traditional wisdom from Africa and beyond: An exploration in intercultural epistemology,” 4.
- ³³ Dao De Ching, chapter 2.

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