

Paper Type: Original Article

Resolving the Paradoxism with the Logic of "Not" in Javanese Puppetry: A Re-reading of Wrekodoro and Dewaruci's Mythology

Victor Christianto¹  and Florentin Smarandache^{2*} 

¹ Malang Institute of Agriculture, East Java, Indonesia; victorchristianto@gmail.com.

² University of New Mexico, Mathematics, Physics and Natural Sciences Division 705 Gurley Ave., Gallup, NM 87301, USA; smarand@unm.edu.

Received: 01 Mar 2024

Revised: 31 May 2024

Accepted: 27 Jun 2024

Published: 29 Jun 2024

Abstract

There are a large number of text collections in Indonesia, related to wayang theme, cf Zoetmulder (1971). And the text collections do not consist only of wayang purwa but also variations of this theme, including wayang wahyu etc. In the mean time, a Japanese scholar Shoshichi Nagatomo proposed the concept of "Asian Logic" which differs from Western logic. In Western thought, things are often seen as black or white, good or bad. However, Asian logic embraces certain degree of ambiguity. Here, "good" characters can exhibit flaws, and "bad" characters can possess redeeming qualities; especially among Javanese people preference is given more to harmony with others and with Nature (called "serasi" or "cocok"). This concept resonates with the Javanese philosophy of "ngono yo ngono neng ojo ngono" (note: the phrase can be translated: "you can do what you like, but you should not to" – as in paradoxism). This philosophy can be considered as embodiment of the logic of "not," acknowledging the contradictory multifaceted nature of reality. This review article is a follow up to our previous articles [1, 12, 13].

Keywords: Paradoxism, Logic, Philosophy, Javanese Puppetry.

1 | Introduction

Puppetry, or Wayang in Javanese, transcends mere entertainment. These intricate figures serve as a guiding light for the Javanese community, depicting the path to a noble life. There are a large number of text collections in Indonesia, related to wayang theme [4]. And the text collections do not consist only of wayang purwa, but also variations of theme such as wayang wahyu etc.

In recent times, Wayang has even become a popular metaphor for social and political figures in Indonesia. This article delves deeper, exploring how Wayang stories, particularly those featuring conflicts between protagonists and antagonists in the Mahabharata epic, can be interpreted as a manifestation of Javanese logic, or the logic of "not."

If the story of "Dewaruci" is known during the Late Majapahit period, the things described by Dewaruci to Wrekodoro (Bhima) are likely to be related with the religion that developed at that time, namely the



Corresponding Author: smarand@unm.edu



<https://doi.org/10.61356/j.scin.2024.1318>



Licensee SciNexuses. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>).

Śaiwasiddhanta religion, whose teachings can be known from the Tukur books. Speak the oldest is Bhuwanakosa comes from during the reign of King Siṅḍok in the 10th century. In the book of Speech, knowledge is taught Śiwa religion which is centered on sacred knowledge and proper knowledge of emptiness (sūnya) which is called by various names, including Paramaśiwa, Parameśwara, Mahadeva Shiva; cf. [2, 5].

1.1 | Nagatomo's Notion of Asian Logic

Japanese scholar Shoshichi Nagatomo proposed the concept of "Asian Logic," which differs from Western logic [1]. In Western thought, things are often seen as black or white, good or bad. However, Asian logic embraces ambiguity. Here, "good" characters can exhibit flaws, and "bad" characters can possess redeeming qualities. This concept resonates with the Javanese philosophy of "ngono yo ngono neng ojo ngono" (note: the phrase can be translated: "you can do what you like, but you should not to" – as in paradoxism). This philosophy embodies the logic of "not," acknowledging the multifaceted nature of reality.

Considering the above wayang tradition in Southeast Asia, this logic of "not" is not an absence of logic, but rather a different form of reasoning. It emphasizes the importance of intuition, symbolism, and a deeper understanding of the universe. Through the fantastical elements in Wayang, Javanese audiences glean valuable life lessons and explore the complexities of human nature.

1.2 | The Myth of Wrekodoro and Dewaruci: A Realm Beyond the Scientific

The story of Wrekodoro encountering the Dewaruci exemplifies this logic. Wrekodoro, a Pandava protagonist known for his immense strength, shrinks himself and enters Dewaruci's ear after deep philosophical conversations. Scientifically, this feat seems impossible. However, within the framework of Wayang, the logic resides in the realm of the spiritual or the "not." Here, the story transcends the physical world and delves into the symbolic, where Bima's journey represents overcoming inner challenges [2, 5].

Moreover, that encounter with the Divine – if we interpret the myth not only just as a myth of the past but to represent how ancient Javanese people have longed for eternity in their hearts, cf. D. Richardson [3]– can be re-read as how spiritual people in ancient Java considered union with God the Almighty as one of the highest virtue in their life, symbolized with tirta prawitasani (the sought-after living water in that story). In other words, we can also interpret with the more recent book of Sir D. Hawkins, *Power vs Force*, that by encountering God Almighty, Bima who was known as a really brave knight, has been turned upside down in his worldview, and then become transformed into a higher level of conscious awareness. Or, provided we follow the levels of consciousness as depicted in Hawkins' diagram, perhaps he was able to move up from around 200 scales (associated with bravery) to 500 in scale or maybe higher.

We all know that one of the mysteries of consciousness study if we read the *Power vs Force* book, is how to move up to a higher scale of consciousness. And even with a hidden message in that wayang mythology which was characteristic of Javanese cosmogony, we can learn that to be in another state of conscious awareness, we need help and encounter with God the Almighty, and rarely such an improved state of awareness can be done by that person alone. Interestingly, studies also seem to support that spiritually growing people are more likely to be much better either on the scale of EQ (emotional quotient) or AQ (adversity quotient). That would be another topic to be discussed on other occasions.

1.3 | The Art of Softened Criticism: Humor in Javanese Puppetry

Let us analyze in a bit the context of "ngono yo ngono neng ojo ngono" (which seems to imply that even if someone tries to dispute something, it should be done more politely). In the Javanese puppet tradition, there are known figures who do not belong to the Satria (knights) or Raksesa (giants) but are called Punakawan, who play the role of comedians. They can offer criticism of social conditions that happen in the village or town where the puppet drama is displayed, but it is done in a satiric and humorous way by the Dhalang (puppeteer) cf. [2, 4-5].

This concept of softened criticism through humor is a fascinating aspect of Javanese culture. It highlights the importance of maintaining social harmony even when addressing sensitive issues. Here's a closer look at how this works:

- **The Power of Punakawan:** The Punakawan characters, with their witty remarks and slapstick humor, act as a social commentary device. They can poke fun at human behavior, societal norms, or even political situations.
- **Satire with a Smile:** The humor employed by the Dalang is often satirical. By using jokes and puns, the Dalang can convey critical messages in a way that is more palatable for the audience. People are more receptive to criticism when it's delivered in a lighthearted manner.
- **Indirect Commentary:** The beauty of this approach lies in its indirectness. The audience is left to interpret the underlying message within the humor. This allows for a deeper impact as people can come to their conclusions.

This approach to criticism is not unique to Javanese puppetry. We see similar methods employed by comedians and satirists around the world. By using humor to soften the message, these figures can make important points without causing offense or social disruption.

Put in another way, the Javanese concept of "ngono yo ngono neng ojo ngono" and the role of Punakawan characters in puppetry offers valuable lessons in delivering criticism. By using humor and satire, we can create a space for constructive dialogue and positive change, all while maintaining social harmony.

At this point, it appears quite interesting to compare the role and methods played by Punakawan in folk puppet shows with, for instance, paradoxism both as avant-garde art and also a social movement in Romania, especially during the 1980s, we discuss this topic in the next section.

2 | Discussion

2.1 | Paradoxism as Social Movement Against Totalitarianism, and All That

The definition of paradoxism (pă`r`ã`dõks`iz`m) is as given below:

- n 1** An avant-garde movement in literature, art, and philosophy, based on excessive used of . . . antitheses, antinomies, contradictions, oxymorons, and paradoxes.¹

A more complete definition is described as follows: "PARADOXISM is an avant-garde movement in literature, art, philosophy, science, based on excessive used of antitheses, antinomies, contradictions, parables, paraphrases, odds, anti-clichés, deviations of senses, parodies of proverbs and aphorisms, against-the-grain speech, upside-down interpretations, nonsense, paradoxes, semi-paradoxes in creations. Paradoxism tries to find common parts to apparently uncommon things in any human field. It was set up by one of us (FS) around 1980s."²

Its origin came from suppression and totalitarianism during the socialist regime in Romania back then, and it has been discussed in [12]. What's interesting here, is that we can hypothesize that paradoxism was a mixture of brave grassroots movement along with neutrality and thinking, then the movement can be considered to belong to Hawkins's scale of consciousness ranging from 200 (brave). 250 (neutrality) up to 400 something (scale for thinking).

Provided such an interpretation is closer to true to the past background of the movement, then it can be considered a step higher to a scale of consciousness compared to the average scale of consciousness according

¹ Source: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/paradoxism>.

² Source <https://fs.unm.edu/a/paradoxism-en.htm>.

to D. Hawkins, somewhere around 190. But it seems unlikely that even with such avant-garde art and literary books they can bring the majority of people to higher than that, which seems clear to the quite stagnant period over the years especially in Romania (of course, this is by no means to be a disregard to what has happened to Romania people in common at the time).

Similarly, in Javanese cosmogony, the union between Divinity and humans becomes the essence of aspiration, which Prof Zoetmulder, called the seven steps to becoming Perfect Man, as martabat [4]. The pinnacle of the seven steps is called “manunggaling kawula lan Gusti” or perhaps better termed as unio mystica. In our reading, while it can be argued otherwise, we can consider that such an unio mystica phase of spirituality can be compared to Hawkins’ scale of around 600 or higher in his map of consciousness.

What is not so obvious, both in Hawkins and also Javanese nondual unity with the Divine inside humans (God-indwelling in humans), is how to achieve such a highest scale of consciousness. That seems to be a great problem with all kinds of gnosis teachings, i.e. the role of Teacher of Righteousness even if one encounter with such a great teacher may be not so helpful (cf. if we compare it with the term from Qumran scrolls, term such as Teacher of Righteousness). Prayer and meditations are of course quite helpful, but not yet sufficient to improve our phase of spirituality, except when we encounter the Divine, with God Almighty Himself [6, 8, 10].

That is what Christianity may offer a hint, that to achieve higher in the scale of consciousness, just another perfect knowledge or gnosis is not sufficient, even if for instance we learn properly The Gospel of Thomas [10]. That is because spiritual inertia that we know as sins are unavoidable (as St Paul admitted it in his Letter to Romans chapter 7).

Therefore, enlightenment is more than just accepting the hidden knowledge or sudden inspiration to the “correct” hermeneutics of the texts or Nature[14], but to encounter and embrace the grace of God Himself, given through Jesus the Son of God, and then permit the Holy Spirit to guide him/her in daily and gradual process to higher consciousness scale.

Because at the end of the day, the awareness of humanity cannot be separated from the ruach and nephesh of God Almighty, which God has given to all humans since their birth [7, 9]. That seems to us to be deficiencies of the map of consciousness as a spiritual ladder as described by D. Hawkins (note: it appears he is more inclined toward Hinduism or Buddhism’s meaning of enlightenment and Nirvana.)

We do hope that this small comparison section among different approaches to hidden knowledge, from Javanese puppet shows (wayang) to teachings such as D. Hawkins will not bring more obstacles to any reader in his/her pursuit of the True Creator, that is God Almighty, the Creator of Heavens and Earth.

3 | Concluding Remark

Javanese puppetry offers a unique perspective on logic, one that embraces the concept of “not.” By delving into stories like Wrekodoro and Dewaruci, we gain a deeper appreciation for Javanese philosophy and its approach to understanding the world. This exploration not only enriches our understanding of Javanese culture but also broadens our perception of logic itself.

Therefore, enlightenment is more than just accepting the hidden knowledge or sudden inspiration to the “correct” hermeneutics of the texts or Nature [14], but to encounter and embrace the grace of God Himself, given through Jesus the Son of God, and then permit the Holy Spirit to guide him/her in daily and gradual process to higher consciousness scale.

We do hope that this small comparison section among different approaches to hidden knowledge, from Javanese puppet shows (wayang) to teachings such as D. Hawkins will not put more obstacles to any reader in his/her pursuit of the True Supreme Creator, that is God Almighty the Creator of Heavens and Earth.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to the editorial and reviewers, as well as the correspondent author, who offered assistance in the form of advice, assessment, and checking during the study period.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this work.

Funding

This research has no funding source.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to the privacy-preserving nature of the data but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the research.

Ethical Approval

This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

References

- [1] F. Smarandache & V. Christianto. Beyond Negation and Excluded Middle: An exploration to Embrace the Otherness Beyond Classical Logic System and into Neutrosophic Logic. PAMDA Vol. 2 no. 2 (2024) <https://www.americaspj.com/articledlist/34/480/359>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54216/PAMDA.020204>
- [2] S. Subiyantoro, K. Kristiani, Y. S. Wijaya. Javanese Cultural Paradoxism: A Visual Semiotics Study on Wayang Purwa Characters of Satria and Raseksa Figures. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education* 20 (1) (2020), 19-28. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v20i1.17525>.
- [3] D. Richardson, Eternity in their hearts. (2010) https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Eternity_in_Their_Hearts.html?id=mtNB3XSu014C&redir_esc=y
- [4] P.J. Zoetmulder. *The wajang as a philosophy theme* (1971).
- [5] Hariani Santiko. BHIMA DAN TOYA PAWITRA DALAM CERITA "DEWA RUCI". *AMERTA, Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengembangan Arkeologi* Vol. 35 No. 2, Desember 2017 : 75-148.
- [6] K. Koyama. *50 meditations*. Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1975.
- [7] W. Hildebrandt. *An old testament Theology of the Spirit of God*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Ltd., 1995
- [8] C.S. Song. *Sebutkanlah nama-nama kami*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993.
- [9] C.S. Keener. *Spirit Hermeneutics*. East Java: Penerbit Gandum Mas, 2022.
- [10] J-Y. LeDoup. *The Gospel of Thomas foreword by Jacob Needleman*. Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 2005.
- [11] CharlieLe editor, *paradoxism – the Last Literary, Artistic, Philosophic and Scientific Vanguard of the Second Millennium*, 1980, <https://fs.unm.edu/a/paradoxism-en.htm>.
- [12] V. Christianto & F. Smarandache. The paradoxist movement, precursor of Neutrosophy. *NOIS J*, Vol. 2 (2024).
- [13] V. Christianto & F. Smarandache. An evidence-based approach to set theory paradoxism. *Neutrosophic Sets and Systems*, 2024, 64, p. 91-95.
- [14] V. Christianto. *Hermeneutik tanpa Hermes*. Jakarta: Bina Warga, 2022.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The perspectives, opinions, and data shared in all publications are the sole responsibility of the individual authors and contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Sciences Force or the editorial team. Sciences Force and the editorial team disclaim any liability for potential harm to individuals or property resulting from the ideas, methods, instructions, or products referenced in the content.