

Dark Side of Art Development: Reflection on Indonesian Art

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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good evening.

It is an honor for me to speak here at Lasalle College. I have known the College since the early 1990s, and every return visit is always a delight and a revelation. It is gratifying to witness every change turn into progress. Therefore, I would like to thank Lasalle College for this honor, especially Professor Yvonne Spielmann, who I know is currently writing a book on Indonesian art. As well as to Jeffrey Say and Wulan Dirgantoro who have worked tirelessly to ensure the event's success. Finally, to everyone here today, I am very grateful for your presence. I hope that what I will be sharing today can be useful in any way.

Distinguished guests,

My presentation today is the culmination of a lifetime project that has been a great part of my life for almost 40 years. After all this time, I have come to realize that this lifetime project is hinged upon a phenomenology whose boundaries must be loosened. This lifetime project is my attempt to build a subjective consciousness about a particular reality that is connected to a collective consciousness. This phenomenological approach has distanced my thinking from ontology that studies reality in an objective way, and that allows empirical examination to build understanding. However, the phenomenon encountered within this lifetime project can be put in parallel with a particular phenomenon found in ontology that resulted in the question “what is art?”

For me, this question came from my experience as an art student at the Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology from 1970. The first year in college is usually a time when new students demonstrate their introductory-level knowledge about their chosen fields based on what they receive in their first lectures. Friends from other faculties were able to describe their respective fields of study—what is architecture, what is industrial technology, what is civil engineering, and so forth. I was the only one in this group who struggled to explain what I was learning, or its uses, or how it would benefit general society.

I was drawn to study art because I had been acquainted with it when I was younger, through the Western art masterpieces that I saw in popular art books. I was raised in an environment that did not interact with any sort of ethnic traditions. Thus, even if I tried, I wouldn't have been able to act like the Javanese or Balinese children who naturally absorbed the ability to create paper puppets as toys, to play the *gamelan*, or to help the adults make objects for traditional ceremonies. These children never saw the need to question artistic expressions in cultural activities because they seem to have an instinctive knowledge of it.

I couldn't find the answer to explain what sort of art practice I was studying, even after I graduated. The knowledge that I had received in college was constantly overshadowed by doubt, leaving many questions unanswered. No amount of instruction could tell me how this art practice could benefit society. Or why this sort of art practice could not enjoy the same infrastructures as those enjoyed by the customs that form the basis of traditional artistic expressions. Or why this art practice was isolated from social life. Or why we often hear people complain of not understanding the expressions found in this art practice.

Much later, I realized that I had been questioning the fundamentals of art practice in Indonesia. Personally, I believe that we cannot blindly accept Western fundamentals of art practice as the fundamentals of art practice in Indonesia. In terms of phenomenology, this belief serves as my attempt to resolve the “intentionality” or “aboutness” of the object of my thoughts, that is: art practice in Indonesia as a reality.

Today, there is almost no unknown reality. There is almost no reality that can be presented to us as though a blank piece of paper, still waiting for people to write down their hypothesis. Most of the realities we face

today are like pieces of paper already filled with writing, with no space left to add anything.¹ This is also true for art practice as reality. An understanding of it is no longer created through encounters with art practice, as activities, and the resultant artworks. Our understanding cannot be separated from understandings that have been formed by art history, philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of art, art theories, and art discourses.

The reality of art practice in Indonesia is not an exception. However, that proverbial paper about the reality of Indonesian art practice is actually filled with theories, art histories, viewpoints, and art discourses that came from the West—developed across time, from modern art to contemporary art era—that no longer question art fundamentals because they are thought to be instinctive. But, because art fundamentals have never been questioned in Indonesia, they are not generally known or understood. Neither do we have other fundamentals as 'proper' alternatives. An activity devoid of fundamentals is an ambiguous activity, and as such, discussions about this activity become ambiguous as well. Therefore, it is quite possible that the reality of art practice in Indonesia is, in fact, a blank piece of paper.

My thinking on the fundamentals of art practice in Indonesia is my attempt to answer this problem. It is truly not a reexamination of art history and its various attendant theories in order to gain an understanding about overlooked art fundamentals. By examining diverse veins of developmental history, I am actually trying to not let myself be swept away by Western contexts. You can say that I am attempting an unconventional reading. I am using Western ideas not as quotable statements, but as materials to stimulate an awareness of the fundamentals of art practice in Indonesia.

Even when I was still trying to determine the “aboutness” of my thoughts, I was aware about how art-making in Indonesia develops in parallel with art-making in various parts of the world. The spread of Western-influenced art-making has formed the basis of how the world views world art, international art, and most recently, global art. When I joined the Asian contemporary art forums in Australia and Japan during the 1990s, I discovered this awareness as reality. I felt that the issue of the fundamentals of art practice was also present in many Asian countries. So, I began to expand the scope of my thinking. This similarity allowed me to find connections within the collective consciousness of art practice in Asia, and even in other non-Western parts of the world.

Honored guests,

The first sort of consciousness that emerged in my mind was regarding the disconnect between art-making and artistic expressions in ethnic traditions. It was sparked by knowing that among the 500 languages used by the 250 ethnic groups in Indonesia, there exists no suitable equivalent to the Indonesian word *seni*. Although rooted in the Malay language, the Indonesian language is a modern language that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, there are new Indonesian words to refer to the various aspects of modern life that are not present in the Malay language. Among them is *seni* as a translation of the English word *art*.

This does not mean that the translation happened at the beginning of the 20th century. I have traced the genealogy of “*seni*” back to the term “*kagunan*” that appeared in the 19th century. This term can be found in the dictionary of High Javanese Language, *Baoesastra Jawa*, and has a clear definition.² From a linguistic point of view, we can observe similarities in the terminological constructions of the Javanese *kagunan* and the Ancient Greek *mousikê technê*. As we know, this Ancient Greek term is the basis of the modern English terminology, “art”.³

In the 19th century, the term *kagunan* was already an object of some debate. We could see an example of such debates in the work of the Javanese poet and scholar, Ronggowarsito (1802-1873).⁴ Today, Ronggowarsito is recognized for his role in the development of Javanology, and is considered a pioneer of modern Javanese literature. As a philosopher, he took and adapted many Western ideas but remained critical about Western

culture. He famously turned down the Dutch's offer to be professor of Leiden University's Department of Javanology. His stance is apparent when we consider his critical comments regarding the term *kagunan* as something adapted from Western culture. Although we don't have an overlong explanation of this issue, in my opinion, Ronggowarsito's views played an important role in the construction of the definition of *kagunan*, which would later be reflected in the definition of the word *seni*. The 'art phenomenon' found within these two definitions can be understood as a sensibility, or a human mental capacity that connects the beauty of expression with goodness, eminence, and morality. But not with the truth.

So, we can conclude that the term *seni* was not born from any of the ethnic traditions in Indonesia. Instead, it was created to define art-making based on Western perceptions. The connection between the terms *seni* and *kagunan* shows that, in the 19th century, there might already be attempts to adapt a kind of art-making that would later form the foundation of art practice in Indonesia.

There are other indicators to strengthen this hypothesis. In 1979, the Dutch Royal Family returned a painting created by Raden Saleh in 1858 to the people of Indonesia. It shows the arrest of Pangeran Diponegoro, leader of the rebellion that led to the Java War (1825-1830). At first, the painting's return did not spark any issues, because at that time (at the end of the 1970s) they were still debating whether Raden Saleh (1807 – 1880) could be considered as an Indonesian painter. Only at the beginning of 1990s that the painting began to draw much attention, thanks to a research done by the German anthropologist Werner Kraus. Many new facts surfaced thanks to this research, and most importantly, we now know of Raden Saleh's critical attitude toward the Dutch colonial government.⁵

Based on this new research, the painting of Diponegoro's arrest finally 'reveals' Raden Saleh's hidden criticisms against the unfair politics and foul actions conducted by the Dutch military to capture Pangeran Diponegoro. These criticisms become even more apparent if we compare Raden Saleh's painting to the 'official' painting to commemorate the capture, created by Dutch painter Nicolaas Pieneman. Raden Saleh was trying to uncover the falsehoods in the official painting by using his own work as comparison.⁶

Using this painting, we can also unlock the meanings in Raden Saleh's other paintings. Recurring themes—the battle-like confrontation between hunter and prey, tigers wrestling buffaloes, the mortal fight between men and lions—can be seen to symbolize the fight between two forces facing off in a dance of life and death. These themes reflect the conflict between the colonized and their oppressors.

Raden Saleh lived in Europe for 22 years, because he was repeatedly barred from returning to the Dutch East-Indies, his motherland. The Indies Council (Raad van Indie) viewed Raden Saleh as too Westernized in his thinking. The Dutch colonial government was worried that he would disseminate liberal thinking in the colonies (the Dutch East-Indies), thus sparking even more rebellion.⁷ They had valid concerns. From history, we know that 19th century Europe and her colonies were mired in various social unrests and bloody revolutions. These events were influenced by a shift in mindset among the elites, who finally realized that centuries of feudal rule only led to the suffering of masses.

One of the ideas that influenced this shift belonged to the German philosopher GWF Hegel (1770- 1831). In 1821, Hegel published his *philosophy of rights*, which was an expansion of his famous treatise on the phenomenology of spirit. Here, he discussed the mutual nature of people's rights and freedoms, in that they must be mutually beneficial. This mutual nature would only emerge if individuals have equal standing in their social relationships. This condition cannot exist in a master-servant, ruler-subject, or colonizer-colonized relationships.⁸

And so Raden Saleh, like GWF Hegel, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, or John Stuart Mill could be considered as

part of an elite group that ideologically validated the people's rebellion against feudalism's repressive rule. These yet-to-be-examined indicators have made me aware that the adaptation of art-making in Indonesia cannot be seen as mere cultural phenomenon, which is the dominant view today. This adaptation must also be seen as a result of the socio-political phenomenon of the 19th century that had affected global change.

Viewing this adaptation as purely a cultural phenomenon—that led to, amongst others, the East-West dichotomy—only serves to create numerous unanswered questions. It makes more sense to view it as a socio-political phenomenon, because we can put it in parallel with the adaptation of modern ideas in colonized regions that sparked nationalism, the desire for independence, various political movements, and even a state system. It is clear that these adapted, modern ideas began in the West. It appeared in Indonesia at the start of the 20th century. The founding of Persagi in 1938—the Artists' Union that carried Soedjojono's nationalistic banner—could not be separated from the larger nationalist movement.

Although Raden Saleh led a life influenced by Javanese tradition, we will not find anything to indicate that he was adapting Western culture into Javanese culture. Both technically and stylistically, his paintings clearly adhere to Western Romanticism. To me, these indicators show that the artistic expressions of ethnic traditions cannot convey expressions that are more critical in nature. Thus, when modern thinking spread around the world in the 19th century, artists like Raden Saleh found themselves compelled to express their critical views on social justice through art-making as their only media.

This can be explained through the treatise that Hegel made in 1807. Hegel's phenomenology of spirit examines the evolution of human consciousness concerning the spirit, by looking at art, religion, and philosophy. Hegel argued that art is a vehicle for the spirit to show various manifestations related to religion and philosophy. In this evolution, there was a forceful upheaval in the metaphysical realm occupied by art, the spirit, religion, and philosophy. It led to a shift where art and the spirit—previously ruled by religion—began to move toward philosophy and human rationale. It allowed art to free itself from religion, and to finally gain the ability to question reality, including social reality.

These sorts of breakthrough happened only in the West. The freeing of art from under religious influence cannot be found in the artistic expressions of any ethnic traditions elsewhere in the world. Artistic expressions in ethnic traditions always celebrate collective values that are, more or less, based on religion. In these sorts of artistic expressions, there is no space to show subversive expressions.

This research has enlightened me, and I no longer hesitate to use the term “Indonesian art” to refer to the *art practice based on the Western sense* in Indonesia, whose emergence was induced by a process of adaptation with sensible reasons. I no longer hesitate to state that “Indonesian art” is not necessarily rooted in the artistic expressions of ethnic traditions.

Although it had yet to be formulated clearly, this consciousness formed the basis of my thoughts on multimodernism in 1996, as a reaction to multiculturalism. I know that the term ‘multiculturalism’, as employed by Lucy Lippard, actually refers to the basis of a movement by American artists of color to face up against white dominance. I am not opposed to this view, but I am concerned about the idea of expanding multiculturalism to world scope. Even then, I already knew that it would be impossible to position the artistic expressions of ethnic traditions as a replacement for art-making. Basically, multimodernism was an attempt to show that *art in a Western sense* is the common ground of art on a world-stage, even though we do need to realize the diversity within art-making itself.⁹

Ladies and gentlemen,

So far Hegel's thoughts in my presentation are pieces that I have unconventionally read to find explanations for the adaptation of art-making outside of the Western world. I admit that this sort of reading can feel

paradoxical, because the explanations show that adaptation occurred not due to the acceptance of art fundamentals in a Western sense—that is, fundamentals that were also founded upon Hegel's thoughts. I am aware that I cannot fully avoid this paradox now that I am about to critically discuss the adaptation of Hegel's thoughts.

Hegel accented his *phenomenology of spirit* by examining art history as formulated by Giorgio Vasari in the 16th century. By the 19th century, art history was recognized as scientific knowledge. Based on this art history, Hegel saw that the evolution of human consciousness about the spirit had three distinct stages: the symbolic, classic, and romantic stages.

Hegel considered the art expressions in these three stages as demonstrating a religious sphere. On the one hand is perception that celebrates nature as a symbol of eternity; on the other hand is the individual mind with God as object. The interaction between the two would show a spiritual consciousness in the relationship with God. However, in the romantic stage—reflected in art history as English naturalism and romanticism—Hegel found the beginnings of doubt, where man began to question the ability of spiritual institutions to explain the spirit. The end of the romantic stage marked the end of art expressions within a religious sphere. Hegel called it 'the end of art'.

Thus, *art after the end of art*, in Hegel's view, is art practice that believes in *art for art's sake*, where art no longer questions its capacity to serve religion, only its own capacity for itself. *Art after the end of art* indicates an awareness that spirit resides in the human mind. Here, art expression is no longer bound by perceptions that celebrate nature as a guide for truth. Art expression, according to Hegel, demonstrates a higher level of creation than nature. Its underlying individual mind is self-manifestation that serves as the source of consciousness, feelings, and perceptions that seek absolute truth in reality and nature.

In a completely different context, I wish to once again state that this ideological breakthrough only occurred in the West, bound to Western history. We know that naturalism and romanticism in art history —marking the romantic period In the Hegelian sense—show melancholic expressions as a result of being under a totalitarian rule that persisted in Europe since the Dark Ages, maintained through a collusion between the church, aristocrats, feudal lords, the military, and landowners.

An examination by the philosopher William James (1842-1910) provided the background explanation for the melancholic expressions found in English naturalism and romanticism. William James examined the phenomenon of mysticism that had spread through the destitute lower-classes at that time. Mysticism reflects one's attempt to seek a direct connection with God outside of religion. At the time, it was sparked by depression-induced melancholy, as a person attempted to live a life of virtue as prescribed by religion. It reflected a general malaise due to poverty, augmented by one's fear of sin and hell. William James noted that 19th century medical knowledge regarded mysticism as a pathological symptom. Meanwhile, atheism that appeared around the same time saw mysticism as morality that represents nothing. Friedrich Nietzsche called practitioners of mysticism as people without vitality.¹⁰

These indicators relate back to Hegel's thoughts that showed a critical attitude toward religion and an attempt to seek breakthroughs in order to confront the undeniably cruel consequences of authoritarian rule faced by the lower classes. Hegel managed to create a new development; though he was not the only one to do so. This sort of societal development could not be found outside of the Western world. Although there are other examples where alliances between the Crown and Religion can lead to power, there are no concrete proof that these alliances lead to totalitarian rule that inflicts centuries of misery and misfortune on their subjects. Thus, in the context of world civilization, Western societal development can be considered an anomaly.

The social dimension in the development of Western societies meant that such developments cannot be fully

regarded as “cultural development”. Hellenistic culture, as introduced by the elites, was actually denounced because it was viewed as immoral, especially with its excessive display of wealth. However, art development became one of the important indicators of societal development because of its integration into Hegel’s ideas. Thus the development of Western society was marked with the emergence of individual consciousness, progress in thinking due to a change in how people perceive the spirit, and the development of art expressions. We must add to the list: the development of science or knowledge that also influenced Hegel’s ideas. Hegel’s philosophy of art derived from phenomenology of spirit is known to Hegelians as the science of aesthetics.

Yet, we must take caution when looking at the art developments that marked the developments of Western society, especially because they are not universal in meaning. Art expressions in this art development relate to art expressions that are visual and material. This is not a new idea arising from a development. Instead, it is a continuation of long-held conviction.

It began when Hegel sought to examine art history to develop his own ideas, where he examined *the Beautiful* that used to be the object of past art history and aesthetic examinations. He also did not change its boundaries, where *the Beautiful* remained as a visual and material art expression. Certainly, he did modify its meaning. He viewed *the Beautiful* as a concrete spirit that can be seen as objective reality. *The Beautiful* is an expression of absolute spirit that carries truth. As such, in Hegel’s thinking, *The Beautiful* is the center of the whole world of art, even the essence of it. This was the basis of art development that occurred in the West, and also the rest of the world, until the middle of the 20th century.

When modern thinking and modern concepts spread outward from the West to the rest of the world, the attributes of Western societal development followed. They included the visual and material art expressions, that is, art-making based on art fundamentals influenced by Hegel’s thoughts.

I observe that the central issue of the dissemination of modern thinking lies in the efforts to raise the livelihoods of the lower-classes in all aspects: social justice, human rights, democratic systems, and so on. Another issue lies with the signs of Western societal development that have nevertheless spread out to the rest of the world. We must look at these signs critically, or with caution, because it is an anomaly. We cannot find parallels of it in other parts of the world. I have been made to understand that this critical attitude did emerge eventually, despite its slow process. My questions regarding art fundamentals that have spread together with modern thought reflect this critical attitude. I have discovered that these fundamentals are not accepted in Indonesian art development, although hegemony managed to prevent its outright rejection.

As comparison, I will highlight two art fundamentals that stem from Hegel’s thoughts—firstly, perception about the spirit, and secondly, the eminence of art expressions that are visual and material in nature. In the development of Indonesian art, as I have mentioned previously, these two issues are almost never questioned.

In the early 1990s, Y. B. Mangunwijaya—an Indonesian philosopher, also known for his work in architecture and literature—conducted an examination into the development of literature in Indonesia since the beginning of the 20th century up to the 1980s. From this research, he was able to discover the strong relationship between the expressions found in Indonesian literary works and religiosity. In his book on this research, Mangunwijaya stated that his view of religiosity is different from the English understanding of the term that refers to excessive religious attitude. Mangunwijaya saw that religiosity has no connection with religion as we know today. Religiosity reflects the individual’s connection with the Almighty—a connection that exists even in paganism, where it is manifested in the tension between the micro- and macro-cosmos. Looking at it from the context of current development, Mangunwijaya found that Indonesian literary works actually question reality, contemporary life, and other secular things found over time without ever losing their transcendental dimension.¹¹

Mangunwijaya's examination shows that poets, and perhaps most artists in Indonesia, perceive the spirit in a way that is different from how Hegel viewed human consciousness of the spirit. I observe that their perception resembles Indonesian society's perception about the spirit. As such, their perception about the spirit can become the fundamentals of art expressions in Indonesia without any problems.

Another indication can be found in the statement of the eminent painter Affandi. In a special interview given to *Tempo* magazine, to celebrate his 80th anniversary in 1987, Affandi off-handedly commented, "I am a naturalist in the purest sense." This statement caused something of an upheaval because he was generally known as an expressionist. In this interview, Affandi stated that the natural objects in his paintings are manifestations of life.¹² Affandi's conviction shows a perception of the spirit that Hegel would have seen as an archaic form of human consciousness about the spirit. Meanwhile, it is entirely possible the Affandi's conviction also represents many Indonesian artists' perception of the spirit, because the tendency to paint expressively never fades from Indonesian art development, even in its contemporary art development today.

I have also examined the questions regarding the eminence of art expressions that are visual and material; although not for research purposes. In several conversations, discussions, and seminars, I posed the following question to various artists, critics, curators, and collectors: "do you believe that visual and material art expressions, known as *seni rupa*—i.e. visual art, in the Indonesian language—can claim the premier place in art expressions?" I have asked this question perhaps many hundred times, but not once have I heard someone state their complete belief. Some of them even asked, in return, "why should we place visual art higher than other artforms?"

I am convinced that this perception is a common belief that forms the basis of society's perceptions because it is implied in the understanding, and use, of the term "*seni*" in the Indonesian language. Linguistically, the root word *seni* acts as the head from whence various other terms are derived, such as *seni rupa* (visual art), *seni tari* (the art of dance), *seni musik* (the art of music), and so forth. The words used to explicate the head in these terms act as modifiers, known as *adverbia*—words (either nouns, verbs, or adjectives) that explain the noun.

From all of these *seni* terminologies, only *rupa* (visual) is an adjective. This adjective is special because it can be taken as a connotation that explains the basic characteristic of *seni*, in the sense that *art is visual*. As such, linguistically, this word is known as an *adjectiva*. However, in the Indonesian terminology *seni*, the word *rupa* is not especially recognized as an *adjectiva*. Rather, *rupa* continues to carry its adverbial nature, and it has become equal to all of the nouns and verbs of in other *seni* terms. This linguistic trait shows that a visual and material art expression is not the most important in Indonesian art practice. We must also note that the structure of *seni*—whose expressions are all adverbial—has allowed the Indonesian term *seni* to be easily interpreted as having a certain sensibility, as well.

In 1997, Susan M. Vogel questioned the material culture of the African Baule tribe, especially Baule sculptures whose artistic values have been recognized by the Western art world since the past century, and are considered to be the best example of African art. Susan Vogel stated that the artistic values of Baule sculptures cannot be read using Western concepts. She further explained that the creation of objects within a material culture, including sculptures in Baule tradition, shows an adverbial symptom. Susan Vogel affirmed that Baule sculptures do not show the same understanding of "thingness" as Western art understanding do through the English *art*.¹³

Susan Vogel's viewpoint can be used to look at the artistic expressions found in the 250 ethnic traditions in Indonesia. Material culture in these ethnic traditions—as reflected in their buildings, textiles, weapons, decorative objects, and other sacred objects—cannot be detached from the very culture that inspires artistic expressions in other forms, such as music, dance, and other performing arts. The visual and material in this

material culture is adverbial. There is nothing in them that can be considered as adjective symptoms.

The perception about spirit and the perception about adverbial art expression can be seen as the fundamentals of art practice in Indonesia. These fundamentals should have been able to break through Western-constructed categories that were based on empirical examinations into visual and material art expressions. Especially because these fundamentals have demonstrated a kind of sensibility, that is, the human mental capacity as mentioned previously. But, I must admit that we still lack serious work or scholarship on to this issue. Discourse on the fundamentals of art practice in Indonesia is still very thin on the ground, so to speak.

However, I have also become conscious that the fundamentals of art practice in Indonesia show very little change, if any, because they share similarities with the fundamentals of traditional art expressions. Both show adverbial symptoms. Although Indonesian art practice adapts Western-influenced art-making, art practice in Indonesia actually uses the mother tongue to create expressions. This is evident in works by artists who have successfully challenged hegemony, such as Affandi, Srihadi Soedarsono, Heri Dono, Tisna Sanjaya, Entang Wiharso, Nasirun, Pupuk Daru Purnomo, and, Eko Nugroho.

This symptom can be seen as an example of the vernacular is used in expressions. One famous example is Dante Alighieri's epic poem, *Inferno*, written in the 1300s and noted as one of the greatest influences that shaped Western culture. *Inferno* was written in Dante's mother tongue, the Italian language, then considered a vernacular language especially compared to Latin.

However, current use of the term *vernacular* is once again influenced by a perception trapped within a language that is visual and material, and which demonstrates "thingness". Therefore, traditional buildings are called *vernacular* buildings, to distinguish them from modern architecture. In 1970s, UNESCO stated that the term vernacular is used to refer to architecture without architect. This perception also views decorativeness, flatness, and energetic compositions in paintings or pictures as vernacular forms.

I tend to not share this view of the vernacular. I understand vernacular as mother tongue. However, the use of vernacular does not necessarily imply the use of local languages, or traditional visual idioms. The use of vernacular, in my opinion, must be understood as something arising from the mother tongue, in connection to genetic culture. This means, through this language, artists can recognize the connection between the urge to express themselves and the intricacies of the language they use to show it. The objective is to control this connection to build an appealing expression. The process is manifested through skills or aspects like theatrical expressiveness, sensitivity to intentions, as well as articulacy, persuasiveness, and fluency in conveying a message. So, it is not merely the mastery of language itself. For instance, the Italian language and Dante. Even translated into other languages, Dante Alighieri's work will never lose its appeal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To end my presentation, I return once more to Hegel's thoughts, and again with an unconventional read of it. When Hegel freed art from religion, it might be that he had also discovered an art sensibility spectrum. In the development of art in the 19th century, art sensibility spectrum existed in the expressions that showed social anxiety, as seen in romanticism, in socialism as reflected in realism, and in the development of science in impressionism.

Once again, this sort of breakthrough can only be found in the West. And as such, this breakthrough could have been developed further in the West. However, it has been left under-developed, even *undeveloped*. A belief in absolute truth that flourished in the Western world has led to a bitter contention between various schools of thought that insisted on their belief as the only truth. Modernism is the most visible example. It had managed to diminish art to a singular capacity, although it wasn't in the service of religion.

We now have the possibility to fully realize or even explore art sensibility spectrum, especially since contemporary art has drawn itself closer to art practices outside of the Western world. Both hinge on culture, and both are trying to sharpen the as-yet-unclear fundamentals. Another similarity: both are positioned as the antithesis of Hegelian art fundamentals. I feel no need to discuss the particulars of contemporary art, because they are already often discussed and widely known.

Signs of art sensibility spectrum can be observed in the development of contemporary art, which continues to offer up new symptoms at every turn. This is the *wide spectrum of contemporary art*. On the other hand, the indicators that question “art-making” and the ones that transform the term “fine art” into “visual art” show signs that they view Hegel's concept as an adverbial symptom. In non-Western art practice, the search for fundamentals—that is currently still limited—could contribute to the description of art sensibility spectrum, especially to connect art expressions in visual art with art expressions in other forms.

In closing, I would like to quote Pauline von Bondsdorff who has simplified *Naturalist theory* as a theory that sees art as a universal and central human practice, even though it may take different forms in different cultures¹⁴. In the Information Age today, the boundaries separating these 'different forms in different cultures' will continue to narrow. This is why, global art discourse—as reflected at least in the views of Hans Belting—tries to discover a suitable rationale to understand these differences. For me, this rationale can be found by tracing Hegel's art sensibility spectrum, one that has so far failed to flourish, restricted by its own thinking.

Thank you.

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- 1 This metaphor is adapted from a comment made by the Indonesian artist, Pupuk Daru Purnomo
 - 2 *Baoesastra Jawa* Pigeaud, Th. (et.al). JB Wolters. Groningen–Batavia. 1939.
 - 3 *The Arts and Their Interrelations*. Thomas Munro. Case Western Reserve University Press. London. 1969. pp.49-67.
 - 4 <http://www.jawapalace.org/ronggowarsito.html/>
 - 5 Published in 2012. *Raden Saleh – Awal Seni Lukis Modern Indonesia*. Werner Kraus, Irina Vogelsag. Goethe Institut Indonesien, Jakarta. 2012.
 - 6 *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*. Jim Supangkat. Indonesian Fine Art Foundation. Jakarta. 1997. p.24.
 - 7 *Di Negeri Penjajah – Orang Indonesia di Negeri Belanda 1600 – 1950*. Harry A.Poeze. KPG-KITLV, Jakarta 2008. pp.13 -16.
 - 8 Discussions related to GWF Hegel in this text is mainly based on: *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*. Hegel's writings as translated from its original German to English by William Wallace, in 1830. Republished by Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1971; *The Philosophy of Art*. G.W.F. Hegel. Translated from the original German to English by William Hastie. Heinrich Gustav Hotho (ed.) 1886. Reprinted with new introduction by Christa Davis Acampora, by Barnes & Noble, New York. 2006; “Hegel's Symbolic Stage: An Old Perspective on Contemporary Art.” Laura T. Di Summa-Knoop in *Contemporary Aesthetics - Online Journal of contemporary theory, research, and application in aesthetics*. Volume 11. (2013). “Lectures on Aesthetics”. GWF Hegel. Hegel-by-HyperText Home Page @marxists.org; “Hegel: Social and Political Thought.” David Duquette. St. Norbert College. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/hegelsoc/>
 - 9 “Multimodernism/Multiculturalism.” Jim Supangkat. Published in the catalog for the exhibition *Contemporary Art in Asia – Tradition/Tension*. Apinan Poshyananda (Curator). Asia Society Galleries. NY 1996.
 - 10 *The Varieties of Religious Experiences*. William James. First published in 1902. Translated into the Indonesian language by Gunawan Admiranto with the title. *Perjumpaan dengan Tuhan. Ragam Pengalaman Religius Manusia*. Mizan. Bandung. 2004
 - 11 *Sastra dan Religiositas*. Y.B.Mangunwijaya. Kanisius, Yogyakarta. 1992.
 - 12 “Affandi, Naturalis Murni.” Rubrik Seni Rupa, *Tempo*. Maret 1987.
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