Theosophy of Human Concept in Pangestu: Sufism Perspective

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Abstract: The study of humans has so far been dominated by Western schools of thought. As shown by psychoanalytic theorists, behaviorists, and cognitive theorists. Meanwhile, studies on humans that are sourced from local thinkers do not seem to have been discussed much by scholars. As the human concept that developed in the Pangestu mysticism in Indonesia. This article aims to examine the human concept according to the Pangestu school in terms of the process of human creation, the purpose of human life, and the relationship (union) of man with God. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The results showed that human creation was caused by courtship from God or what is called Tri Purusa. Meanwhile, the purpose of human life is union with God or it is called ittihad and hulul. This study concludes that the teachings about humans in the Pangestu school are identical to those in Islamic philosophy and mysticism.

Keywords: Pangestu School, Human Creation, Human Unification

A. Introduction

Since pre-Ancient Greece until now, the discussion about humans has never ended in the scientific world. So it is not surprising that almost every religious teachings, philosophy, Sufism, and mystical flow also have a conception of human nature.1 Wahyudi said that human Sufism has several aspects, including body (jism), mind (aql), heart (qalb), soul (nafs), spirit (ar-ruh), all of which are independent but related to one another, all have their respective roles and functions.2 The flow of materialism says that humans are part of nature, humans are objects whose substance is spacious, humans are a collection of cells and nervous systems. Humans are soulless flesh that occupies space time, experiences development and contraction over time.3 The development of each human being is also influenced by local cultural factors, so that the concept of humans is multi-perspective.4 Thus, Humans are unique creatures, have obligations and responsibilities. Thanks to the psychic power of creativity, taste and character, man can know that he

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knows and also he knows that he is in a state of ignorance. Compared to other creatures, with his psychic power, humans have the advantage of being able to face every problem in life.

Humans are special creatures on earth, because humans are gifted by God in the form of reason. With this intellect, humans have a tendency to know and discover who they are.\(^5\) The desire to know, understand, and know who he is is a human instinct. The instincts here are practical intellectual and existential.\(^6\) This tendency is rational and realistic because humans are the axis and axis of the cosmos. A cosmos cannot possibly be understood and imagined without humans.\(^7\) Humans are the center of history, the center of culture, and the center of civilization.\(^8\) Therefore, only humans have a special position that is not shared by other creatures, so that understanding of humans is urgent.

The urgency of human knowledge can be felt and understood because it is part of the view of life.\(^9\) This indicates that studying humans will be able to help shape and perfect patterns of thought, mental attitudes and outlook on life. In the historicity of humanity, there are many answers with various approaches, both individuals and groups that try to provide answers to problems related to human nature. Starting from the philosophers, Sufism, religious teachings, to belief schools. The answers obtained also varied, some were theoretical, some were practical, and some were even philosophical.\(^10\) However, there are also those that combine philosophical values with things that are practical in nature, including the Pangestu school.


\(^7\) Sachiko Murata, The Tao of Islam (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 30.

\(^8\) Burhanuddin Salam, Filsafat Manusia, Antropologi, Metafisika (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1988), 15.


In looking at humans the Pangestu has several similarities with the philosophical Sufism, which views humans with a rational Sufism approach. While its practical value can be seen in the embodiment of the conception of human being in the context of serving the purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs) to be able to carry out unity of form (wahdah al-wujud).\(^{11}\) Tazkiyatun nafs is the initial condition when an individual will enter the world of Sufism, before going through the states of Sufism. This is important to do to make it easier for

Based on the explanation above, this research will conduct an analytical study of the human conception in the view of the Pangestu school. This research focuses on Pangestu's concept of the process of human creation and the purpose of human life. This research is a library research, namely data collection techniques and a review of books, literatures, notes and reports that are related to the problem being solved.\(^{12}\) The process of collecting data in research is through literature data related to this research. The data that has been collected will be analyzed in the discussion section so that it will bring up a conclusion. This research is generally expected to provide benefits and contribute to Islamic studies, especially in the fields of Islamic studies, mysticism and humanity.

B. Theory of Human Creation and Unification

Discussing human creation is inseparable from the emanation theory, which is a philosophical and religious understanding which states that this nature emerged as a result of the emanation of the One.\(^{13}\) Emanation teaches that nature and its contents are the result of the emanation of the Almighty.\(^{14}\) The idea of emanation was first coined by

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Plotinus. In this case Plotinus intended to develop Plato theory of goodness. The notion of emanation was also followed by some Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. So do not be surprised if this understanding also colors the world of Sufism, spirituality, and mysticism (belief).

When the human creation process occurs, it will culminate in the process of human union with God. The teaching of mystical unity or what is known as mystical union or manunggaling kawula Gusti or wahdah al-wujud. In the context of Javanese mystical unity, the teaching of mystical unity is highly emphasized and even becomes the highest life goal. The mystical union can also be seen in the treasures of the world of Sufism, as follows:

First, Ittihad, literally means united, unified or oneness. This idea appeared for the first time after Abu Yazid al-Bustami (a figure of Sufism) issued mystical expressions describing the event of his union with God. In ittihad, the meaning of being united with God is only symbolic. So the essence of being united with God is to separate oneself from being and oneself and adjust one's will to God's will so that there is only His will. This is called the mortal state (cessation from other than God) and it is in this state that a person is one with God. However, it needs to be emphasized, that union with God cannot be equated with the term union between being and being, because God does not reside and be occupied.

Second, al-Hulul literally means place or place. Meanwhile, in terms of al-Hulul, it means that God takes a place in humans. In al-Hulul, God chose human bodies to take their place in it. To get to the level of al-Hulul, it is necessary to destroy human qualities to strengthen and focus on divine attributes. This understanding of al-Hulul can also be found in the thought of al-Hallaj Sufism. Besides that, it can also be seen in the Islamic mysticism of Syekh Siti Jenar and several sects of divinity from Javanese kebatinan (kejawen) circles.

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16 Nasution, Islam Ditinjau Dari Berbagai Aspeknya, 83.
The understanding of al-Ittihad and al-Hulul is categorized under the understanding of mystical unity. Both show the unity of man and God, but the servant is still the servant and the Lord is still God, even though between the two there is a process of unification or oneness. So this is different from the understanding of Wahdah al-wujud which has the understanding that when there is a union that no longer emphasizes the distinction between God, humans and nature.

Third, wahdah al-wujud (unity of form) implies that what exists is single. Everything is God. Therefore, it is not wrong to understand the unity of existence to be pantheistic. Wahdah al-wujud means that only a Single Essence exists while the others are another but only a manifestation of a Single Essence.17 The basic concept of Wahdah al-wujud indicates that there is nothing that exists except the Essence of God. Only the Single is there, and that all that exists is the One Essence. In the realm of Sufism, the idea of the unity of being was coined by followers of Ibn 'Arabi. This understanding is widely opposed by the majority of Muslims and a number of scholars. Thus, this unity of existence differs from the term mystical unity. In the mystical union, the relationship between God and servant is likened to the single term tan singular (one but not one) so that this conception is different from the concept of unity of being which is ministic and pantheistic.

C. Understanding the History and Teachings of the Pangestu School

1. The history of the Pangestu School

Pangestu was founded on May 20, 1949 in Surakarta. It coincided with a dramatic situation in the midst of a demonstration against the Dutch East Indies government's anti-colonialism over the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. This organization is an association of students of the True Teacher which in Pangestu terms is often referred to as the Jagad Desert. Pangestu's teachings were revealed by Suksma Kawekas through Suksma Sejati to R. Soenarto Mertowerdoyo to expand his teachings to all

17 Muhammad Abdul Haq Anshori, Antara Sufisme Dan Syari'ah (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1990), 149.
corners of the world. Pangestu sect was founded by R. Soenarto Mertowerdoyo who was born on April 21, 1899 in Simo Boyolali and died on August 16, 1965. Pangestu stands for Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal, which is the name of a mystical sect that was founded and developed in Java. In language, Paguyuban means association, Ngesti means asking for or concentrating reason and feelings, while Tunggal means one. Thus, Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal can be said to be an association that aims to unite with God Almighty.

R. Soenarto, in his youth suffered a lot of mental suffering and restlessness due to the condition of society which began to move away from esoteric aspects. Even though he is a Muslim, the religious lessons he received are not complete and not deep so that he does not get peace from Islam. He also reads a lot of Christian books, including the Suksma Supana or Piwulung Agami Christian books, but he has yet to get the inner peace of those books. R. Soenarto's mental anxiety had driven him to take the mystical path of knowing God, or what is called true knowledge.

On February 14, 1932 at 17.30, based on the belief of the Pangestu sect, R. Soenarto received a word from the True Guru. The Word descends in three stages. The first stage, the affirmation that true knowledge is the right path to the origin which contains the origin and purpose of life (Sangkang Paraning Dumadi). The second stage is a statement from the Real Suksma about who He is and what His duties are. The third stage, contains words that affirm R. Soenarto heart in carrying out his duties and a promise from the True Teacher who will provide an assistant (clerk) to R. Soenarto, namely R.T. Hardjaprakoso and R.T. Soemadiharjo. The revelation that came down in three stages is written in the Kitab Sabda Pratama.

In the process of revelation, R. Soenarto proclaimed himself a way or wasilah from the words of the True Teacher. The words of the True Guru for seven months are compiled in a booklet which includes, Hasta Sila,

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Paliwara, Gumelaring Dumadi, Tunggal Sabda, Dalan Rahayu, Sangkan Paran, and Panembah. The seven books in their development are compiled in one book called Serat Sasangka Djati. Apart from the Sabda Pratama and Serat Sasangka Djati, the Pangestu sect also has a main book which is the personal work of R. Soenarto which is named Bawa Raos Ing Salebeting Raos and Taman Kamulyaan Langgeng.

R. Soenarto died in 1965, so the teachings of the Pangestu sect were developed by his students and followers. In the same year that R. Soenarto died, the Pangestu sect has grown rapidly and has 178 branches spread across the country. Besides that his students also hold regular meetings called Bawa Raos. The purpose of Bawa Raos (feeling) is to deepen the teachings of the True Teacher. The teaching of feeling is contained in the book Bawa Raos Ing Salebeting Raos.21

Pangestu as a mysticism is based on the One Godhead and respects religion. Meanwhile, the aims of the pangestu sect are as follows: (1) Adherents are able to live in harmony, mutual respect, and mutual cooperation with all groups without differentiating between nationalities, groups, religions, degrees and beliefs. (2) Adherents in order to be one with God by the actions and conditions of the True Teacher. (3) Expanding “pepadang” is a discourse from the True Teacher to anyone who needs it, without coercion or hope of obtaining something without strings attached.22

Soewandito revealed that the aim of the Pangestu sect in brief is to deliver humanity towards worship for the community, nation, state, homeland and humanity. As formulated in the Dasa Sila Pangestu guidelines, which means ten life guidelines which include serving God, God’s messenger, being loyal to the law and the head of state, serving the country, parents, parents, teachers, teaching virtues, compassion for others. and respect all religions.

2. Principles of Pangestu Teaching

Pangestu as a belief institution has several teachings which include theology (divinity), cosmology (the universe), and anthropology

21 Pangestu, Pokok-Pokok Piwulangipun, 1.
22 Tohdjojo, Apa Pangestu Itu?, 4.
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(humans). In theological teachings it is stated that the state of God Almighty has three characteristics (Tri Purusa). First, Suksma Kawekas or the True Prince who is the source of life. Second, the True Suksma or True Teacher which has the nature of sustaining all living things. Third, the Holy Spirit who is called a real human.\(^{23}\) The Pangestu school of theology can be said to have a similarity with the Christian Trinity theology. This is because in his life R. Soenarto read many Christian religious books such as the Suksma Supana book (Christian religious piwulang).

In the book Sasongko Djati, it is explained that the three attributes of God are like Allah, Rasul (nur Muhammad) and Prophet Muhammad in Islam. Likewise, it is the same with God the Father, the Son (the soul of Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit in Christianity. Therefore, the Pangestu sect has the understanding that Nur Muhammad, the True Suksma, Jesus Christ, all three are the same. Each of them is a God who reveals himself and each of them comes from the essence of Ingsun which is colorless and formless, and cannot be described in any form.

Apart from theological teachings, the Pangestu sect also has teachings about humans. As has been explained in the Sasongko Djati book, the human soul is the Holy Spirit. Human creation took place after the macrocosm. Human creation is described in the Sasongko Djati book as follows:

_Sawuse djagad gede (bumi) iki dumadi, Pangeran bandjur nitahake manungsa. Mungguh dumadining manungsa iku, saka sorot panunggaling Tri Purusa (suksma kewekas, suksma sejati, roh sutji) tjara Islame, tumrap para ahli makrifat sinebut: Allah, Rasul, Muhammad, utawa tjara Kristene: Sang Rama, Sang Putra, Roh Sutji, kang binusanan sarining anasir patang prakara, kajata: swasana, geni, banjo, lan lemah, kang banjur kababar dadi bebakalan kasar lan alus._

Besides the metaphysical style, Pangestu teachings about humans also teach ethical aspects. In Pangestu ethics there are various obligations known as Hasta Sila which include the Tri Sila and Panca Watak Utama.\(^{24}\)

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The precepts in the precepts are conscious, trusting and obedient to God Almighty and His messenger, willing, accepting, patient and virtuous. Meanwhile Pangestu teachings about nature are closely related to the attitude of life of its adherents. In this attitude of life, the main characteristic of the Pangestu attitude is that humans take a distance (distance) from the material-empirical world. Taking this distance includes material, psychological, and spiritual aspects. However, this distancing is not permanent but temporary, which is then followed by a concentration on reality and truth which is ultimately realized in a concrete world.

D. Human Creation in Pangestu

The conceptions in the Pangestu have basic values of syncretism. Syncretism is a new idea from the result of combining several different ideas so that it becomes harmonious and balanced. Some other thinkers call it tantularism, namely the spirit of teaching Bhineka Tunggal Ika Tan Hana Dharma Mangrwa, which was triggered by Empu Tantular to be willing to accept, acknowledge, live and practice true values from any source. This syncretic or tantularistic nature is indicated by the borrowing of terms, use of conceptions and taking from teachings from other systems. For example, the teachings of manembah, which are very similar to prayer services in Islam, are influenced by Islamic teachings. The terms Nur Muhammad and Sang Christ which are likened to the True Suksma are taken from Sufism and the conception of the Trinity in Christianity.

Basically, in general there is no substantial difference between the Pangestu concept of emanation and other conceptions of emanations, such as al-Farabi’s emanation or Plotinus' emanation (originator of the idea of

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emanation). All conceptions of emanation have the basic understanding that all existence originates and emanates from God. However, there is a slight difference regarding the emanation process that causes the existence of four elements as the original material from which material nature is formed. According to Plotinus and al-Farabi, this sensory material world even though its existence originates and radiates from God but through distant or indirect emanations.

In Plotin’s philosophy of emanation, the material world emanates from the natural soul, the natural soul from reason and reason emanates from God.28 Like Plotinus, al-Farabi who stated that this material world directly emanates from God but passes through the transmitters of reason. God only radiates intellect while the mind’s thoughts about him give rise to the heavens and planets. Meanwhile, the tenth reason as the last reason cannot produce reason but only produces the earth and its sides.29 Thus, both Plotinus and al-Farabi actually wanted to show that material forms have an ontological nature which is far from God.

In contrast to the two conceptions above, the Pangestu tradition has a teaching that the material nature of the four natural elements (water, air, fire, and earth) originates and emanates from Suksma Kawekas directly as the smoke that comes out of the lamp. This direct broadcast actually shows the inconsistency of Pangestu teaching itself. On the one hand, the Pangestu sect considers that everything that is divine is holy and everything that is earth-patterned is impure. On the other hand, the Pangestu school also states that the natural material form of this sensory emanates directly from God. The Pangestu school will have difficulty answering questions about the impurity of the material world which originates and emanates directly from God, while God (Suksma Kawekas) is the source of holiness.

The Pangestu emphasizes students to abstain from the temptations of worldly passions and things. But in the Pangestu school, the existence of lust and the material form of the world that comes from the four natural factors is still considered as a form that comes from God through direct emission. Thus, the boundary between holiness (Ilahiyah) and impurity

28 Ahmad Tafsir, Filsafat Umum (Bandung: Remaja Rosda Karya, 1993), 61.
29 Harun Nasution, Islam Rasional (Bandung: Mizan, 1989), 45.
(material world) at the level of ontologism in the Pangestu school is not very clear. Something that emanates directly from God should not be the cause in keeping people away from God. However, in the Pangestu school the four natural elements that emanate directly from God are precisely the potential forms of the support of lust that can distance people from God.

Besides all that, there is also something that is unique in the Pangestu sect, namely the form of logos or human intellectual skills (angen-angen) that emanates from the shadow of the Tri Purusa. This Logos does not radiate directly from God but from the shadow of Tri Purusa. This kind of conception was never found in the previous emanation school and thought. Apart from the differences between the emanation school and the concept of human creation according to the Pangestu school, all of them have the same principle, namely that it implies that God has been active since the eternal era.30

E. Unification as Pangestu Life Purpose

The Pangestu school, which has the conception of the union between man and God, follows the concept of emanation. The concept of unification has a strong theological premise that between God (Suksma Kaweka) and humans (Holy Spirit) have similarities and similarities in substance. Therefore, it is possible to have a process of union between man and God. By looking at the teaching of this unification, it can be said that the Pangestu sect is included in the mysticism mysticism group.31 This group tries to unite the human soul with God as long as humans are still alive or after death.

The Pangestu as a mysticism group has a philosophy of life that wants to have a direct relationship with God.32 This relationship will produce the results of mystical consciousness. This awareness means being fully aware of the existence of a single essence and feeling happiness because

30 Ibid., 46.
32 Harun Nasution, Filsafat Dan Mistisisme Dalam Islam (Jakarta: Penerbit Bulan Bintang, 1976), 76.
it has attained pemesasan, namely the loss of duality and plurality so that it dissolves in the absolute essence of individualism. The existence of this unification teaching shows that the Pangestu sect recognizes the immortality of the soul. The true human soul will live eternally after separation from the gross body. There are times eternal in happiness and eternity with God and there are times eternal in sorrow with the fiery bodies.

This unifying principle has the same value as Plato's conception of nature, which implies that the human soul comes from an eternal world and has an eternal nature.\(^{33}\) In line with Plato, according to the Pangestu tradition, the true human soul comes from God (Suksma Kawekas) and has an eternal nature. The immortal nature of the true human soul must be endeavored to be united (united) with God in order to obtain an eternal and happy life. The teaching of unification in the Pangestu school is a form of recognition of the immortality of the soul which is often questioned and even rejected by humanitists who in fostering creative development and individual development always use logical, rational and empirical ways without referring to spiritual and metaphysical concepts.

In the teachings of the Pangestu, a happy feeling in union with God is described as living in *Taman Kamulyaan Langgeng*.\(^{34}\) Likewise, the miserable state in the hereafter which in the divine religion is described as a hell, in the Pangestu sect this miserable state is called or is like the life of a creature with the body of fire. Thus, the conception of union with God has no essential difference from heaven. Likewise, the life of creatures with bodies of fire is identical to the life of hell. The existence of heaven and union with God, is actually only a language that describes the existence of eternal happiness after humans pass through death.

**F. Conclusion**

This research takes the theme of the human conception in the view of the Pangestu school, and it can be concluded that the human conception in

\(^{33}\) Abdul Qadir Djaelani, *Filsaфat Islam* (Surabaya: Pangestu, 1969), 156.

the Pangestu school is identical to the teachings in Islamic philosophy and mysticism. This can be seen as follows:

First, the concept of creation in the Pangestu school emphasizes the aspect of emanation or emanation, so the Pangestu school is classified as an emanationism school. In addition, there are four elements as the basis for matter originating from the sensory realm which comes from direct emanations or overflows from God. Second, the teaching of living unification in the Pangestu sect as a general teaching of a belief is similar to the mystical teachings of Islam regarding the union of man and God. Thus, the teaching of mystical unity in the Pangestu school is no different from the teachings of *ittihad* and *hulul* in the realm of Sufism.

This article has implications for the development of Islamic scholarship, especially Islamic philosophy and mysticism. One aspect that needs to be studied further is the genealogy of Pangestu's thought. 

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