

## Conference Paper

# A Perception of Javanese Philosophy based on *Serat Wedhatama* toward Virgil's Symbol of Human Wisdom and Role in Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*

Petrik Mahisa Akhtabi and Inayatul Fariha

Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang

### Abstract

Virgil in *Inferno* is claimed to be a perfect example of human being concerning to his mastery of maturity and rationality viewed from the perspective of western philosophy as phrased in 'Love of Wisdom'. As we know, the wisdom taught by western philosophy is the most important thing in someone who philosophies because western sees efforts as an absolute thing in human philosophizing process rather than its result or the truth itself. As believed by western, wisdom can be acquired by practicing and thinking which then the result is human with high intellectual and ethical attitude as depicted by Virgil in *Inferno*. On the contrary, a different concept stated by Javanese philosophy which truth is the absolute one whereas effort is only a means as stated by the phrase 'Love of Perfection'. Relying on the belief in God, Javanese philosophy states that perfect human is person who understand the existence of God, the unity of man and God as termed by *manunggaling kawula gusti*. Human ethics and wisdom have only been destined along with the maturity of one's age and spiritual attitude. Therefore, Javanese philosophy based on *Serat Wedhatama* used as the perspective of reading and interpretation to expand the exploration toward Virgil's role and symbol, also structuralism which is used as a method of extracting pieces of evidence based to Virgil's action and speech in relation with that two philosophical concept. Not merely to expand exploration, the use of that two philosophy concept is to compare those different values in discussing Virgil in *Inferno*.

**Keywords:** Love of Wisdom, Love of Perfection, Wisdom, Ethics, Manunggaling Kawula Gusti, Compare.

Corresponding Author:

Petrik Mahisa Akhtabi

petrikmahisaakhtabi@gmail.com

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## 1. Introduction

Human who is blessed by wisdom can actually recognize whether capable or not on the every action. Blessed by human wisdom means that someone has rationality, maturity, and a high level of intelligence. Blessed by human wisdom, a man will be labeled as the perfect example of human should be in respect to western philosophical concept in a phrase of 'the love of wisdom'. In connection with that, Virgil bears the symbol of human

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wisdom because in *Inferno*, he is told as a rational human soul, full of self-awareness, and a high level intelligence considering that he is a poet whose work is said to be like water that flows without stopping and timeless (*Inferno*, 1, 79-80). Also, Virgil is a suitable example of how human should be seen from the concept of western philosophy that said if the perfection of human can be seen from one's acquisition of wisdom, the wisdom of human, the wisdom of rationality, maturity, and self-awareness.

As mentioned above, focus of this study will be given to Virgil character whose role is the protagonist's pilgrimage guide into hell or *Inferno*. Not only that, Virgil is chosen because there is also something embedded inside him, something beyond his role, invisible, but can be felt and the effect is enormous. Some of the previous researcher believe that Virgil is a symbol of what is termed as 'human wisdom' (Weinrib, 2005:90; Kirkpatrick, 2004: 10; Schoder, R, 1949:414). A human wisdom, is a philosophical value which is believed by the western as the characteristics of human with a mastery of philosophy. First introduced by Socrates, a term of human wisdom used to indicate a perfection of human existence, the existence of human who philosophies, a value that distinguished whether human does philosophy or not (Futter, 2013: 62).

Therefore, in this study, there is a slight difference with the concept used in discussing Virgil and his symbol of human wisdom. The discovery of Virgil and his symbol of human wisdom is nothing but the result of western philosophy concept of 'the love of wisdom' used in the process of interpretation. Western researcher agree if Virgil is well qualified to bear the symbol of human wisdom, also the title as perfect example of human being seen from the prevailing value of the western philosophy concept. His action and speech in *Inferno* reflects a human who walks on the path of philosophy, a human of must should be. The fact that he was a pagan, did not reduce legitimacy of the philosophical values that exists inside Virgil. So, on the purpose of exploration in understanding Virgil's symbol of human wisdom, this study is made by using a perception of philosophy concept that many western researcher may not know yet, which is Javanese philosophy.

The differences of Javanese philosophy and the western philosophy was all started in a fundamental matters of purposes. Western emphasizes 'thought' for human in searching truth and happiness of life. Simply, the values of western philosophy is phrased with the term 'love of wisdom' which means wisdom is the important thing for human to live their life perfectly and/or wisdom is something that human has to look for in order to find the truth of the existence. The western see 'efforts' to be the most important thing emphasized rather than the truth itself (Kenny, 2006: 159). On the contrary, the Javanese one emphasizes 'feelings' in the process of finding the truth of an existence and said that to be perfect, human needs to unite with the truth itself which revealed that the

truth is God. The truth is an absolute thing, even though it is invisible, the Javanese can feel that the truth exists and as time goes by, it unites along with the human spiritual life growth. 'The love of perfection', that is the key of what Javanese philosophy is which the truth is absolute and all have been destined since man born and along with the lifetime (Ciptoprawiro, 1986: 14).

Talking about the Javanese philosophy being used, it will be sourced from one of Javanese literary work which contents indicate a thick philosophical value. The work named as *Serat Wedhatama*, a well-known Javanese literary work written by Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Arya (KGPA) Mangkunegara IV (4<sup>th</sup> Mangkunegaran King) whose birth name is Raden Mas Sudira. He is a king who is known as a wise king who rule the Mangkunegaran (Surakarta) for 25 years since March, 24<sup>th</sup> 1853 (Wibawa, 2013: 123). *Serat Wedhatama* has a whole meaning as a work that contains knowledge of being a noble human and blessed by the divine (Wibawa, 2013: 123). Talking about the content, this work does not contain religious dogma about the beauty of heaven nor torment of hell, but rather the 'paths' for everyone who expect a high spiritual level of life (Wibawa, 2013: 123). The truth of life, self-understanding, and *manunggaling kawula gusti* or the unity between human and the 'energy' of their creator that allows human to understand 'Its' and life truth are the actual content of what *Serat Wedhatama* wants to convey (Suseno, 1984: 120).

## 2. Method

Since the research is a literary study, so structuralism is used. The process in analyzing this literary work goes through depth interpretation of every lines aimed to obtain information, especially about Virgil, which would later support the success of this study. A careful reading of all lines is needed, since the structuralism used suggests that criticizing literary work is not necessary to extract extrinsic elements outside the work because the entire information for interpreting the work is already contained in the work itself as by Ryan (1999: 27), if basically, everything inside narrative, such as: action, function, setting, character, and etc, are something linked and related to form the whole story. So, the data we need in discussing Virgil will be gained from what is written inside *Inferno*, such as: word, sentences, expression, and speech. The data needs to be done by reading the *Inferno* carefully in order to find any action and speech that indicate Virgil and his symbol.

After finding evidences of what we need in interpreting Virgil and his symbols, then the philosophical discussion about him will be carried out. Here, the concept of Javanese

philosophy is used to know about how human should be, whether human considered as a perfect example or not. On the side of western philosophy, Virgil is full of wisdom and a perfect example of man as stated by some western researcher on their study. According to that, the use of Javanese philosophy based on *Serat Wedhatama* in this study is to compare the result of what have been studied and shows the implementation of eastern concept in discussing western literary works.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1. Virgil's Role and Action is a Form of Javanese Philosophy Appreciation

The importance of Virgil cannot be separated from his role in accompanying Dante to make a perfect pilgrimage to hell. As a guide in general, Virgil invites Dante to get around and explain every stage of hell they have passed. Virgil, just as his role in guiding the protagonist through hell, actually can be interpreted as a teacher who is teaching a philosophical lesson to the students about the truth of life. Leading the protagonist to pass every level of hell which aims to achieve the existence of divine grace, he shows the pursuit of reaching truth must be. In process of determining series of steps to achieve truth, human must be aware of their capabilities, whether capable or not in carrying out that particular steps. In short, man needs to grow self-awareness. Virgil shows an extraordinary realistic attitude which able to recognize his inability and that is how human should be. The sense of that can be felt on *Inferno*, 1, 121-126 where Virgil says if the protagonist wants to go beyond, there is a more worthy soul to guide him, and that is where actually explained that Virgil has self-awareness and representation of maturity.

It is clear that Virgil is the figure of teacher who is very worthy to be emulated. Beside he has intelligence, his self-awareness is also high and this reflects a value of Javanese philosophy that is contained in *Serat Wedhatama. Pangkur*, 11.

*Iku kaki takokena,  
Marang para sarjana kang martapi mring tapaking tepa tulus,  
Kawawa nahen hawa,  
Wruhanira mungguh sanyataning ngelmu  
Tan mesthi neng janma wredha  
Tuwin mudha sudra kaki.*

The verse means that man should have a very intelligence teacher, respectful to rules and guidelines, and loyal in day or night. Virgil in *Inferno* is suitable with a figure of teacher in *pupuh Pangkur*, 11, written above. Being a figure of teacher, later, that will be thing relates to Virgil's symbol of human wisdom. Choosing a good teacher who is worth to be emulated is not easy, because not everyone has a high attitude of wisdom as human being as depicted by Virgil. Can be said that the important thing for human's journey of studying philosophy is the figure of teacher whose intelligence level is high, but primarily, the most suitable figure of teacher for one does philosophy is someone who has wisdom not just intelligence. Therefore, Virgil is suitable with a good teacher figure in Javanese philosophy because, basically, Virgil exists and expected to be interpreted as an example of how humans should be, about the wisdom that human must be possessed which later leads into the ethics of human's life.

As well as the Virgil's attitude of self-awareness and realistic. That can be said that Virgil's attitude is a reflection of Javanese philosophy's value on *Serat Wedhatama, Pucung*, 11.

*Lila lamun kelangan nora gegetun,  
Trima yen ketaman,  
Sakserik sameng dumadi,  
Tri legawa nalangsa srah ing Bathara,*

It can be translated as willing to lose something or not be disappointed, be patient when something hurts, and put our trust on the Almighty. Virgil shows a sense of self-awareness and realistic that is extraordinary because he knows that he is incapable to lead the protagonist in reaching the heaven which is actually a place that he also desires, he accepts that *Limbo* is his place and it will not change at any time. Virgil knows that *Limbo* is his place forever, but he accepts and realizes that he deserves it because he did not have time to live in the world to get the divine Virtue (*Inferno*, 1, 124-126). This is the proof that Virgil has a 'wisdom' on his existence. In reality, sometimes a person imposes self in achieving what is desired, but then situation will be blamed if it is not achieved. However, such sense is not shown by Virgil because he knows if it is impossible for him to reach the goodness of heaven. He accepts and realizes the harsh reality of his inability to reach the ultimate truth of the divine.

### 3.2. Virgil is not An Example of Perfect Human in Javanese Philosophy Concept

As we know, western emphasizes the effort as the most important step of philosophizing rather than the result of philosophy. On the contrary, Javanese philosophy comes in more spiritually emphasized which is said that truth itself is the most important thing on philosophy. According to western, Virgil surely has met the criteria of someone with philosophical values of intellectually blessed, but it becomes 'has not' if we look it based to philosophy concept of eastern. Virgil said to be a pagan who does not believe in the existence of God and the revelation which makes him does not met criteria of one who philosophies under the concept of Javanese philosophy. According to that, Virgil in Javanese philosophy concept is not a perfect example of human being due to his God ignorance. Virgil as human wisdom then considered very lacking because the emergence is not based on trust, trust to who blessed him with that wisdom. The fact that he cannot reach the truth (heaven) states that he is not a perfect example of human because Javanese philosophy said that perfect human being is the one who knows the God, the one that unite with the god as termed by *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*. Perfection of how human must be is written on *Serat Wedhatama, Pangkur*, 12-13.

*Sapantuk wahyuning Allah,  
Gya dumilah mangulah ngelmu bangkit,  
Bangkit mikat reh mangukut,  
Kukutaning jiwangga,  
Yen mengkono kena sinebut wong sepuh,  
Lire sepuh sepi hawa,  
Awaw roroning atunggil*

*Tan samar pamoring sukma,  
Sinuksmaya Winahya ing ngasepi,  
Sinimpen telenging kalbu,  
Pambukaning warana,  
Tarken saking liyep layaping aluyup,  
Pindhha pesating sumpena,  
Sumusuping rasa jati.*

It is said on 12 that whoever has received the divine virtue, someone can master the art or science of reaching perfection, becoming mature, and understanding the energy of the almighty. While the 13 said that is the feeling when the truth has come, someone

will have no doubt with the existence of God because it can be absorbed and felt at the deepest heart when the time of contemplation, feels like a dream. That is *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*, the time when human reaches the perfection of truth, time when there is no longer an individual impression or ego between 'I' and 'God', there is only 'I, God' and that is the goal of whole Javanese philosophy. The unity of human and the God's energy is an absolute truth of human existence who does Javanese philosophy in life. This then becomes the cause for Virgil not to become a perfect human example because how Virgil attain the truth of Javanese philosophy if he was Godless. Surely, he will not be able to feel the truth comes from the existence of God as said by *pupuh Pangkur*, 12-13 of *Serat Wedhatama*.

#### 4. Conclusions and Suggestions

Conclusion that can be taken from the analysis above states that Virgil is not an example of perfect human must be. It is undeniable that his ignorance of God is the main cause of the exclusion of Virgil from the perfect human qualification according to Javanese philosophy concept. That thing also, written inside *Inferno* when he is unable to reach the truth or heaven given that he is a pagan who does not worship God. It is true that his action inside *Inferno* reflects to what is good in the concept of Javanese philosophy, but all good things are wasted without the blessing of God because the key to perfection in Javanese philosophy concept is the virtue from God which becomes evidence that God's existence is true.

Under the name of science and literature, it is hoped that further research will be carried out on this study. Divine Comedy is a timeless work of art, its beauty and messages are still waiting to be interpreted in other ways, other perceptions, and definitely, other results. This is an interesting thing in a literary world, the same exact thing will produce something different depends on who is reading. Continue this work for the development of science, literature, and philosophy because maybe, this study is still lacking and waiting to be perfected.

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