

Humans as Cultured, Ethical, and Aesthetic Beings: A Conceptual Study

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Abstrak: Telaah konseptual mengenai manusia sebagai manusia sebagai makhluk berbudaya, beretika, serta berestetika masih terus berkembang mengingat manusia merupakan entitas kompleks yang masih memerlukan berbagai pemahaman. Dengan demikian, artikel ini mencoba mengelaborasi telaah-telaah konseptual sebagai bagian dari memperkaya wacana dan pemahaman mengenai manusia. Artikel ini merupakan kajian literatur yang ditulis dengan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Dari hasil kajian didapatkan gambaran bahwasanya Pola hubungan antara manusia dan kebudayaan juga tidak dapat dipisahkan satu sama lain. Manusia ialah pencipta kebudayaan. Terciptanya kebudayaan merupakan hasil interaksi manusia dengan segala aspek kehidupannya, baik secara abstrak maupun kongkrit. Budaya lahir karena adanya manusia, sehingga selama manusia tetap ada di muka bumi maka kebudayaan juga akan tetap lestari. Dalam perkembangannya, kebudayaan kemudian terus berdialektika mengalami dinamika karena adanya peran manusia yang melaksanakan ataupun mempertahankan kebudayaan tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Manusia, Budaya, Etika, Estetika

Abstract: Conceptual study of humans as human beings with culture, ethics, and aesthetics is still developing considering that humans are complex entities that still require various understandings. Thus, this article attempts to elaborate on conceptual studies as part of enriching discourse and understanding of humans. This article is a literature review written using a qualitative descriptive approach. From the results of the study, it was found that the pattern of relations between humans and culture cannot be separated from one another. Humans are creators of culture. The creation of culture is the result of human interaction with all aspects of life, both abstractly and concretely. Culture was born because of humans, so as long as humans remain on earth, culture will also remain sustainable. In its development, culture then continues to experience dynamics in dialectics because of the role of humans who carry out or maintain this culture.

Keywords: Human, Culture, Ethics, Aesthetics

Recommended citation: Prayogi, A. ., & Prasetya, D. . (2023). Humans as Cultured, Ethical, and Aesthetic Beings: A Conceptual Study. *Jurnal AlifLam: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, 3(2). 14-22. https://doi.org/10.51700/aliflam.v4i1.423

Introduction

The plural means that humans are (in Aristotle's terms) zoon politicon or social beings. As social beings, humans are destined to live in society and interact in it. Humans also have various needs which (many of them) can only be fulfilled perfectly if they are related to other humans in living together. In this case then, the relationship between humans needs to be based on values and ties, especially morally so that there is order. This morality makes human relations balanced where

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each individual will then understand what is his obligation and obtain the rights he should have. This balance of rights and obligations will make human relations pleasant, happy, and able to satisfy all parties. This then becomes the essence of the purpose of human life as a social being. Morals are ultimately needed to ensure that social life is safe and secure for one another.

Aside from being a social being, humans actually have a variety of "meanings". This is because when we talk about humans, we will find a complex understanding that will still be dialectical today. In another language, it can be explained that the human figure is basically a mysterious figure for himself. However, many human thinkers (philosophers) have poured out the understanding of humans. For example, Drijarkara (1969)³ stated that humans are creatures that face and face themselves. Humans face various problems about themselves. Humans, too, can unite with themselves while also taking distance from themselves. Furthermore, humans are creatures that are one with nature and at the same time maintain a distance from it. He has the ability to dialectic with nature, an ability that is not possessed by other creatures, namely animals. Weij (1988)⁴ then also summarizes the definition of human, in which humans are creatures who are good at asking questions about the whole world, even to their own sphere. Humans who ask questions make humans have awareness of themselves so that they have the ability to find the meaning of their lives. Even though they have fundamental differences from animals, humans in several expressions are also often referred to as animals. This can be seen in terms such as animal rationale, animal symbolicum, and animal educandum.

Notonagoro (1980)⁵ states that humans are monoplural creatures. Monopluralism means that humans have various natures (plural) but are one unified whole (mono). This means that the various natures that are owned are actually a complete system. In addition, Notonagoro also said that humans are monodual beings, which means that humans, when viewed from various aspects, are basically a unified whole (mono) even though they have two elements and especially nature, where humans apart from being social beings, are also individualistic beings. As a result, besides what has been said, there are also other terms that are equivalent to humans, such as homo ludens, homo faber, homo seconomicus, and so on. The various human understandings, as has been conveyed, basically just want to illustrate how human understanding is – once again, a (very) complex understanding. This paper will then highlight how humans are understood as creatures that are cultured, ethical, and aesthetic.

Method

The writing of this article uses an analytical descriptive method based on extracting data through the method of literature study/literature study from several sources of literature (written). Writing is done through the process of extracting data from various reference sources that discuss various related articles/writings from various literature on the concept of humans as cultured, ethical, and aesthetic beings. These various sources are published in public media, so that they can be accessed openly through various places (libraries) and internet media. This paper can be an elaboration of various related articles and writings. Likewise, this article is more of a synthesis of existing writings, later it will be seen in relation to what can be done in the current context.

³ N Drijarkara. 1969. *Filsafat manusia*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

⁴ P.V. Weii. 1988. Filsuf-Filsuf Besar Tentang Manusia. (K. Bertens, Trans.) Jakarta: Gramedia.

⁵ Notonagoro. 1980. *Pancasila Secara Ilmiah Populer*. Jakarta: Pantjuran Tujuh.

Result and Discussion Humans as Cultured Beings

There are many definitions given by experts related to the understanding and meaning of culture. There are many aspects and paradigms that can be used to define what culture is. However, in general there is agreement that culture is a term that is closely related to the study of the social sciences and humanities. As part of the science of humans, culture is clearly attached to the humans themselves. From here then humans are known as cultured beings. From their respective cultures, humans are then able to realize it in various forms both abstractly (immaterial) and concrete (material) such as ideas, values, norms, regulations, customs, weapons, traditional houses and others where there are broadly seven elements of culture. universal, including religious systems, social systems, knowledge systems, languages, arts, livelihood systems, as well as technology and equipment systems. All of these cultural elements basically boil down to the complexity of human activities and actions, both as individual creatures and creatures that live in society.⁶

Even though it is complex, it needs to be refocused – as a distinction from discussions related to humans as cultured beings. And in this elaboration, reviews regarding humans as cultural creatures and cultural symbols, remember that culture in the form of symbols can reinforce identity. This can be seen from the attachment to a profession – which in this review means profession/occupation, with symbols. Symbols are used as cultural markers (identities) that have their own characteristics. So it is not strange if the symbol becomes something important in human life as a cultural creature considering that culture in human life is also inseparable from symbols, so that it can be said that humans are also creatures colored with symbolism (animal symbolicum). Symbolism here means a system of thought that emphasizes or follows a pattern based on symbols and symbols. Symbols are also a form of culture that has an inherent meaning that can explain the meaning of human culture.

A well-known anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1992)⁸ explains that to be able to know the culture of a society, it can be done by looking at the symbols used by that society. Geertz further conveyed that a cultural phenomenon can be searched for and its meaning can be traced from the symbols used. And to understand the meaning of symbols, knowledge and understanding of the people who use cultural symbols are needed in their social life. It was further conveyed that culture is a pattern of various meanings that exist in various symbols that are passed down from generation to generation. Culture becomes a system that is inherited and expressed in various symbolic forms in which humans communicate it, perpetuate it, and develop it into knowledge about culture and respond to their lives with that culture.

That is, the symbol has an important position in human culture. The symbol then becomes one of the core of culture in human life, because it becomes one of the markers of human action. As cultured beings, humans communicate by throwing and (then giving) meaning to symbols through their social interactions. This process of communication and meaning makes humans understand reality and can take a role in their culture. Although, it needs to be understood that symbols (sometimes) are more attached to the understanding of objects or situations, symbols are still used by humans as a medium in communicating between humans. Therefore, symbols can also be understood as a means of human communication. And because humans use action as a way of communicating, without symbols, humans will not be able to carry out an action.⁹

⁶ Koentrjaraningrat. 1990. *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Jakarta: Djambata. Hlm. 186-187.

⁷ Arditya Prayogi. 2022. DINAMIKA ISLAM DI MALAYSIA: TELAAH SOSIO HISTORIS. *ETNOHISTORI: Jurnal Ilmiah Kebudayaan dan Kesejarahan*, 9(1), 40-48; Arditya Prayogi, Rohmad Abidin, & Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngaisah. 2022. Masuk Melayu. *Madaniyah*, 12(2).

⁸ Clifford Geertz. 1992. Kebudayaan dan Agama. (F. B. Hardiman, Trans.) Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

⁹ S. Poespowardojo. 1977. Filsafat tentang Manusia. Jakarta: Gramedia.

The link between humans and cultural symbols can be articulated in different forms, the first of which is in practical action. Practical actions can mean actions that are commonly carried out or actions that do not cause something to happen or something that is not shown. This action means that it is related to the process of communication that occurs between humans which contains notifications, appointments, or recognition of something else. Second, pragmatic action. This action is used by humans in communicating to strengthen relationships with other humans. This action is a stage for humans to be able to distinguish between activities related to symbols. Practically, in pragmatic actions, humans give an image related to the symbols used. However, the symbol used is temporary-limited by time. This can be illustrated in the application process by using the ring exchange symbol. The symbolization of exchanging rings is described as a symbol of a "new relationship" even though it is temporary because there is a time limit. Third, effective action. In effective action, humans have demands to be able to communicate effectively and thoroughly and are (still) limited by time. However, this effective action can be done easily because it is not limited by conditions. Fourth, symbolic action. Symbolic action is an action that has a long-term nature. This action is mostly used by humans to communicate with other humans because this action is mostly associated with things that are natural. This action is also reciprocal when it takes place. And in its implementation, symbolic actions are often associated with the past/history. 10 Thus, the symbol is a "simple" marker that humans are cultured beings because they are tools and goals for the needs of human life. Symbols become a basic human need that is not owned by other living things which also makes humans in principle as cultured beings.

However, the most important thing to underline regarding the concept of humans as cultural beings is because humans have two main potentials that other creatures do not have. These two potentials are the existence of mind and mind. Or what is widely known as thoughts and feelings. It is these two main potentials that ultimately make humans a cultured being, because by being human they are at the same time the main thing that distinguishes them from other (living) creatures. With reason and mind, humans can meet the demands of life, both physically and spiritually. With reason and mind, creativity and intention are realized which are used as an effort to create cultural results as part of efforts to fulfill the needs of human life. Creativity as a result of reason can produce knowledge, then feeling can produce aesthetics, and intention can produce norms/rules. It is from this dynamic that humans and culture develop into civilization. So it can be concluded that with the existence of reason and mind, humans can be called cultured and civilized beings.

By having reason, humans then become "perfect" creatures on earth. He becomes a creature that has basic behavior that distinguishes it, especially from animals. These behaviors include, first, that humans have free mastery of nature (the ability to control nature). With this ability, humans can adapt and live in various places. Second, humans have the ability to learn through certain systematics that do not only involve mere instinct. Third, humans have the ability to accumulate knowledge and abilities, so that structural complexity arises in social life. Fourth, humans have the ability to create "tools" that are useful in supporting and even covering their deficiencies. Fifth, humans have language (oral and written) as the ability to communicate. In this case "language" also becomes an important marker of humans as cultured beings. Language - especially writing is an important "tool" that encourages culture to develop. Sixth, humans have various identifications – both physical and non-physical. Seventh, humans live in complex structures. This complexity eventually gives rise to a unique division of labor that cannot be compared to the patterns that exist in other living things.¹¹

Thus, one main thing can be understood in understanding humans as cultured beings. This understanding is that it is human reason and reason that result in humans being able to develop their

¹⁰ Budiono Herusatoto. 2008. *Simbolisme Jawa*. Yogyakarta: Ombak.

¹¹ Djoko Widagdho, & dkk. 2010. *Ilmu Budaya Dasar*. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara. Hlm. 20.

relationship with the natural surroundings, through which humans can develop values towards a phenomenon objectively and critically. It is the human mind that ultimately makes humans able to live life in order to create, create, develop, as well as various other activities that are part of life interactions carried out for the sake of their lives in order to fulfill their life needs.¹²

Humans as Ethical Beings

As creatures that have reason, humans must have good behavior/actions. This is a necessity so that human life among other humans can run well, safely, and comfortably, where each human being will be stuck with an attitude of helping and respecting one another. It is in this context that humans become ethical beings.

Ethics in a simple sense can be understood as manners. In another sense it is often equated with morals. However, in a broad sense ethics (should) be interpreted as rules/norms that are used as guidelines for behaving in society in human life which are associated with good and bad traits. These good qualities and behaviors are then needed by humans in creating a society that is safe, comfortable, and mutually respectful. Ethics is a science related to decency (conscience) and human behavior which provides guidelines, principles, and rules regarding correct behavior. Thus ethics becomes a benchmark for humans in living their lives so that later they do not fall into immoral acts that only prioritize lust by ignoring human traits. Ethics is then attached as part of the moral responsibility of every human being in his life both as individual beings and social beings.

Etymologically the word "ethics" comes from the ancient Greek word "ethikos" which literally means "arising from habit". Etymologically, ethics has a normative meaning in which humans and their actions become objects in it. Gradually, the notion of ethics then changed and developed to keep up with human developments and needs. Thus, as with the discussion of "culture", ethics in the end also has various understandings that have been formulated by various experts. Poerbakawatja and Harahap (1981),¹⁴ for example, define ethics as a science that provides references, directions and a basis for human action. Another expert, Poerwadarminto (1991)¹⁵ defines ethics as the science of an action or human behavior that is seen from the good and bad sides and at the same time looks at the extent to which this behavior can be determined by the human mind. From these various opinions, at least it can be concluded that ethics is closely related to human behavior itself.

Ethics can emerge when humans reflect on various ethical elements (habits) in a spontaneous opinion. Reflections on these various needs will be felt, partly because our ethical opinions are often different from those of others. At this point then ethics as an attempt to find out what should be done by humans. However, it needs to be well understood that methodologically, not every thing that evaluates (and gives value to) actions can be said to be ethical. A critical attitude is still needed in ethics, by also paying attention to methodical and systematic procedures in reflecting. For this reason, ethics can also be understood as "science". As a science, the object of ethics is human behavior. However, unlike other sciences that also examine human behavior, ethics has a normative perspective. That is, ethics sees from a good and bad point of view human actions.

That is, ethics, apart from being a science, is also shown to be the norm. As a norm, ethics shapes humans to be able to act rationally towards the norm itself. This makes humans as autonomous beings. In addition, ethics also makes humans creatures who can think critically to be able to

¹² Herimanto, & Winarno. 2010. *Ilmu sosial dan Budaya*. Jakarta: PT. Bumi Aksara. Hlm. 18-19.

¹³ Irwan Gesmi, Ujang Bakri, & Epizarman. 2019. *Etika Politik dan Kepemimpinan*. Cirebon: Mentari Jaya. Hlm.

¹⁴ R. Soegarda Porbakawatja, H.A.H. Harahap, 1981. Ensiklopedi Pendidikan, Jakarta: Gunung Agung.

¹⁵ W.J.S. Poerwadarminta, W. 1991. Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.

¹⁶ K. Bertens. 2000. *Etika*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

distinguish things related to right and wrong, legal and illegal, and so on.¹⁷ Ethics allows humans to be autonomous with which they can determine their own steps and also determine the direction of the development of society. Aside from being a norm, ethics is also related to values (norms in abstract form). This is because ethics basically talks about matters related to "value predicates". From this value predicate, what is widely known as the "ethical" (code) is born, which is a human guide when carrying out an activity – in this case means work.

However, humans have various limitations and weaknesses, such as making mistakes, making mistakes. It is not impossible that one day there will be deviations or violations of social norms which will lead to a state of disorder and instability that needs to be restored. To enforce order and stabilize the situation, supporting facilities are needed, one of which is this code of ethics. This is because in social life, every human being adheres to ethics which are then translated into moral principles as a reference for his behavior. These moral rules are then translated into social rules which are a reflection of every act of living in society, which is called customary law. This customary law will be consciously respected and obeyed by every member of society.¹⁸

Even though it regulates (organization) relations between humans, this code of ethics is closely related to humans as individual beings because it concerns personal life because it is born from the human conscience itself. The code – so that it later becomes an ethical norm can cover the imbalance of human life and minimize various worries that arise from within, considering that it was born from the human mind. These ethical norms can become a guideline in a concrete way to prevent humans from various evil actions that conflict with other broader social norms. Even though it is not concrete – in the form of an imperative punishment, this ethical norm eventually becomes the first compass for humans in living their lives as ethical beings.

Ethics is ultimately meant to help humans as responsible autonomous beings. This is because in every human action, it is born from a free personal reflection which contains a willingness to be accountable for the action because the action was carried out for various reasons and considerations (on strong personal reflection) why the action was taken. Ethics, giving humans direction so that humans know how they live their lives through various series of actions. Thus, ethics helps humans to be able to make decisions in behaving and acting appropriately in their lives. Therefore, ethics then becomes an integral part of the first basic form of human culture, namely the system of ideas. In this case, ethics in culture is closely related to human needs as cultured social beings. It cannot be understood an sich as culture in the narrow sense of art and customs. From this it can be concluded that ethical humans will be able to produce a culture that has ethical values in it. Ethics in culture contains a necessity so that humans create a culture that contains ethical values that are socially acceptable to most people. An ethical culture is a culture that demeans and even destroys human dignity. Meanwhile, an unethical culture is a culture that demeans and even destroys human dignity.

Humans as Aesthetic Beings

Broadly speaking, aesthetics can be interpreted as a theory of beauty. Because it means beauty, aesthetics is often equated with the concept of art. The word aesthetics terminologically is taken from the Greek word aisthetikos or aisthanomai which means to observe with the senses. In

¹⁷ Juhaya S. Praja. 2005. *Aliran-aliran Filsafat dan Etika*. Jakarta: Kencana. Hlm. 59-60.

¹⁸ Abdulkadir Muhammad. 2006. *Etika Profesi Notaris*. Bandung: : Citra Aditya Bakti.

addition, the notion of aesthetics can also be connected with the Greek word, aisthesis, which means observation or perception.¹⁹ There are at least three aesthetic meanings to be understood. First, the broad meaning. In this sense aesthetics can be interpreted as a postulate "everything that is good is beautiful". Thus aesthetics covers broad dimensions in human life, such as in science, law, character, and so on. Second, aesthetics in a narrow sense. Narrowly, aesthetics is defined as limited to what the visual senses can access. It is limited to visions such as color configurations, or shapes. Third, substantively. Here aesthetics means pure beauty which means human experience related to the use of the five human senses. From these various meanings it can be concluded that the concept of aesthetics is closely related to the concept of beauty in it.²⁰

Humans will naturally tend to things that have beauty. In this case humans as cultural beings will make their culture aesthetic. However, even though humans are aesthetic creatures, the aesthetics of one human being and another is not the same as one another. That is, aesthetics has a subjective meaning that cannot be forced. Aesthetic values —because they are subjective, they focus more on feelings and not on reality. Thus, cultural aesthetics then necessitates tolerance related to respect for the perception of cultural beauty/aesthetics produced by other humans.

Humans by default have the completeness of the five senses with which humans become beings who can feel and sense. With this ability to feel and sense, humans can generate "feelings" from which "satisfaction" will arise. So from this, humans then become aesthetic beings. In the study of philosophy, the predicate of humans as aesthetic beings also becomes something that is inherent in human life. Humans are worshipers of beauty because humans will continue to seek beauty as an effort to show their existence to other humans (Anshoriy & Sudarsono, 2008: 11). In the realm of life, humans will look for something beautiful in their life, such as looking for views in the form of mountain peaks, beaches, and so on that look beautiful. Such things are understood as efforts to quench the thirst for human needs for beauty that arise from their five senses.

It is also necessary to understand that beauty – apart from physical and sensory aspects, there is also other beauty that humans are also pursuing (especially) such as moral and intellectual beauty. These two beauties become something important because with them the values (ethics) of kindness that humans need when they live socially in society will be realized. With moral and intellectual beauty, humans gain self-esteem/dignity as humans. The esthetical element of being that exists in humans can make humans a moral human being, in other words living in customs and manners.²¹ That is, aesthetics will also bring goodness to relationships not only between humans but also human relationships with nature and other living things.

Thus, the element of aesthetic being possessed by humans necessitates him to be able to behave and act based on moral and customary values/ethics so that the aesthetics can be obtained concretely. Concrete actions based on morals and customs are embodied not only to fellow humans but also to nature and other living things, because even though they are not humans, nature and other living things principally also have their own aesthetic elements. Therefore, humans who have an element of esthetical being must be able to maintain the beauty that exists in fellow humans and also in nature and other living things, so that humans can still see, feel, and live the beauty that exists within themselves and their fellow human beings, namely himself and others as aesthetic human beings; and outside himself, namely nature and other living things themselves.

Aesthetics as part of human life is ultimately needed as a prerequisite for humans to become more civilized. Civilization —as a more subtle form of culture, necessitates aesthetics as a prerequisite because it has a number of basic qualities that make human culture high. The main qualities include

¹⁹ K. Kuypers. 1977. *Encyclopedie Van de Filosofie*. Amsterdam: Elsevier. Hlm. 251.

²⁰ Tri Prasetyo Utomo. 2010. Estetika Arsitektur dalam Perspektif Teknologi dan Seni. *Jurnal Pendhapa*, 1 (1), 1-15; Kunto Wibisono, & dkk. 1989. *Materi Pokok Dasar-dasar Filsafat*. Jakarta: Karunika. Hlm. 6.

²¹ Rowlang Bismark Pasaribu. 2013. Manusia dan Keindahan. *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya Dasar* .

unity, balance, harmony and symmetry. In the context of unity, aesthetics requires human life to become an inseparable social system. In this case it means that the social system of society unites and influences one another, so that the function of humans as social beings will be able to run well (in this case it means beautiful). With a social system that runs well, humans will become more civilized.

In the context of balance, aesthetics requires a balance in the ability to behave, think, and a balance in providing opportunities openly to all parties. An imbalance in the ability to behave, think, provide treatment and opportunities will only create an unpleasant atmosphere. In the context of harmony, aesthetics requires conformity in the way of thinking and goals to be achieved among all social systems. The existence of this harmony will simplify, expedite, and create human comfort in living their lives. In the context of symmetry, aesthetics allows forms of material culture to be implemented in good forms. With good forms, humans can enjoy the beauty of culture so that they can develop it into a civilization.

These various basic qualities in aesthetics prove that aesthetics as a branch of philosophy contributes to creating pleasant and progressive human culture. Moreover, in the life of the nation, society and state, of course we can participate in developing aesthetics and building the country towards a superior and dignified civil society civilization. Building the state and nation is not only limited to the physical aspect, such as the construction of road infrastructure, bridges, reservoirs, river channels, office buildings, and housing. If necessary, it is also necessary to build the nation's character from a mental-spiritual perspective so that the future of the nation and state becomes stronger, more dignified, and more civilized.

Conclusion

Culture is a complex concept of the whole system of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, traditions and all other capabilities and habits acquired by a human being as part of the social system of society. Humans are cultured, ethical and aesthetic creatures. This is because humans basically have the main potential that makes them cultural beings, namely by ownership of reason and mind. With their minds and minds, humans utilize their potential to create order and happiness, because with these things human life becomes good, right and just. So, only humans who use their minds and minds to be good, right, and just have the right to get the title of cultured human being.

The pattern of the relationship between humans and culture cannot be separated from one another. Humans are creators of culture. The creation of culture is the result of human interaction with all aspects of life, both abstractly and concretely. Culture was born because of humans, so as long as humans remain on earth, culture will also remain sustainable. In its development, culture then continues to experience dynamics in dialectics because of the role of humans who carry out or maintain this culture. Although eternal, culture as a concept still needs to be preserved. The process of transmitting human culture still needs to be ensured so that the position of humans as cultured beings is also maintained. Therefore, culture is not only formed in the abstract but is also manifested in a real way as a form of human existence in the world. Based on the results or heritage of human culture in the world, a track record of history and a long memory of the collective journey of humanity in the world can be made so that it can be known by future generations of humans.

With the ability to be cultured, humans will also begin to think about how to utilize the potential of nature and other living things to make human work easier and increase the results of their efforts in relation to meeting the needs of everyday life. Humans then have a high drive and desire when compared to other living things. The desire to always add to the results of his efforts to facilitate all his life endeavors. This desire is then accompanied by moral values and a sense of beauty which gives rise to human complexities as ethical and aesthetic beings. This desire then continues to push humans so that it increasingly creates cultural complexity which will culminate in the concept of humans as actors of civilization/civilized beings.

Conflicts of Interest

Funding Acknowledgment

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