How Indonesians Argue

Almost everything said and written about Indonesian society assumes knowledge of how Indonesians argue. But how much do we understand about how Indonesians narrate, discuss, argue, agree or disagree in different contexts? And what do existing accounts presuppose? This project aims critically to interrogate these accounts and to investigate how Indonesians engage with one another in different public settings. Some of the problems of inquiry are obvious. The topic risks being vast and vague: which Indonesians in which contexts (Hobart 2013)?[1] What counts as argument in Indonesia and according to whom? What theory and methods are best suited to studying something seemingly so widespread but inchoate? What are the epistemological, political and practical implications of such research? Indeed, why bother? I discuss these issues below.[2]

The case

Do we really need to research argument in its various forms across different Indonesian societies? This depends on what we consider as argument (which I discuss in detail below). So are there are universally valid criteria? Or do ideas about argument vary cross-culturally and even according to ethnicity, class, gender or religion? And how far are these categories themselves part of a Euro-American epistemology, as indeed is the distinction between epistemology and ontology? If what comprises reasoned argument is universal, then cultural issues are irrelevant (Hollis 1970) or at best secondary (Lukes 1970). Against this, studies, say, of Java have long suggested distinct cultural styles (e.g. Anderson 1990; Geertz 1960; Keeler 1987; Koentjaraningrat 1985; Mulder 1978). But who determines the criteria of argument, reason and universality? It is overwhelmingly Euro-American academics using European criteria (Wilson 1970). The resulting danger is not simply of Eurocentric hegemony, but epistemological imperialism (Overing 1985). But what is at stake if cultural differences are irreducible? We face the spectre of relativism. So reflection on argument not only raises profound philosophical questions, but also inescapably involves power. However convenient it may be to brush over such issues, it is intellectually, ethically and politically dubious.

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[1] If 'Indonesia' is itself a discursive articulation, then enquiry is always already part of what it examines and so is political, in a serious sense. My thanks to Richard Fox for helpful comments on this draft and my apologies for citing myself frequently. I have been thinking about these questions for some time and hope that my introductions to these various debates may be helpful.

[2] The choice of theme is not accidental. It is part of a broader project into Public Life as Performance. More specifically, it is intended as a way of developing a coherent pragmatist account of society: that is an account based on, not merely supplemented by, practice. So doing requires finding alternatives to notions of order, system and structure that I would argue are hegemonic. An alternative to such venerable concepts must account not only for what these concepts have, but also to provide workable approaches to what they have marginalized. More generally, we need to clarify what a pragmatist approach can offer that others do not. Being sensitive to practice, such an approach should in principle itself change through engaging with others' practices. So, how might engaging with Indonesian styles of argumentation problematize and change our own pragmatist presuppositions?

What is at issue?

The concept of argument has a long and tangled history in European philosophy.[3] From Aristotle (or, rather, the various Aristotles or the 'Aristotle-functions') to twentieth-century Rationalists the role of logic and reasoned argument is held to be essential to establishing what is true (whether in terms of pure or practical reason, Kant 1997a, 1997b) as against what is merely persuasive (rhetoric[4]) or false (irrational). Unfortunately, as with Aristotle's Laws of Thought, description tends to shade into prescription or proscription: do they describe how people argue, state how they should argue or forbid people from arguing in certain ways? In any event, there is a formidable lineage of arguments about what constitutes proper argument ready to dismiss anything that does not fit the canons of reason. What is striking about this lineage is what is omitted. All reference to the contexts of utterance, the myriad social roles people occupy or the purposes for which they argue, let alone the cultural or historical circumstances under which they do so, are usually deemed irrelevant because they would void the clear lineaments of reason.[5] In short, what counts as proper argument is carefully defined to exclude all social, cultural, economic and political considerations – in other words what interests almost anyone in the social or human sciences.

Reason and argument

How all this is germane is evident if we briefly review two important debates. The first, about so-called Primitive Thought, was inspired by the discovery that the collective representations of colonized peoples often breached the Laws of Thought, which suggested that non-Western peoples argued and thought in a pre-rational manner.[6] Much more interesting was the subsequent Rationality Debate involving leading philosophers and anthropologists, sparked by Peter Winch's *The idea of a social science*. Winch drew upon Collingwood and Wittgenstein to propose that how people argue is inherently historically and culturally specific, that arguments or 'ideas' may be non-discursive as well as discursive, and that logical relationships themselves depend upon social relations.[7] According to universalists it follows that anyone who adopts such a position is a

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[3] Issues of reason and argument, for example in Islam, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Buddhist philosophical thinking, need consideration insofar as they are relevant to contemporary usage (e.g. Hobart 1985 for Bali).

[4] 'Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion' (Aristotle 1954: 6).

[5] Examining the social context of the Greek city-states where policy was decided by public argument, Geoffrey Lloyd noted that the early logicians were determined to counter the persuasive efficacy of rhetoric (1979). So they had to come up with something even more persuasive and so independent of context, namely truth.

[6] The conventional starting point was Lévy-Bruhl's *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910; translated into English as *How natives think*). The original French however makes clear the hierarchical and racist cosmology.

[7] 'It will seem less strange that social relations should be like logical relations between propositions once it is seen that logical relations between propositions themselves depend on social relations between men' (Winch 1958: 126). We need to recall that for rationalists logical argument is propositional: that it is while it is expressible in words or logical formulae, logic is ultimately independent not only of context and utterances but also of language itself. *Snow is white* is a truth quite separate from its forms of signification.
My use of 'discourse' and 'non-discursive' refers to the work of Foucault and, in particular, Deleuze's thoughtful review of the relationship between the visible and the articulable in Foucault (1988: 47-69).

'relativist', but relative *to what* varies.[8] For those who are interested, the discussion that followed is instructive (Wilson 1970; Hollis & Lukes 1982b; Overing 1985; for a summary, see Hobart 1992). For present purposes what matters is that, although such debates rarely produce an uncontested winner, the case for treating argument as culturally specific, social, contextual and potentially non-discursive emerged as very strong and cogent.

These apparently irreconcilable differences may be approached rather differently, if we consider argument as about persuasion (Aristotle's rhetoric) as much as reason. Writing about the Greek and Roman Classical Scheme, Beale noted that a speech consisted of five parts: Introduction; Narration; Confirmation; Refutation; Conclusion (1986: 35).[9] Compare this with the account of the proper sequence when servants appear on stage in theatre according to an old Balinese actor: 1. *Panglembar* (introductory dance to warm up the audience); 2. *Angucap-ucap* (describing the state of affairs); 3. *Mapaitungan* (deliberation over what is at issue); 4. *Ngalèmèk* (giving advice, often by drawing on past precedent); 5. *Panangkilan* (proceeding to the king's court; Hobart 2011: 23).[10] In each instance different circumstances invite different modes of engagement with the audience and different ways of presenting and developing the theme.

Argument and narrative

Even in the Classical Scheme the relationship between narrative and argument is complex. In the Malay world, this relationship may take a singular form. In her study of Malay *hikayat*, Shelley Errington highlighted the singular structure of narrative with its short declarative sentences. This paratactic style avoids 'the multitude of explanatory linkages characteristic of hypotactic styles' common in European discourse. In other words *hikayat* avoid introducing conjunctions implying temporal, causal or logical relations between statements. By contrast in English, say, the habitual use of conjunctions and subordinate clauses is implicitly interpretive and so argumentative. Such narrative conceals argument even if it purports to be neutral and objective.

If narrative is generally argumentative, are non-discursive ideas? Winch noted of elements as different as dress or silent scenes in films that 'there is no sharp break between behaviour which expresses discursive ideas and that which does not' (1958: 129). By imposing a rigid dichotomy of reason *versus* emotion, the rationalists end up confining argument to propositions, so leaving out almost all of social life. Collingwood pointed out that the entire argument is reversible such that 'speech is after all only a system of gestures…[s] in this sense it may be said that dance is the mother of all languages'… Music is one order of languages and speech is another; each expresses what it does express with absolute clarity and precision (1938: 243-5; my reading of Collingwood is

[8] The question was neatly posed by Hollis and Lukes (1982a), who distill five different kinds of 'relative to what?'. My response to the question is not to leap into 'loony relativism', but to argue that social analysis is inevitably doubly discursive (and non-discursive), because it is wise to start by assuming that the intellectual practices of academics and the intellectual and lived practices of those they study may differ.

[9] These are respectively: 1. Warming up the audience and announcing the theme, 2. Presenting the circumstances, history and background, 3. Laying out good reasons for accepting the argument, 4. Considering difficulties or alternative arguments, 5. Summing up.

[10] The celebrated Balinese Lègong dance also has four or more definite stages: 1. *Pepeson* (the entrance onto stage); 2. *Pangawak* (the slow introduction of thematic movements); 3. Pangècèt (the faster development of the plot); 4. *Pakaad* (Conclusion and departure).

that the tricky term 'expresses' here is meant constitutively). Errington argues that 'the *hikayat* consists not, in a sense, of narrative, but of a succession of images' (1979: 235) and links them to *wayang*. To understand the cultural range of argument may therefore entail considering quite different media.

Indonesian practices challenge the adequacy of Aristotelian accounts of narrative and drama, as Alton Becker famously argued (1979). Not only are broadly *a priori* categories like space, time and causation called into question, but the *bêtes noires* of reason, contingency and paradox, are celebrated. Curiously, people have paid less attention to Becker's most radical suggestion: that a *wayang* performance necessarily involves several quite different, and incommensurable, epistemologies or even ontologies (1979: 224-5). The idea that different kinds of being work with quite different presuppositions outflanks even Bakhtin's notion of polyphony.[11] The implications for the study of how argument works in Indonesia are fundamental and mind-blowing. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in the rationalists' philosophy.

This however is far from the end. Meaning (or at least what Stuart Hall called 'the preferred reading' 1999: 513) is effectively determined at the act of formulation. One of the most significant contributions of Cultural Studies has been to question the closure around the process of production at the expense of how different people engage with and use what they read, hear and see. While it is wonderfully convenient – and intellectually lazy – to concentrate on the speaker's or author's intention to the exclusion of much else,[12] it flies in the face of observable practice everywhere and, strikingly, in Indonesia. Of *wayang* spectators, Becker noted: 'One responds according to his makeup. There can be no single, intended correct response to a play, no one complete interpretation. This multiplicity of events and perspectives builds the kind of thick texture that Javanese favor (1979: 230).

The missing audience

A corollary of producer-driven models is the stark asymmetry between the speaking or producing subject and the recipients. Whether explicitly or not, the former are conventionally attributed with agency, while the latter are assumed to be relatively passive.[13] No matter that ethnographic studies show how active, diverse, unpredictable and original audiences are in how they engage with media of all kinds, like vampires analyses focused on production insistently rise again from the grave. This skew is exacerbated by assumptions that European commonsense ideas about agency are universal, which is questionable not least in the Malay world. 'There is a sense in which *hikayat* hardly have boundaries: they consist of stories or episodes which travelled around the Malay world and were on occasion "caught" by a scribe and given a name' (Errington 1979: 236; cf. Hobart 1990).

If meaning and so argument cannot be adequately or objectively captured in the

[11] Becker put more emphasis on epistemology than ontology. And later he tended to backtrack to conflate epistemology with worldview. A more radical reading, which includes multiple ontologies as well as epistemologies or transcending the dichotomy, is worth exploring.

[12] Auteurist film theory carries this to extremes.

[13] In *What is an author*, Foucault argued that attributing an author to a work was part of a complex of disciplinary practices which restricted how a work might be interpreted as so minimize its polysemy (1980). That much art, dance and music in Java and Bali is unattributed raises intriguing questions.

moment of production, what follows? For a start we need to take account of the cultural practices of, and understandings about, such processes in context from inception to use. Further it becomes impossible to pretend that scholars do not impose their own discursive frameworks with their inevitable limits. So issues arise not only of double discursivity,[14] but also of non-discursivity. Now the force of Foucault's point becomes clearer: 'one does not interpret what there is in the signified, but one interprets, fundamentally, *who* has posed the interpretation. The origin [*principe*] of interpretation is nothing other than the interpreter' (1990: 66, emphases and parentheses in the original). So the interpretive practices of both participants and analysts become an object of study.

If studying the relatively small and accessible number of producers is problematic, what about readers and audiences? The problem of knowing what they think is compounded by the impossibility of even knowing who they are – the trap facing audience studies (Ang 1991; Morley 1992; Nightingale 1996). The seeming impossibilities stem from a problematic epistemology. As Foucault asked: 'What, then, is so perilous in the fact that people speak, and that their discourse proliferates to infinity?'(1981: 52). It requires changing the object of study from minds and meanings to the practices through which speech and action is regulated and controlled.[15]

This approach opens up ways of rethinking familiar problems. For, among the procedures for controlling and delimiting discourse, one is particularly important:

> there is scarcely a society without its major narratives, which are recounted, repeated, and varied; formulae, texts and ritualised sets of discourses which are recited in well-defined circumstances; things said once and preserved because it is suspected that behind them there is a secret or a treasure. In short, we may suspect that there is in all societies, with great consistency, a kind of gradation among discourses: those which are said in the ordinary course of days and exchanges, and which vanish as soon as they have been pronounced; and those which give rise to a certain number of new speech-acts, which take them up, transform them or speak of them, in short those discourses which, over and above their formulation, are said indefinitely, remain said, and are to be said again. We know them in our own cultural system: they are religious or juridical texts, but also those texts (curious ones, when we consider their status) which are called 'literary'; and to a certain extent, scientific texts (Foucault 1981: 56-7).[16]

Reason and argument, far from determining what should be the case, are themselves in significant part a function of narrative, rarefying and disciplining practices. People do not enunciate, argue, interpret, narrate and so forth *ex cathedra*. Even though they may not do so publicly or at the time, other people are busy commenting on what one another said. So

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[14] I use the expression 'double discursivity' to highlight the problems of interpretation and translation between languages which are radically different (see Quine 1960; Asad 1986). Following Collingwood (1940), I take it that distinct societies have different metaphysics: that is people use different presuppositions in different ways in daily life. On my understanding, this usage links fairly neatly with Foucault's later sense of '*discours*,' for instance as elaborated by Deleuze (1986). So the reference to double discursivity aims to draw attention not only to the potentially incommensurate differences between societies, but to the practices by which scholars seek to transcend the differences.

[15] As the issues have been discussed at length by Foucault (e.g. 1981), I shall not elaborate in detail here. Briefly every society has procedures of prohibition and exclusion (determining who may speak about what); internal procedures (how discourses regulate themselves) and procedures that regulate the terms of access.

[16] The reader will have noticed the pernicious circularity that risks pervading even Foucault's writing. How do we define society independent of its collective representations of argumentation, narrative etc.

practices of commenting in their many forms and contexts – whether by the great and good or humble readers and spectators – emerge as a coherent object of study.

The non-discursive

A perennial problem is the relationship between 'the articulable and the visible, the discursive formations and the non-discursive formations, the forms of expression and the forms of content' (Deleuze 1988: 49). Because Europeans, and certainly academics, overwhelmingly articulate things verbally, in *The archaeology of knowledge*, Foucault stressed the 'primacy of the systems of a statement over the different ways of seeing or perceiving… but primacy has never meant reduction. Throughout the entire range of Foucault's work, visibilities will remain irreducible to statements and remain all the more so for developing a passion for the action of statements' (Deleuze 1988: 49). Implicit here however is a dichotomy between saying and seeing, as if argument belonged to the former, but not the latter, which Collingwood dismissed. 'There is a story that Buddha once, at the climax of a philosophical discussion…took a flower in his hand, and looked at it; one of his disciples smiled, and the master said to him, "You have understood me"' (1938: 243). If a gesture contributes to a discussion, should we not investigate as argument the myriad forms that movement, song, music and sheer spectacle take from the great ceremonies in *kraton* and Balinese temples to films, soap operas and so forth?

What is the object of study?

Like Lewis Carroll's Snark, the initial object of inquiry, argument, transforms when you look at it into something else. Quite apart from the philosophical difficulties, how are we to rethink different European ideas about, and uses of, argument into different Indonesian contexts? We run immediately into both cultural connotations and stereotypes. 'Argue' in English often suggests sharp public disagreement or opposition.[17] Conversely Indonesians, exemplified by Javanese, are supposed to go to great lengths to avoid this. However, what exactly is the evidence upon which such generalizations are based, according to whom, directed towards whom, under what circumstances and for what purpose? Unless we interrogate critically such stereotypes, all we have is tittle-tattle.[18] They tell us more about who posed the interpretation.

What exactly is the object of research in this instance? Argument even in English does not comprise a discriminable class of phenomena. And it founders on the rocks of double discursivity. So I would prefer to examine those important narratives, texts and spectacles, sounds, gestures and acts which people value, together with their antitheses: what they must shun, leave unspoken or even unthought. On this account these in turn are subject to procedures of disciplining, regulation and rarefaction and so forth. How such procedures vary across Indonesia by class, gender, religion or whatever in different places at different times becomes an object of research. If this seems rather abstract and theoretical, let me

[17] Interestingly, of the nine main classes of definition of 'argue' and eight of 'argument', the stress is on deliberation and reasoning rather than confrontation.

[18] Anecdotally, Balinese are often considered very forthright compared to Javanese (all 80 or so million of them?). In my experience of working in both Bali and Central Java over nearly 50 years, I tend to find Balinese on the whole more indirect: *plus Javanais que les Javanais*. But that is merely my casual impression. It is useful to remember Goodman's point that you cannot represent something as itself in its full complexity in all contexts. We represent something *as* something else to someone on some occasion for some purpose towards some outcome.

rephrase: argument, narrative, ritual or spectacle and their regulative procedures are usefully rethought as the outcome of observable practice.

Where does this leave argument as the titular theme of this project? I have suggested that it resolves itself into other issues, which I think are worth examining as a way of addressing what would otherwise be nebulous. There are reasons however for foregrounding the term argument with its connotations. We cannot assume that words broadly to do with what we would call 'argument' in English have similar connotations, let alone use, in different Indonesian societies. Given the differences between dictionary definitions and commonsense usage in various European and Indonesian languages, I hope irreversibly to destabilize the familiar Eurocentric presuppositions that scholars so often bring to bear.[19] The same obviously holds for other concepts like narrative, text, spectacle, ritual, discipline and so on.[20] That seems a necessary first step towards taking double discursivity seriously.

Practice and Performance

A brief explanation of what I mean by practice is necessary. It is neither commonsense practice nor a supplement of structure as used by, say, Bourdieu (1977, 1990; cf. Jenkins 1992). It derives from Foucault's various senses of practice, Deleuze's of pragmatics (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) and Butler's of performance (1990, 1994). I take practices to be primary and structure, system or order to emerge from practices of representing, claiming, denying and so on. So, by practices, I refer to those recognized, complex forms of social activity and articulation, through which agents set out to maintain or change themselves, others and the world about them under varying conditions. Such an account is deliberately open and problematizes *inter alia* what it is to articulate, to recognize as, or to ascribe agency.[21] This might seem abstract and complex, but it offers a quite different way

[19] An example is the unwitting use of metaphor, which is virtually never dead. Nor is it harmless (Quine 1979). Lakoff and Johnson note how widely English usage of argument draws upon military metaphors (Argument is War) and invite the reader to 'imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way (1980: 5). You need not necessarily go to the opposite ends of the earth to find this happening. Seminars in many universities are strikingly stylized, like something from the court of Louis XIV. The philosopher of science, Mary Hesse, points out that metaphor underlies 'the "objectified" or "factual" world…[because] language in use remains essentially metaphoric… Metaphoric usage implies evaluative interpretations as well as descriptions, that is it is, directed towards stating a "proper stance" towards the world, which in turn implies that metaphor is concerned with action as well as description' (1984: 40-41). This leaves the interesting question of the significance of metaphor in, say, different parts of Indonesia.

[20] Each of these abstract nouns requires rephrasing. The questions become: what are, or were, the actual disciplinary practices? Similarly how are rites or spectacles (or, I might add, political speeches, newspaper columns, films, radio or television programmes) put together? Narrative is interesting because what would otherwise be a monologue may be split between different voices as in *wayang* or modulated with pauses so that the audience can respond in some way. 'Text' is perhaps the most interesting, because it assumes a luminous transcendence for many scholars, despite Barthes's strictures (1977). I would argue strongly for reworking text as practices of textualizing (note taking, composing, redacting, printing, reading, commenting). Just think of a treatment for a film or television programme, which goes through many revisions, only to be reworked when the cameras start turning – you cannot film a text. Once the editing is complete though, the product is re-textualized as promotional blurb, the director's *ex post facto* explication of their intention, through the reviews, commentaries in the press, social media and so on.

[21] Recognizing implies recognizing as or representing as. Practices are not natural objects in the world. Articulation here is in the sense argued by Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 104-14). If actions are taken as primary, activities are sets of actions. Practices are more complex in that they involve the articulation of subjects,

of thinking about the Malay world. Errington makes a striking remark in passing when she observes that 'the *hikayat* does not so much record the past as bring it into being' (1979: 242). The contrast with Clifford Geertz's conventional view is striking when he wrote, for example, that 'the Balinese view of the past is not, in the proper sense of the term, really historical at all' (1973: 334), which presupposes that real history somehow corresponds to what happened. Readings of texts, theatre performances (and perhaps music?) re-create and bring to life a state of affairs.[22] So argument in whatever sense should not be measured against supposedly universal criteria of reason, but investigated for what they do.

How does this discussion bear on the study of argument? Rethought as practice, apparently simple events and procedures become more interesting. Take the example of a film or television broadcast. Instead of 'reading' this as a static text, we can consider the assemblage of practices that went not only into producing it, but which continue long after screening. A more precise description would then start with the earliest thoughts and conversations in which a possibility is mooted, through the whole process of production (in which agency is always complex), marketing and dissemination to reception and use. These last need not be a mystery, because among the innumerable commentaries people make we can select those we deem important (the question of method) and some commentaries, following Foucault articulate or enunciate. These in turn are open to counter-articulation. To avoid the risk of substituting one positivity with another, any study of argument should also consider what is omitted, whether as what is sutured, what is left unsaid or unrepresented, what is unsayable or even what is rendered unthinkable. An example of effective suturing or cauterizing might be the role of *musyawarah* in Pancasila accounts of democracy, which gerundively suggest deliberation leading to consensus (Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings 2004: 650). We need not follow each step in every analysis, but it is useful to recognize that they exist.

Stressing practice has a further implication. Practices take place in the context of previous practices and often anticipate subsequent practices. In other words, they are dialogic. How the participants recognize, use or ignore these dialogic potentialities may prove important. While it might be reasonably easy to inquire when we can ask, if we are dealing with historical events or texts, then we may need something like the method of critically re-enactment proposed by Collingwood (1946; Boucher 1992). So aspects of a critical approach have been around for a long time, but have been sidelined by the predominant taste for neat systemic and structural answers, however inadequate.

What academic discipline?

How might we set about researching argument in the above sense? The route that I have taken to justify the project is highly theoretical and draws on Anthropology, Post-

objects and purposes. Performances in turn articulate practices into recognizable complexes, which resemble Peirce's notion of Thirds. The categories are evidently overlapping and situational.

[22] 'Performance does not represent the world: it creates or articulates it. So judging performance as inauthentic or fake is a category mistake. The question is whether it convinces and is effective. And assemblages of such practices comprise a performance, however imagined' (Hobart 2013: 519, where I explain the relationship of practice to performance in more detail). This approach to history, which he also argued applied equally to anthropology, is from Collingwood.

structuralism and Cultural Studies.[23] However the topic might just as easily have been approached from disciplines as diverse as area studies, art, ethno-musicology, historiography, performance or theatre studies, philology, religious studies or rhetoric. In each case, the results would probably be at least, and perhaps more, informative. The aim is to encourage dialogue, even if at moments this risks becoming cacophony. With the stress on everyday practice as against ideal models and stereotypes, I hope it is clear that Indonesians of all walks of life have as much to contribute as Western academics.

What to study?

A problem with a critical analysis of Indonesian styles of argument and story-telling is that unlike, say, South Asia or Classical Greece, there is little written classification or codification nor is there an *ars rhetorica*.[24] Yet it is overwhelmingly clear that there are complex constitutive rules (Searle 1969: 50ff.) and understandings across a whole range of activities from political speeches (think of Sukarno) to *kakawin*, *kidung* and popular forms like *geguritan*, or to theatre, where actors and the more knowledgeable spectators work with a largely shared appreciation. Such mutual knowledge has passed into mass media like television, as many actors originally worked on the stage and audiences bring prior experience to their viewing. Asking the more self-reflexive *dalang* or actors gives insight into how they set about their work. However, to the best of my knowledge, no one has really formulated them for different spheres of activity. So we do not know how widely shared they are, nor whether there is significant overlap between different kinds of discourse. Perhaps more intriguing is how we might access the constitutive rules of art, dance and music.[25]

For this inquiry to question the existing state of knowledge, it needs to draw upon a wide range of disciplines, each with their distinctive approaches. Three broad concerns however do seem central to this symposium. First, inquiry is critical in a strong sense. That is it is not just critical of the ostensible object of study, namely how Indonesians

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[23] Cultural Studies has become so popular as to cover a multitude of sins. Here I refer to the genealogy originating from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which emphasized culture as a site of political struggle.

As to what 'post-structuralism' refers to, let me draw on Foucault.

> An entire series of intellectual figures were defined as "structuralists" who had conducted completely different kinds of investigations, but having one point in common: the need to oppose that set of philosophical elaborations, considerations, and analyses centered essentially on the theoretical affirmation of the "primacy of the subject". One went from a kind of Marxism that agonizes over the concept of alienation, to phenomenological existentialism centered on lived experience, to those tendencies of psychology that in the name of experience and of making it adequate to man (sic) – let's say the "experience of the self" – rejected the theme of the unconscious (1991: 85-86).

[24] Zoetmulder notes that 'the art of writing poetry in ancient Java was given the name *kalangwan* or *kalangön*' (1974: V), but focuses on texts rather than principles of composition. On *kakawin* composition in Bali, see Rubinstein 2000. Hildred Geertz has a book in press, which contains an essay on story-telling as practice in Bali. We shall request permission to circulate a copy.

[25] A kind reading of Searle's notion of constitutive rules can be translated, I think, into Collingwood's idea of presuppositions. Absolute presuppositions, being absolute, are taken for granted and so are accessible to an analyst but not to the participants. Relative presuppositions are closer to working assumptions and implicit or explicit rules. Collingwood argued that the study of presuppositions is the proper subject matter of metaphysics (1940). Here we might designate them metaphysics-in-the-buff because they are not dressed up and so analysts must infer them from observation and discussion. Humans spend a remarkable amount of time commenting on what one another do and say. As Foucault indicated, commentary is an excellent means of examining the order of discourse.

argue, but it is equally critical of the cultural presuppositions of those studying such questions. This matters because anything that bears on argument usually results in a nigh-compulsive insistence of imposing Euro-American criteria of rationality as hegemonic. It follows though that a critical stance requires us to be as self-critical as is possible about such a pragmatist approach. Second, the intellectual vocabulary is shot through with culturally specific, but denied, presuppositions about structure, system, coherence and the superiority of the knowing subject over the object of inquiry. So the research aims to examine not the ideal or imposed structures, but the practices in which Indonesians engage, including, crucially, reflection and commentary on their own practices and ideals. Third, to obviate these difficulties, the participants in the symposium need to be singularly well versed not only in the disciplines that they criticize, but also to have extensive native or field experience including an unusually fine understanding of local language and other germane media. As this brief introduction raises far more questions than it answers, what follows aims to consider these.

Granted how unexplored the topic is, it would be premature to lay down what are interesting or relevant topics or how they should be approached. A few broad fields come immediately to mind though. Because relatively much has been written about literature in Java and Bali, it seems worthwhile to review the structure of narrative, the styles of argument used and the practices involved insofar as we can infer them. Similarly we know for theatre and public speaking that Javanese and Balinese have both highly developed rhetorical devices and a distinctive semantic theory (for Bali, e.g. Hobart 1999, 2015). The work of Becker and Errington *inter alia* suggests it may well be worthwhile to re-examine how general such alternative frameworks are and whether they are confined to classical forms like *hikayat*, *babad* and *wayang*. There are also questions about argument in the fairly formal sense of what modes of reasoning and argumentation people use and what kinds of forms of persuasion. At one end there are questions of when and how they make use of identifiable Arabic, South Asian or Buddhist logics; at the other of regularities in styles of arguing in everyday life, according to class, culture, gender or other possible distinctions.[26]

Exclusive focus on such formal criteria may however distract attention from culturally specific presuppositions that often pass unremarked upon, but which are crucial both to formulating arguments or narratives and to appreciating them. Bakhtin in his study of European literature designated these 'chronotopes' (1981). They include not only presuppositions about time and space distinctive of a particular cultural genre at a given historical moment, but also by extension to ideas of causation, reason, agency and subjecthood.[27] Together with Foucault's work on how human subjects have been imagined, constituted and disciplined under changing conditions of knowledge and power, we have a potentially interesting way of approaching the presuppositions involved in argument that lies beyond the ken of most European philosophers.

[26] Elsewhere I have examined quotidian argument among Balinese, which has surprising parallels with *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* (1985), and, less surprisingly, complicated forms of inference and indirect speech (2015).

[27] Amelie Rorty (1976) has a fascinating and more wide-ranging analysis of how notions of the person changed under different social and historical circumstances in Europe. Although both studies restrict themselves to Europe, by being explicit about this, they do not attempt to preempt comparable studies elsewhere.

Discursive materials are easier to analyze using the highly developed discursive techniques of scholarship. However what about art, dance and music? Paintings in Indonesia often depict stories, as may dance, which is accompanied by music. To restrict inquiry into discursive forms seems a needless and Eurocentric restriction. Worsley (1984) has shown how Balinese paintings are quite capable of argument, in that they may elaborate alternative accounts of society. Dance and music are evidently also dialogic in the sense that they are composed and performed in response to previous performances. However dance specialists rarely inquire about the dialogic or argumentative aspects of dance when speaking to choreographers or performers. Do comparable concerns permeate musical composition and performance?

At this project has by its nature to be exploratory, I do not want to prejudge or pre-determine what questions and lines of inquiry might be fruitful. So I would like to invite the participants to think how they might wish to proceed from here.

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