Shaping Moral through Art and cultures

By Dr. Kun Setyaning Astuti,M.Pd.

Yogyakarta State University

Indonesia

**Abstract**

One consequence of globalization is cultural transformation that occurs very fast. Individual idealism crashes with other parties' needs which are macro in nature. Global view embraced by most people will form a paradigm that influences one's view and assessment toward a phenomenon. To anticipate cultural crashes, a person should have many optional attitudes, so that his actions can be accepted by people around him. It is possible to take different stance when facing the same problem and taking the same stance when facing different problem. A person who can “push and draw” the principle appropriately will be able to adjusts himself comfortably, so is the existence of a nation. A nation will be able to live with other nations harmoniously if that nation understand the need of other nations without sacrificing its own needs. To balance different needs of many nations, the parties need to have agreement on moral foundation.

Understanding each other among nations can be reached if each nation can understand cultures, both of its own cultures and cultures of other nations. Art is the highest cultural achievement that contain values of life that are highly respected by a nation. Hence, arts is a reflection of moral values of a nation. Besides that, arts can be used as media to deliver moral messages. Through arts, moral messages can be conveyed effectively, because human beings naturally need esthetic touches in their life. Those messages can be conveyed through sound, visual, movement, and their combinations.

The essence of arts itself, viewed from their output, is capable of developing imagination, intellect, expression, sensitivity, and skills. It can also apply technology for performing arts. The creation process of art, viewed from its outcome, can stimulate empathy, tolerance, democracy, civilization, and harmony of life in heterogeneous society.

1. **Introduction**

One consequence of globalization is cultural transformation that occurs very fast. Individual idealism crashes with other parties' needs which are macro in nature. Global view embraced by most people will form a paradigm that influences one's view and assessment toward a phenomenon. To anticipate cultural crashes, a person should have many optional attitudes, so that his actions can be accepted by people around him. It is possible to take different stance when facing the same problem and taking the same stance when facing different problem. A person who can “push and draw” the principle appropriately will be able to adjusts himself comfortably, so is the existence of a nation.

The existence of a nation is determined by its capability to adapt to the global needs. But on the other side, a nation will lose its self-identity or even has to be willing to let its needs go if the nation follows the global view without paying attention to its local potential and its own needs. A nation that loses its identity will become more helpless to defend pressure from outside, and it does not have freedom to determine its own fate.

It is very important for a nation to take a stance when it has to adjust itself to the global needs and when it has to defend its idealism. There are many nations that hold their principles or idealism and succeed, but there are also many nations that stick to their idealism blindly and finally collapse.

A nation is supported by its people. All people have natural tendency to choose good things and avoid bad things.The goodness can be viewed from many angles such as pragmatism, moralism, and religion. Thus, all nations have natural tendency to choose and do good things; one of them is to live together with other nation harmoniously.

A nation will be able to live with other nations harmoniously if that nation understands the need of other nations without sacrificing its own needs. To balance different needs of many nations, the parties need to have agreement on moral foundation. The problem is that even though moral is universal, every nation actualizes it in different ways. This is because moral is formed by norms and idealism, and moral values are dependence on situation and condition. Besides that, moral does not have legal sanction as mentioned by Morris (2000) bellow:

“Morality in this sense is a set of norms, ideals, and dispositions governing conduct and thought that claims authority, as in condition.The set of norms making up common morality must satisfy the existence condition mentioned earlier. The claims of morality are at least as audacious as those of law. Its reasons are also meant to be preemptive, and it too claims supremacy. Our moral obligations differ from our legal obligations in two important respects. First, most are not contentindependent.Secondly, some moral obligations appear to be general in a particular sense: they hold for all agents and all obligations, at all times.”

Moral is normative. It means that moral depends largely on the norms embraced by a nation which is sometimes very different from each other. The norm embraced by a nation is reflected by the manner, behavior, and etiquette of its society. Even though in moral there is no legal sanction like in a legal system, the violation of the norm can cause social sanction that indirectly can disturb someone's life.

Hence, every nation should be able to understand each other in order to live together harmoniously. Understanding each other among nations can be reached if each nation can understand cultures, both of its own and cultures of other nations.

Every nation has geographic condition, natural resources, and historical background which are different, so that their cultures also vary. However, in order to live harmoniously, each nation should be willing to learn to understand cultures of other nations. By understanding cultures of other nations, we will be able to understand ethics, norms, and moral of a nation.

1. **Moral values in Art and Cultures**

Art is the highest achievement that contain values of life that highly respected by a nation. Hence, arts is a reflection of moral values of a nation. In Indonesia, which consists of 33 provinces, there are many traditional arts that contain deep philosophical values, for example, *Bedoyo* and *Srimpi* dances from Yogyakarta. *Bedoyo* is traditional dance which actually had been introduced in the seven or eight century of Mataram kingdom I. Some people say that the *Bedoyo* dance is symbolizing a mediator’s highest achievement during *semedi* ( meditation) by closing the 9 human orifices and deflating all bad desires. The *Srimpi* dance is very soft movement depecting a good moral behavior. The dancers have the same dresses and make up, wish that people not to be jealous one to another. The life of mankind should be in accordance with the nature consisting of fire, water, wind and soil.

Another example is *Saman* from Aceh province in Sumatra. This art is a combination between music and dance that uses voice and hand clapping to express the ideas. *Saman* contains *pantun* (lyric) that contains of advise about life. In Makasar, South Sulawesi, there is *Pakarena*. It is a combination between song music and dance which is performed on the haverst and planting seasons. This performance is also conducted in ***Jaga*** fiesta. Takalar people in Makasar believe that a child who is ritualized with this ceremony will always get protection and be free from dangers.

At the beginning of the 21st century, in Indonesia there is growing and developing *nasyid* music especially in Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan Islands. According to Mulyani (2003:7), *nasyid* has entered both campuses and out campuses, from big cities to rural areas. Berg (2007:5) says that *nasyid* is Islamic music whose strength is on the religious propagation. Propagation is an activity to teach about Islam, and has strength as well as legitimacy which is believed as an obedient to Alloh (God). The lyrics and the religious messages contained in *nasyid* make it have strength and become an important part of Muslim societies. In its development, the themes of *nasyid* songs not only consist of *jihad* and obedience to Alloh ( God) but also develop pluralism and universalism in accordance with people's way of thinking which also changes at present.

The values of moral teaching are also contained in cultures. As an example, in Indonesia, there are many Javanese literature works as a heritage from the past, for instance *Serat Wulang* *Reh*, which means to teach to control one self. *Serat Wulang Reh* was written by Sri Pakubuwana IV. It contains the teaching of etiquette. Darmosoetopo ( Suharti, 2004) states that etiquette means *muna-muni, tinda*k *tanduk, solah pratingkah* ( how to talk, to act, to behave) in order to be in accordance with the existing norms. *Wulang Reh* teaches us how to respect other people and how to avoid *adigang* (arrogant because of high position/authority), *adigung* (arrogant because of the knowledge one has),and *adiguna* ( arrogant because of bravery). Those characteristics have to be avoided because a person who has such characteristics tends to underestimate other people and to be careless which can endanger himself.

The explanation above shows that arts and cultures have moral teaching that needs to be carried out by people that support it. That moral teaching regulates human relation, relation between human and God, and relation between human and their environment. The objective of that teaching is to manage behavior in a society in order people can live peacefully, quietly, comfortably, and prosperously. That is because every individual keeps and respects other people's right.

1. **The function of arts and cultures as educational media**

Art is human expression which is done beautifully. A culture is a social milieu where arts grow and develop. The elements of art are music, dance, fine arts, and literature. Soedarsono (2002:118) states that the function of arts is not only as an entertainment but also as a educational media, a means of religious and customary rituals, and as a presentation of aesthetic.

The function of art as educational media makes the art have high potential to shape moral because art has big influence on affective development. Dewantara (1977:303-304) says that music can train listening sensitivity, that leads to soft feeling and behavior; that practice can balance between the language and the behavior, both of which are inseparable. Rudolf Steiner (Dewantara,1977: 312-313), in his theory called *anntroposofisch onderwijs*, says that music- in this case rhythm- can facilitate physical work, support the brain work, improve moral, and bring the spiritual power alive. Khan (2002 : 121) states that sound has certain psychological values, every different sound expresses a value, a sensitive person can recognize someone's personality just by listening his voice.

That art is an effective tool for education is also stated by Wara Kushartanti (2004:10). She explains it through the function of brain as follows:

“Both sides of brain are connected by a corpus Colosseum switch system which is very complicated with 300 millions active nerve cells. This system balances messages left and right brain parts by combining abstract and holistic pictures with concrete and logic messages. For example, when we listen to a song, our left brain will process the lyrics while our right brain processes the music. Thus, it is no surprising that we can understand the lyrics of popular song easily because our both left and right brain hemispheres are involved”

Based on the above explanation, it is obvious that art is an effective medium to convey messages. Through arts, the whole parts of brain are involved in processing the message so that it is easy to be understood by its listeners. It is also through arts that moral messages can be conveyed effectively because human beings naturally need aesthetic touches in their life. Those messages can be conveyed through sound, visual, movement, and their combinations.

The activity to convey messages through arts and cultures was done by people in the past, and it proved effective. The spreading of Islam in Java was pioneered by Walisongo ( nine saints). They propagated Islam using arts and culture as media. Walisongo taught Islam through wayang (shadow puppet) and gamelan which were influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism. Besides that, The Walisongo also composed Javanese songs whose lyrics contain Islamic teaching (Berg,2007:9). Berg says:

“...the High respected and admired to Walisongo, who are considered the first men to bring Islam to the island of Java. Often mythologized, their graves remind holy Islamic sites in Indonesia today. During proselytization of Java, it is said that the Walisongoused Javanese culture, such as wayang kulit and gamelan, to promote their teachings”

In line with Berg, Soekirno (2004: 60) says:

“...It (ilir-ilir-Javanese song)was believed to have been composed by Sunan giri in the 16th century. He was one of the first Islamic preachers in Java known as the Walisongo (nine saints). The Walisongo had turned Java toward a form of Islam that was shaped by Javanese culture, which had long been influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism.”

Wiwien (2007:50) adds that at the 15th century, Sunan Kali Jaga ( one of the Walisongo) taught Islam by using cultures rooted in Java such as wayang (puppet), gamelan, songs, carving, and batik which were very popular at that time. Sunan Kali Jaga's teachings were embraced by authorities, then followed by common people. Eventually, most of Javanese who were Hinduist or Buddhist converted into Muslim. Even now more than 200 million people in Indonesia embrace Islam.

1. **Arts and Cultures as Media to Shape Moral**

Art is a result of creation, feeling, and a will. Therefore, art is an activity to cultivate feeling which is supported by thinking capability and kinesthetic skills. Within art, the involvement of cultivating feeling is very dominant so that subjectivity plays a significant role in arts. Performing arts should be done whole expressively so that it can give deep impression. This is the strength of art if compared to other fields. Within art, it is not enough just to show the technique and materials correctly, but it is also important to do it whole heartedly.

In general, there are three phases in creating an art: appreciation, creation, and expression. Appreciation is an awareness to appreciate art works by recognizing various forms of art. Creation is activities to create/ produce art work, while expression is activities to express or actualize the art work with certain techniques.

The essence of art itself, viewed from their output, is capable of developing imagination, intellect, expression, sensitivity, and skills. It can also use technology for performing arts. Dryden (Kushartanti, 2004:9) mentions ten basic laws of brain, three of which are: (1) Imagination can strengthen brain to achieve whatever wanted; (2) Brain never takes rest. When rational brain gets tired and can not accomplish the job, intuitive brain will continue it; (3) Brain and heart try to be close. If brain is trained continuously, it will become wiser and calmer.

Thus, wisdom ( as a part of moral characteristics) is obtained from brain work and heart. As explained previously, within arts, cultivating feeling involves heart. Therefore, there is a similarity between the process of moral shaping and the process of art, where both processes cultivate feeling. Because both moral shaping and artistry have the same domain, it is very likely that there is relationship between both, and it is very possible that moral shaping can be done through arts and cultures.

Moral shaping through arts can be done by two sides: the substance of moral values contained in the art works, and the process of creating arts. For example, the main factor that music can influence the behavior is the lyrics. This is in line with what Kushartanti (2004:20) says. According to her, if information is accompanied by music and pleasant aromatic therapy, the information floats under unconsciousness and is transmitted more quickly and conveyed in the right file. srimudjilah (Imaji,2003:147) also states that in vocal music, there is lyric that functions to influence the psychological condition of someone. Even this factor has influence on someone's moral. In other words, music has positive effect on someone's moral.

The creation process of art,viewed from its outcome, can stimulate emphaty, tolerance, democracy, civilization, and harmony of life in a heterogeneous society. What is meant by cultural art as media of moral shaping through process of art is that art creation needs certain skills, where someone needs a long process of practice to achieve those skills. In the process of practice, someone needs discipline and perseverance, so it can be said that art can form perseverance and discipline attitude. Besides that, it is not rare that art is performed in a group such as music ensemble, opera, and dance. To perform an art in that way, it is needed cooperation, tolerance, democracy, emphaty, harmony, and mutual respects. Thus, it can be said that arts can increase someone's awareness to cooperate, to respect one another, and to be emphatic (Astuti,2003-281).

The three attitudes - cooperation, respecting one another, and empathy - are basic capital of a nation to live together with other nations. Because globalization has caused nations in the world to become one world society, which is multi-cultural, each nation must be able to appreciate each other, and give emphaty in order to be able to cooperate with one another based on the awareness of needing each other. The higher one nation ability to cooperate with other nation is, the easier that nation to survive will be. Thus, it is a must for a nation to understand characteristics of other nations so that good communication can be built.

1. **Conclusion**

Arts and cultures are the peak of civilization of a nation where it contains the norm, ethic, and moral embraced by a nation. Thus moral shaping can be done through art activities. Art works which are used as means to shape moral are art works that have positive values of life; whether those are contained in the messages conveyed, or the way how they are performed.

In global era, the existence of a nation are determined by both its potential and its capability to cooperate with other nations. As we know, every nation has different custom and traditions, so each nation needs to recognize and understand custom, tradition, and cultures of other nations in order that those nation can cooperate harmoniously. One way to achieve that is by studying and understanding arts and cultures of a nation.

By knowing and understanding ethics, norms, and moral values embraced by other nations, a nation can take stance appropriately. Idealism of a nation can be applied in balance by paying attention to global needs, so that the nation can keep showing its existence in globalization.

**REFERENCES**

Astuti, Kun Setyaning (2009). Pengembangan Model Evaluasi Pembelajaran dalam Perspektif Penciptaan Makna Baru pada Grup Nasyid DIY.*Disertasi Doktor*. Yogyakarta : Pascasarjana UNY.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(2003). Pembelajaran Ansambel Musik Mempersiapkan Anak Didik Memasuki Masyarakat Multikultural.*Cakrawala Pendidikan Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta : LPM UNY.

**Berg, Birgit (2007). *Presence and Power of the Arab Idiom in Indonesian Islamic Musical art*. www.mcm.asso.fr./site02.**

Dewantara, Ki Hadjar. (1977). *Pendidikan.* Yogyakarta: Majelis Luhur Persatuan Taman Siswa.

Khan, Hazrat Inayat.(2002). *Dimensi mistik musik dan bunyi*. Yogyakarta:Pustaka Sufi.

Kushartanti,Wara (2004) *Optimalisasi Otak dalam Sistem Pendidikan Berperadaban*. Pidato Dies Natalis Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta : UNY.

Morris,Christopher W.(2000) Morals,Manners, dan Law. *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 34: 45–59.The Netherlands: *Kluwer Academic Publishers.*

Mulyani, Widya (2003). *Nasyid* sebagai gerakan estetik mahasiswa muslim di kampus. *Tesis* , tidak diterbitkan, Pascasarjana UGM,Yogyakarta.

Soedarsono, R.M. (2002).  *Seni Pertunjukan Indonesia di Era Globalisasi*. Yogyakarta : Gadjah Mada University Press.

Soekirno, Dewi Candraningrum(2004). Phases of awareness:Why I became an English Teacher. *http:/education.waikato.ac.nz./research/files/etpc/2004v3nlnarl.pdf.*

Srimudjilah, Hanna (2003). Musik sebagai salah satu wahana pembentukan moral anak. *Imaji, Jurnal Seni dan Pendidikan Seni*, vol.1 no. 2, 142-149.

Suharti (2004). Konsep Sopan Santun dalam Serta Wulang Reh : Tinjauan Selintas. *Imaji-Jurnal Seni* *dan Pendidikan Seni*. Vol 2. No.1. Yogyakarta : FBS UNY.

Widyawati, R. Wiwin(2007). *Ilmu Sastra Jawa. Butir-butir Kearifan Sebagai Referensi Pembangunan Budi Pekerti Luhur*. Yogyakarta : Unggul Jaya.