

God's spirit in the human person: Pneumatological anthropologies of St. Ireneaus of Lyons and the (Islam)- Javanese mystics

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Albertus Bagus Laksana, S. J.

Preliminary Remarks

Interreligious dialogue may take a variety of forms. Nowadays people talk about four distinct forms of dialogue: dialogue of life, of action, of prayer (spirituality) and of theological reflection. Of course, each of these avenues can be, and is in fact, done in a quite distinctive manner without necessarily in a closer contact with the other. However, the ideal seems to be that all these avenues meet in one place. In this respect, I would argue that theological "humanism" as a theological concept - thus properly belongs to the fourth form of dialogue - can serve as a general category that will help us undertake all those four forms of dialogues in a concerted way.

This is so because the way religious people live and act, insofar as they are truly religious persons, will be very much shaped by their respective theological anthropology. Thus, for example, if a Christian truly believes that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God (thus, on this level, everybody is equal), this awareness should prevent him or her from disrespecting this original dignity of every human person. So, a theological anthropology can serve as the basis for a practico-religious ethics precisely because it deals with the fundamental understanding of our humanity. The burning issue of human rights or the more general problem of intercultural dialogue can be better served by

this kind of anthropology. Furthermore, in my view, theological anthropology seems to have an advantage as a theological category because of its power to draw many religious traditions together despite their many theological differences. Thus, for example, for all their contrasting views on the nature of God, Muslim and Christian theologies can basically agree on some important features on their understanding of the nature and vocation of the human person. This point has been made, for instance, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a noted Muslim philosopher, when he talks about the religious foundation of human rights. He writes,

“Christianity in the West has sought to answer them on the firm theological basis that ‘human beings were created in the image of God’ and it is the immortal soul and the spark of the Spirit within men and women that constitutes the basis for human dignity, the sacredness of human life, and ultimately human rights..... For Islam, likewise, human beings are defined in their relation to God, and both their responsibilities and rights derive from that relationship.Islam believes that God breathed His Spirit into Adam and according to the famous *hadith*, ‘God created Adam in his form, ‘form’ meaning the reflection of God’s Names and Qualities.”¹

Driven by the same goal of helping to bring peoples of different religio-cultural traditions into a closer and deeper dialogue, this paper seeks to do a comparative analysis of the theological anthropology of St Irenaeus of Lyons (Christian tradition) and the mystical teaching of *Pangestu*, an indigenous Javanese mystical association, on the nature of the human person and his/her journey toward God. This paper endeavors to read this Javanese pneumatological anthropology alongside St Irenaeus’ pneumatological understanding of the human person. A special emphasis will be given to Irenaeus’ idea about the prominent role played by the Holy Spirit in the formation of the human person as God’s plasma (at the beginning) as well as the Spirit’s role in the journey of each person to God. In this regard, Irenaeus’ theology of “the two Hands of God” will be explored at some length. In general, it will be argued that these two religious traditions share a distinctive pneumatological

¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 275-6.

understanding of the human person. “Pneuma” (or *Roh Suci* in *Pangestu’s* religious parlance) becomes a theological category in which God dwells in the depth of the human person and then draws the person toward a union with Him. It is really the role of this “Spirit” that is at stake in the drama of human salvation. Or to put it in a more philosophical way, the Spirit is the condition of possibility of the human’s union with God.

To achieve its modest aim, this paper is divided into two major parts. The first part will be devoted to an analytic exposition of some basic tenets of *Pangestu’s* pneumatological anthropology. Then, in the second part we will take up St Irenaeus’ pneumatological anthropology. Some comparative notes and insights between the two traditions will be made as we move through the second part. Hopefully, the second part helps us come to a deeper understanding of the striking similarities as well as obvious differences between these two pneumatological anthropologies. It is these similarities that will eventually draw us closer to each other in our common goal of building a better humanity.

I. Pneumatological Anthropology in the teaching of *Pangestu*

“*Pangestu*” is a mystico-spiritual association, once rather popular in the Javanese culture within Indonesia, especially in the period after the independence.² In this respect, it is part of the larger spiritual movement among the Javanese (mainly among the literati and social elites) to foster mystical experiences in every day life. As the name implies, this association regards itself as a “community of men who seek to direct their thought, *rasa* (the human’s deepest feeling and instrument of knowledge) and interior dynamism solely toward the attainment of the union with God.”³

² As a community, *Pangestu* was founded on May 1949 in the Central Javanese city of Surakarta by Sunarto Mertowardoyo and his close associates who had been meeting regularly for a meditation session (*olah-rasa*). See Johannes Indrakusuma, *L’Homme Parfait Selon L’École du Pangestu: Étude de La Spiritualité Javanaise et de sa Rencontre avec le Christianisme* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1973), 33.

³ Indrakusuma, *ibid.*, 34.

For our purpose, it is interesting to notice that *Pangestu's* understanding of God betrays a certain degree of influence of the Christian theology of the Trinity.⁴ *Pangestu* teaches that God is one but understood in a “trinitarian” way as *Tri Purusa* (three persons or spirits) which consists of *Suksma Kawekas* (the true God, the Father), *Suksma Sejati* (God’s messenger, the guide, consoler and master of humankind), and *Roh Suci* (the true soul of the human person). Obviously, this doctrine is complex. But, our focus of analysis in this paper will be given to the role of *Suksma Sejati* and *Roh Suci*, with the view to understand the pneumatological anthropology of *Pangestu* so as to find some resonances with the Christian pneumatological anthropology.

Sometimes conceived as the same as the second person of the Trinity in the Christian tradition,⁵ *Suksma Sejati* has a crucial role in the creation of the universe as he is the great creator of the cosmos and everything it contains.⁶ Furthermore, he is actively present in the universe he created but he by no means is limited by his creation. As regards *Roh Suci*, he is believed to be a spark of *Suksma Kawekas* and of the same substance with him and forms the true soul of the human person. *Pangestu* tends to conceive the *Roh Suci* as having a pre-existence in the divine life with *Suksma Kawekas* and *Suksma Sejati*. As the true soul of the human person, *Roh Suci* takes the human flesh and thus relinquishing his intimate relationship with *Suksma Kawekas* and *Suksma Sejati*. Once taking the human flesh, *Roh Suci*

⁴ The precise nature and extent of this influence is difficult to decide. It is only certain that Sunarto himself, *Pangestu's* founder, identifies the *Tri Purusa* with the Christian Trinity. It might be the case that he was exposed, in one way or another, to the Christian theology of the Holy Trinity. In this connection, it is interesting to notice the fact that Sunarto also identifies the *Tri Purusa* with the Triad in Islamic Sufism (which consists of God, Muhammad and human being). Thus, it is very likely that the identification of the *Tri Purusa* with the Trinity does not so much rest on a firm theological basis, but more on the Javanese tendency toward inclusivity. However, as Indrakusuma points out in his study, some basic theological reasoning is involved in this identification. This becomes clear when *Pangestu* makes a differentiation between the historical Jesus and the Christ. For *Pangestu*, *Suksma Sejati* can be identified with the Christ, but not with the historical Jesus. It is the Christ who is the Son of God and the essence of Jesus or the non-begotten Jesus (the incorruptible, immortal and eternal Jesus). On this level, the Christ can be identified as the same as Nur Muhammad (the essence of Muhammad). Some basic theological reasoning is also involved when *Pangestu* refuses to identify the *Tri Purusa* with the Hindu *Trimurti* insofar as *Trimurti* is perceived as a form of tritheism. Since *Pangestu* understands *Tri Purusa* basically as One God, it tends to accept certain Hindu interpretation of *Trimurti* as the three aspects or manifestations of the transcendent Siva. See Indrakusuma, *ibid.*, 58, 65.

⁵ As Indrakusuma points out, *Pangestu* understands the role of *Suksma Sejati* as guide, redeemer, consoler, rescuer/comforter, judge, and creator. Thus, upon a closer analysis, it actually points to the combination of roles of the Son and the Spirit in Christian tradition. See Johannes Indrakusuma, *ibid.*, 64.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

is always in danger of forgetting his original relationship with *Suksma Kawekas* and *Suksma Sejati*. Accordingly, *Roh Suci* has to be reminded of his original destiny, that is, to be reunited with *Suksma Sejati*.⁷ This process of returning home constitutes to be *Roh Suci*'s struggle while he still assumes the human flesh.

According to *Pangestu's* teaching, the creation of the cosmos is understood in view of the human person. The universe is created in order to provide a place for the human person, the receptacle of the *Roh Suci*. Although the ultimate origin of the universe is explained in terms of the emanation and power of *Suksma Kawekas*, creation is understood typically as the proper work of the second entity or property of the *Tri Purusa*, that is, *Suksma Sejati*, the grand architect of the universe. Within the whole cosmos, the human person occupies a central role as s/he constitutes its microcosm. All the four elements of the universe (fire, water, air, and soil) are to be found in the human constitution. In this sense, each human person shares the basic feature of all the created being, but s/he stands out due to the fact that no other creatures receive the immortal element, that is, *Roh Suci*. The human person is the only place in which *Roh Suci* dwells.⁸

The indwelling of the *Roh Suci* is, according to *Pangestu*, the very reason of the creation of the human person. While acknowledging the unknowable mystery of God's will in the creation of the human race, it can nonetheless be affirmed that God wants to pour out the Spirit who is with Him. From this point of view, we can understand that the *Suksma Sejati* created the elements and the universe as a preparation for the descent of the *Roh Suci*. Furthermore, in *Pangestu's* anthropology, human being is constituted of three parts. The *first* is the material flesh which consists of four elements (water, fire, air, and soil) and three kinds of instruments (the five senses, passions, and sentiment). The *second* part is the

⁷ In this regard, there are two ways of explaining the nature of this union. *First*, some *Pangestu* believers hold that this union is a dissolution or fusion of *Roh Suci* into *Suksma Sejati*, a process which ultimately results in the dissolution of the *Tri Purusa* into *Dwi-Tunggal (Bi-unité)*. *Second*, there is also a view that this returning process of the *Roh Suci* should be understood as a union in which *Roh Suci* retains its existence in unity with *Suksma Sejati*. See *Indrakusuma, op. cit.*, 65-66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

spiritual flesh which includes the four intellectual faculties (thoughts, imagination, understanding, and intelligence). It is this second part that, according to *Pangestu*, is made after the image of God, the *Tri Purusa*. The *third* part is called *Alam Sejati* (the veritable nature) where the *Roh Suci* resides.⁹

By taking the human flesh, *Roh Suci* takes the elements of the universe as his clothes. This also means that *Roh Suci* takes the risk of being swept away by corruption which stems ultimately from the fleshy nature of human existence.¹⁰ Within *Pangestu's* theological anthropology, it is the ideal state that the material flesh should obey the spiritual flesh, and the spiritual flesh should follow the *Roh Suci* who obeys God. But, *Pangestu* is well aware of the fact that this ideal order is not always the case. Once assuming the human flesh, *Roh Suci* becomes susceptible to fleshy temptations and tends to forget his origin and final destiny of returning back to God. To ensure that *Roh Suci* follows the right path of returning back to his origin, *Suksma Kawekas* is said to give him *paugeran* (the fundamental law) before his descent to the human flesh. This *paugeran* implies a fundamental duty of human being to always remember God and maintain contact with Him through the means of *eling* (being aware of God), *pracaya* (having faith in God), and *mituhu* (being obedient to God). This *paugeran* can be considered something like a credo for *Pangestu* believers. It functions as a reminder of the relation which *Roh Suci*, as the true soul of human being, had previously with *Suksma Sejati* and *Suksma Kawekas*, and which he has to continue to cultivate, in order not to sever his origin and to be lost.¹¹ By observing this fundamental law, *Roh Suci*, and for that matter, every human being, can return to his original home, to the bosom of the *Tri Purusa*.

⁹ Ibid., 87.

¹⁰ Ibid., 81.

¹¹ Ibid., 84.

This returning journey of *Roh Suci* is the principal and central theme in the Javanese mysticism in general, crossing the boundaries of various Javanese mystical associations.¹² This theme is elaborated in the Javanese mystical doctrine of *Sangkan paraning dumadi* (the origin and final destiny of the human person). We can say that according to the Javanese mysticism in general, the ultimate goal of the human person is to return to the source from which s/he was born. Within this conception, the spiritual part of each human being is believed to be of the same nature as the Supreme Being because it emanates from that Being and then assumes the human flesh to become human. It is this spiritual part, or the *Roh Suci* in *Pangestu's* teaching, that enables every human being to know their origin and to embark on a returning journey to his or her original home. In this life, this journey tends to be conceived as an inward journey toward the deepest interiority where God is believed to reside. Thus, union with God can be viewed as the summit or peak of interior life. To achieve this union, one has to free one's self from all kinds of attachment to worldly things and affairs, from uncontrollable passions and from unmastered mental faculties. It is in this process of liberation that mystical asceticism finds its place together with the practice of virtues.¹³

It is certainly beyond the scope of this paper to go into a meticulous analysis of *Pangestu's* religious system or more particularly its mystical anthropology. Our aim here is a modest one, namely, to take a rather close look at how *Pangestu* understands the role and work of God's Spirit in the human constitution and human journey to God. What we see in *Pangestu's* theological anthropology is the centrality of *Roh Suci* as God's indwelling

¹² Ibid., 85.

¹³ Pangestu has a moral code, called *Panca Sila* (five principles), in which five virtues are emphasized. They are *rila* (detachment), *narima* (equanimity), *temen* (sincerity), *sabar* (patience), and *budi-luhur* (purity of heart or loving kindness). Whereas the *Tri Sila* (three principles: being present to God, having faith in Him and obeying His precepts) governs one's proper relationship with God, the *Panca Sila* regulates one's relationship with one's self and others. Although these two sets of rules are to be understood as interrelated, Pangestu tends to give priority to the *Tri Sila* over the *Panca Sila* on the ground that it is our proper attitude to God that ultimately becomes the foundation of our morality. Taken together, these two rules become *Hasta Sila* (eight principles). Pangestu believes that these eight principles should be enough to give us interior peace and harmony and lead us to the right path toward union with God. See, Indrakusuma, *op. cit.*, 159-160.

presence in the human person. It is this indwelling presence of *Roh Suci* that ultimately renders every human being capable of achieving union with God and thus partaking in the divine life of God, the *Tri Purusa*. As we have seen, *Roh Suci* is a theological category that reveals and explains the divine origin of each human person. It is through the category of *Roh Suci* that the spiritual nature of humanity can be fully grasped. *Pangestu* also believes that human beings are created in the image of God as can be seen in the constitution of human spiritual flesh with its faculties.

As we can observe, *Pangestu* understands the origin of the *Roh Suci* as the spark of God (*Suksma Kawekas*) and tends to narrow down the role of the Spirit solely in the realm of human constitution to the point of identifying this Spirit with the human soul. Furthermore, it seems that *Pangestu* does not recognize the fleshy existence of humankind as the proper receptacle of the *Roh Suci* since *Roh Suci* is believed to reside in the *alam sejati*, the veritable nature which is located in the most profound awareness of a purified heart. Given these observations, it is obvious that we cannot, without reservation, identify *Roh Suci* as the Holy Spirit in the Christian tradition. But, keeping in mind the obvious differences between *Pangestu's* understanding of *Roh Suci* and the Christian theology of the Holy Spirit, it can nevertheless be affirmed that *Pangestu's* understanding can become a fertile context for an interreligious dialogue based on pneumatological anthropology. In my view, *Pangestu's* pneumatological anthropology reveals a deep religious longing to see God as proximate and immanent as possible to the human person.

II. St Irenaeus of Lyons' Pneumatological Anthropology

Before we move to a detailed analysis of St Irenaeus of Lyons' pneumatological anthropology, it is fitting to situate his pneumatology within a broader Christian theology of

the Holy Spirit. Christian theology in general holds that the proper indwelling of the Spirit only occurs in the baptized Christians (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Tim 1:14). In this regard, the outpouring of the Spirit by the risen Christ at the Pentecost is taken as the starting point of the Spirit's qualitatively new presence in the humanity. Baptism, then, is considered to be the beginning of a fuller indwelling of the Spirit in the baptized Christian. But, having said this, it does not mean that only Christians are affected by the intimate work of the Spirit. The Spirit has been at work before the Pentecost in the whole cosmos and humanity. It should also be noticed that the indwelling of the Spirit in the baptized Christians must not be understood as a completely abrupt event as if the Spirit has never been in contact with the persons before their baptisms. In order to show that the Spirit has been continually at work within the human persons since their coming into being, it is insightful to look more closely at the pneumatological dimension of St Irenaeus of Lyons' interesting theological anthropology in which he argues for an intimate work of the Spirit and the Word (the Son) in the formation of each human person.

In his *Adversus Haereses* (henceforth *AH*) and *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (henceforth *Dem*), Irenaeus employs the metaphor of the "two Hands of God" as designation of the role of the Word and the Spirit. He employs this image in a number of contexts, the most important of which is the context of the fashioning of the human person (creation). In this framework, the image of the two Hands of God helps him flesh out the Trinitarian structure of the traditional biblical theological anthropology.¹⁴ In the words of John Behr, Irenaeus makes "the creation of man into a Trinitarian activity of the one God."¹⁵

In *Adversus Haereses*, we find this expression for the first time in the preface of book IV where Irenaeus says, "*Homo est temperatio animae et carnis, qui secundum similitudinem*

¹⁴ For a fuller explication of the Trinitarian structure of God's economy in Irenaeus' theology, see also Jacques Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1994), 203-264.

¹⁵ John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria*, (Oxford, 2000), 38.

Dei formatus est, et per manus eius plasmatus est, hoc est per Filium et Spiritum, quibus et dixit: Faciamus hominem" [AH 4. Preface].¹⁶

And over against his heretical enemies' false theology of creation, Irenaeus argues strongly that God only employs his two Hands, that is, His Word and Spirit, in the act of creation. He says:

God needed none of these [beings] to make whatever he had foreordained to make, as if he did not have *hands of his own*. For always with him are *his Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit*, through whom and in whom he made everything freely and independently. [AH 4.20.1; emphasis added].¹⁷

Irenaeus closes book V of *Adversus Haereses* by taking the formation (fabrication) of human being by the Hands of God to its completion, that is, the ascent of God's handiwork to God himself through his Son made man, as he writes:

That His offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature (*facturam*), that is, to what had been moulded (*plasma*), and that it should be contained by Him; and, on the other hand, the creature should contain the Word, and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels, and be made after the image and likeness of God [AH 5.36.3].

In the context of human protology, the image of the two Hands of God is employed to convey the message of God's sustained, direct, and immediate concern over his handiwork. This sense of immediate relationship that exists between God and human beings also points to the "divine" origin of every human person as God's handiwork that always brings the stamp of God's two hands. It is this origin that serves as a theological explanation for the finality of every human person, that is, his or her ascent to God through the Word who not only, together with the Spirit, has a role in the human protology but has served as the model for God's creation of the human. Here we see two basic principles at work in Irenaeus' pneumatological anthropology. The *first* is the principle that what the Word and the Spirit do later to the human person has to be understood organically in connection with what they

¹⁶ "Now man is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God, and moulded by His hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, 'Let Us make man.' The Latin version is quoted in J. Mambrino, "Les Deux Mains de Dieu chez S. Irénée", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique (NRTh)*, 79 (1957), 355.

¹⁷ Here I use the translation of Robert M. Grant in *Irenaeus of Lyons*, (Routledge, 1997), 150.

have done before. And the *second* is the principle that the theological finality of every human person is founded upon his/her divine origin. It is interesting here to notice that these two basic principles also lie at the heart of *Pangestu's* mystical doctrine of *sangkan paran*. This doctrine basically argues that since God is the origin of the human person, God should also be the final destiny of every human person's journey.

Furthermore, Irenaeus understands this formation as a continual fashioning. So, it cannot be isolated in the human protology alone, but has to be placed in the wider context of God's sustained care for his handiwork (God's economy or salvific involvement with the human history). It is true that God's economy indeed includes the creation of the cosmos and the formation of the human persons, but it has other aspects. As John Behr notes, the economy has a temporal or historical nature because "God created the sensible world and the things in it to be of a temporal or transitory nature in view of an economy."¹⁸ In this context, the place of the human race is even more central. Irenaeus categorically states that in God's plan the creation is made for the human race not the human race for the creation [AH 5.29.1]. So, the realization and manifestation of the economies of God are aimed at the salvation or perfection of human kind.¹⁹ In other words, human person is the place where the economy is enacted. Irenaeus describes the unfolding of this grand economy of God through many categories, such as "glory, incorruptibility and immortality, vision and knowledge of God, adoption as sons of God, and image and likeness."²⁰ Obviously, all these categories or tonalities are applicable only to human persons. Indeed, the economy is directed to the idea of human participation in God's glory.

¹⁸ John Behr, *op.cit.*, 40-41.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46. In this regard, commenting on the central place of human being in Irenaeus' understanding of God's economy (AH 5.29.1), Jacques Fantino writes, "*Sans chercher pour l'instant ce qu'est le salut, il faut souligner qu'il est accompli pour l'homme et que, par l'homme, il atteint toute la création. C'est pourquoi l'homme est au centre du dessein divin et toute la création est pour le genre humain.*" Jacques Fantino, *op. cit.*, 204.

²⁰ Eric Osborn, *op. cit.*, 79.

In this framework, what really becomes the issue is the identity and destiny of the human person. In other words, a theological anthropology is at stake here. In relation to our previous exposition of *Pangestu's* theological anthropology, we can say that in general Irenaeus' concerns are shared by *Pangestu*. Like Irenaeus, *Pangestu* understands the creation of the cosmos in view of God's will to share his divine life to human beings. Creation is for man and woman and not vice versa. As we have seen, *Pangestu* holds that the human person is the special place of God's presence in the entire cosmos. In general, Irenaeus' emphasis on incorruptibility, perfection, and immortality finds echoes in much of *Pangestu's* theological anthropology. Notwithstanding the obvious differences in their expressions, *Pangestu* describes the returning journey of the soul to God in terms of the human effort to follow the dictate of the *Roh Suci*, to achieve incorruptibility by disciplining the human mechanism of fleshy desiring and thus to come to a moral and spiritual perfection. Like Irenaeus, *Pangestu* does not fail to notice the fundamental fact that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God.

However, despite these shared common concerns, there is one highly important element of Irenaeus' theological anthropology that is markedly missing in *Pangestu's* understanding, that is, his insistence on the inherent goodness of the human flesh and its capability of partaking in God's salvation. As we learn from history, Irenaeus builds his theological anthropology as he seeks to confound the soteriological belief of the heretics that "while the soul is saved, the body does not participate in the salvation which comes from God" [AH, 5.19.2]. For Irenaeus, it is the handiwork of God that is despised by such doctrine as it refuses to admit the salvation of the flesh [AH, 5.31.1]. Precisely in this kind of battle, his usage of the image of the two Hands of God accomplishes certain effects he needs. By employing the image, Irenaeus manages to prove that human body (flesh) is not only good but also capable of participating in the salvation. If the flesh is created in an

immediate and direct way by the hands of God, it could only be good because it is God's own handiwork. In this respect, Irenaeus uses the word '*plasma*' (handiwork) to designate the human person as a whole (not only his soul) as a special result of the work of God's own hands. He summarizes this point beautifully in *AH* 5.6.1 as he states,

Now God shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modeled after, His own Son. For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not [merely] a *part* of man, was made in the likeness of God. But when the spirit here blended with the soul is united to [God's] handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God.

In light of the immediacy effect of the metaphor, we see here that Irenaeus initiates a further step by making two important points. *First*, the human person is not only created by the hands of God (his Word and Spirit) but modeled after his own Son. It is for this reason that human person is capable of becoming the vessel of God's glory. *Second*, Irenaeus stresses the fact that human person as a whole, not merely a part of it (e.g. the soul), is made in the likeness of God. In this context, it is very crucial to notice, as John Behr argues, the fact that Irenaeus rejects "the possibility of locating the image of God in an immaterial part or quality of man."²¹ For Irenaeus, there is no other possibility for an image than to have a form that can only exist in matter. What we find here is, in my view, a creative elaboration of the image of the two hands of God. It is clear that the two hands of God are more than instrumental agencies by whom He creates. For Irenaeus, the Son is the model for his handiwork. And the Spirit is the gift that will be infused to his handiwork so as to render him a truly spiritual creature capable of becoming the vessel of God's glory.

For Irenaeus, the capability of the flesh to partake in the salvation brought about by Christ depends on the original nature of the human flesh as created in the image of His Son. Thus, the original formation of human person actually becomes the condition of possibility

²¹ John Behr, *op. cit.*, 89; here Behr refers to Fantino, *op. cit.*, 87-89.

for his/her salvation. This logic, namely, that what the Word does at the beginning anticipates and becomes the condition of possibility of what he does at the end, is also true for the Holy Spirit. This means that what the Spirit's indwelling in the human person is prepared, anticipated and made possible by what the Spirit does in the human fashioning in the beginning and his constant presence in the whole economy (*creatio continua*). As we have seen, within the context of *Pangestu's* theological anthropology, human being's ability to be united with *Suksma Sejati* is ultimately stems from what God (that is, *Suksma Kawekas* and *Suksma Sejati*) does in the beginning of the human fashioning, that is, the act of creation and the pouring of the *Roh Suci* into the human flesh. Although *Pangestu's* theological language lacks a sense of immediacy and proximity in describing God's act of molding human beings, it can nevertheless be argued that its teaching implies a marked unforeignness of the human persons (especially his/her soul) to God, the *Tri Purusa*.

In what follows we examine how Irenaeus elaborates the role of the Spirit in the formation of the human person. In *AH* 5.3.2-3 he discusses the dignity of human flesh in relation to the power and wisdom of God, that is, his Spirit, as he writes:

It is not possible to enumerate all the [melodious] parts of the human organism, which was not made without the great wisdom of God. Whatever participates in the art and wisdom of God also participates in his power. The flesh, therefore, is not without part in the art, the wisdom and the power of God, but his power, which produces life, is made perfect in weakness, that is, in the flesh.²²

In this passage that displays deep theological insight and respect for the beauty and harmony of God's creation, Irenaeus manages to flesh out more fully the role of the Spirit, the other hand of God, in the formation of the human race. It is this hand of God who gives dignity to the flesh of his handiwork, making it participate in the art, the power, and the wisdom of the Father.²³ In Irenaeus' anthropology, the complete and perfect human person,

²² Quoted in John Behr, *op. cit.*, 68.

²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

God's *plasma*, is constituted by three elements, that is, flesh, soul, and spirit [AH 5.9.1]. He says, "the commingling and union of all of these constitutes the perfect man" (AH 5.6.1). The flesh is animated by the breath of life, while the whole person can be vivified only by the Spirit of God [AH 5.12.2]. Although as an animated being, a human person can still participate in the life (which comes ultimately from God through his life-giving Spirit), it is this Spirit alone who enables us to participate fully in the glory of the Incarnate Son. As John Behr summarizes, the divine economy is "a movement from animation to vivification: as Adam was animated by the breath of life, so the resurrected Christ is vivified by the life-creating Spirit."²⁴

For Irenaeus, the indwelling of the Spirit effects incorruptibility and immortality and renders baptized Christians spiritual.²⁵ Irenaeus holds that the Spirit is the pledge of God to us that enables us to participate in the divine life. In this respect, I would argue that the Spirit, who makes possible a fuller participation in the glory of the Incarnate Son by the union of this Spirit of God with the substance of the flesh, is not something foreign to the very constitution of the human person. This is so because, as we have seen, the Spirit as the Hand of God has already a decisive role in the fashioning of each human person at the beginning.²⁶ So, again, when Irenaeus employs the image of the two Hands of God in the account of human fashioning, he seems to anticipate what will come later. We have examined how the role of the Word in creation is very crucial to establish the full meaning of

²⁴ John Behr, *Asceticism*, 66.

²⁵ For example, in AH 5. 8. 1 he writes: This pledge [the Holy Spirit], therefore, thus dwelling in us, renders us spiritual even now, and the mortal is swallowed up by immortality. "For ye," he declares, "are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" [Rom 8:9]. This, however does not take place by a casting away of the flesh, but by the impartation of the Spirit. For those to whom he was writing were not without flesh, but they were those who had received the Spirit of God, "by which we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom 8: 15). If therefore, at the present time, having the pledge, we do cry, "Abba, Father," what shall it be when, on rising again, we behold Him face to face; when all the members shall burst out into a continuous hymn of triumph, glorifying Him who raised them from the dead, and gave the gift of eternal life? For if the pledge, gathering man into itself, does even now cause him to cry, "Abba, Father," what shall the complete grace of the Spirit effect, which shall be given to men by God? It will render us like unto Him, and accomplish the will of the Father; for it shall make man after the image and likeness of God."

²⁶ On this important point, Hans-Jochen Jaschke argues that "*Der am Ende ausgegossene Heilige Geist kommt nicht unvermittelt in eine ihm fremde Wirklichkeit hinab. Er hat sich in der Prophetie angekündigt. Aber darüber hinaus ist er zusammen mit dem Wort schon seit dem Anfang der Schöpfung wirksam.*" See his *Der Heilige Geist in Bekenntnis der Kirche: Eine Studie zur Pneumatologie des Irenäus von Lyon im Ausgang vom altchristlichen Glaubensbekenntnis* (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1976), 249.

his Incarnation and the very possibility of the restoration of the human nature. With respect to the Spirit, his role in the human fashioning itself seems to guarantee the viability of the spiritualization of God's *plasma*. This handiwork of God can regain its likeness to God precisely because it has been accustomed by the presence of his Spirit since the beginning and throughout the entire economy of God. In *AH* 5.9.1 Irenaeus speaks about the fact that the soul "which sometimes indeed, when it follows the Spirit, is raised up by it." At this point, it seems expedient to take seriously John Behr's assertion that "Irenaeus does, in fact, envisage the continual nourishing presence of the Spirit, which, nevertheless, was bestowed in a new manner in Christ at the end of time, and therefore, in its fullness, remains an eschatological reality, of which the adopted sons, at present, receive a pledge."²⁷ In this framework, when the Spirit is bestowed in a new manner in Christ at the end of time, she does not come into a foreign reality but a familiar one. Again, this familiarity is effected by the work of the Hand of God since the beginning. In a sense, this eschatological outpouring of the Spirit is not a totally distant future as he has already been present with and in the human person.

It is important to note that although Irenaeus tends to understand the indwelling of the Spirit exclusively in the Christians by virtue of their faith and baptism in Christ, this does not nullify the work of the Spirit as the one hand of God in the human formation in general. The indwelling of the Spirit should be conceived as something that is qualitatively new but it can by no means be separated from the previous work of the Spirit in the human protology and in the whole economy. This perspective can make a room for understanding the universal work of the Spirit in every human being outside the formal boundaries of the Church. Furthermore, it is also obvious that even for the Christians, the intimate presence of the Spirit within them is not the fullest one. The Spirit is a pledge that will be fully realized

²⁷ John Behr, *Asceticism*, 97.

in the end of times when we see God face to face. Thus, it is still possible to speak about the intimate presence of the Spirit in every human being without blurring the qualitative difference between this universal but real presence of the Spirit, and the Spirit's proper indwelling in the baptized Christians.

Closing Remarks

It is certainly beyond the limited goal of this paper to delve into a detailed and textual comparison between the teaching of *Pangestu* and the theology of St Irenaeus of Lyons. Instead, we only endeavor to elucidate some comparative insights that despite its generality, can nevertheless bear fruit in our effort of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

As this paper has tried to show, both *Pangestu* and Irenaeus, albeit their differences, basically agree in arguing that the human person has a very special place in the whole cosmos precisely because it is in the human person that we find the deepest level of immanency, immediacy and permanence of God's presence through his Spirit. Human constitution and life constitute the special *loci* of God's outward availability through his Spirit. In my view, *Pangestu's* understanding of the immanence of God's Spirit in the soul of each human person can be taken as a call for Christians toward a more serious appropriation of their understanding of the presence of the Spirit in the very being of every human person in general and in the baptized Christians in particular, especially with regard to the Christian understanding and practice of mysticism. As we have seen, the whole logic of *Pangestu's* mystical conception of the return of man to God through the mystical union cannot be understood apart from this basic presupposition. In my view, the Javanese mysticism exemplified by *Pangestu*, which is deeply rooted in their pneumatological anthropology, can enrich our conception of the Christian mystical union with God.

Furthermore, especially in the context of interreligious dialogue, the pneumatological emphasis of the Javanese religiosity challenges Christian theology to take seriously the presence of the Spirit of God in the human constitution and throughout the lives of the humans. Speaking about the pneumatological dimension of humanity is also speaking about the spiritual dignity of every human being. In the framework of interreligious dialogue, this spiritual dignity should not fail to draw the human family together. The close relationship between this spiritual dignity and the mystical life that flows naturally from it, cannot be ignored if we want to understand the deeper work of the Spirit in the human person and if we want to build the interreligious dialogue on a firmer foundation.

Chestnut Hill, February 2006