

# The Text of the Indonesian State Ideology Pancasila – A Small Exegesis

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*As if all the words were not pockets, into which this, that, and more have been put at once!*  
(Friedrich Nietzsche)

In his article "Pancasila und Jakarta-Charta: Indonesiens Problem mit der Toleranz" (Pancasila and Jakarta Charter: Indonesia's Problem with Tolerance)<sup>1</sup>, published in the German journal *Orientierungen*, Wolfgang Brehm deals, among other things, in particular with the first of the five principles of the Indonesian state ideology Pancasila. This article has inspired me to present my thoughts and reflections on the meaning and intention of the entire text of the Pancasila, respectively to perform a "small exegesis" of the same.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the text shall be essentially a text-immanent one, thus aims at the meaning which the text receives only through itself. Nevertheless, extratextual aspects will not be omitted, especially with regard to a comparison of the intentions of the text of the Pancasila determined in the context of the text-immanent analysis with the verifiable intentions of its main author, namely Sukarno, the first president of the Republic of Indonesia. Such a comparison is an important part of the exegesis, the results of which may be of interest not only with regard to the autonomous text of the Pancasila, but also with regard to characteristics and peculiarities of the Indonesian language and the use of the same by Indonesian speakers or authors.

The Pancasila<sup>3</sup> (literally: Five Foundations/Principles/Pillars) is considered the state ideology or ideological basis of the Republic of Indonesia, which was founded in 1945. The five principles formulated in the same year were included in the preamble of the Indonesian constitution. They are listed in the last sentence of this preamble, introduced by a formulation that states that the Republic of Indonesia is "based on" these same five principles.

The Pancasila is rightly considered to be of paramount importance for the development of Indonesia, in particular because of its first principle, in which "the divine", and by no means a specific religion, is mentioned as the basis of the Republic of Indonesia. The Jesuit Franz Magnis-Suseno, a professor of philosophy who lives in

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<sup>1</sup> Brehm 2019

<sup>2</sup> In a short Indonesian-language essay for the Indonesian news magazine *Tempo* in 2011, I took a humorous look at the text of Pancasila. See: Damshäuser 2011 and also Damshäuser 2020, 18-22.

<sup>3</sup> The word Pancasila is composed of two words borrowed from Sanskrit, namely *panca* (five) and *sila* (foundation, principle).

Indonesia, describes the significance of the Pancasila with regard to this first "theological" principle as follows:

*The adoption of the Pancasila as the ideological basis of the Indonesian state means nothing less than the renunciation of an Islamic state, which is certainly an extraordinary fundamental decision in a country where four-fifths of the population adheres to Islam in some form. The Pancasila is an expression of the basic national consensus on which the representatives of all important groups had agreed [...]. It is the expression of the fundamental national compromise between the adherents of an Islamic state and those of a secular nation-state for sake of national unity. [...] The state has to protect the religiosity of society as a national value of the first rank. It should therefore promote the religions found in Indonesia. But this, on the other hand, without discrimination. In the Pancasila Compromise, the Muslims agree that Islam will not become the state religion.*<sup>4</sup>

The Pancasila is also "omnipresent" in contemporary Indonesia. It is spoken of as the "Magic Pancasila" (*Pancasila Sakti*), referred to as the "soul of the Indonesian nation" (*Jiwa Bangsa Indonesia*), the "identity of the Indonesian people" (*Kepribadian Bangsa Indonesia*), the "ideal and goal of the Indonesian people" (*Cita-cita dan Tujuan Bangsa Indonesia*), the "source of all legal sources for the Republic of Indonesia" (*Sumber dari segala Sumber Hukum bagi negara Republik Indonesia*). "The Day of the Birth of Pancasila" (*Hari Lahir Pancasila*) is a public holiday. Millions of Indonesians, especially civil servants, have undergone training on Pancasila over the past decades, and to this day "Pancasila" is a compulsory subject in schools and universities. The text of the Pancasila is certainly the best known and most quoted text ever written in Malay, i.e. Indonesian.<sup>5</sup>

In Indonesia, one even speaks of the "Pancasila Philosophy" (*Filsafat Pancasila*) or of "philosophical principles" (*prinsip filsafat*). In exemplary translations into various European languages, they read as follows:

First example of a translation into English<sup>6</sup>:

1. Belief in the Almighty God
2. A just and civilized humanity
3. A unified Indonesia
4. Citizens led by the wisdom of representatives consensus
5. Social justice for all Indonesians

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<sup>4</sup> Magnis-Suseno 2019, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Linguistically speaking, the Indonesian language is the Malay language. In 1928, representatives of the Indonesian independence movement decided that the Malay language should be the national language of a future state of Indonesia, i.e. *Bahasa Indonesia*, the "language of Indonesia". The term *Bahasa Indonesia* also allows the translation "Indonesian language" or "Indonesian".

<sup>6</sup> Source: English Wikipedia [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancasila\\_\(politics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancasila_(politics))]

## Second example of a translation into English<sup>7</sup>

1. Belief in the one and only God
2. Just and civilized humanity
3. The unity of Indonesia
4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives
5. Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia

## Example of a translation into French<sup>8</sup>:

1. La croyance en un Dieu unique.
2. Une humanité juste et civilisée.
3. L'unité de l'Indonésie.
4. Une démocratie guidée par la sagesse à travers la délibération et la représentation.
5. La justice sociale pour tout le peuple indonésien.

## Example of a translation into Dutch<sup>9</sup>:

1. Geloof in de ene en enige God
2. Rechtvaardig en beschaafde menselijkheid
3. Een verenigd Indonesië
4. Democratie die voortkomt uit innerlijke wijsheid en consensus
5. Sociale rechtvaardigheid voor de gehele Indonesische bevolking

## German Translation by Ingo Wandelt<sup>10</sup>:

1. Der Glaube an einen Gott, der groß und einzig ist
2. Gerechte und zivilisierte Humanität
3. Die Vereinigung Indonesiens
4. Demokratie, die geleitet wird von der Weisheit und der klugen Politik in der gemeinsamen Beratung/Vertretung
5. Soziale Gerechtigkeit für das gesamte indonesische Volk

## English translation of Wandelt's translation:

1. Belief in one God who is great and unique
2. Just and civilized humanisme/humanity
3. The Unification of Indonesia
4. Democracy, which is guided by the wisdom and the wise politics in the joint consultation/representation
5. Social justice for the entire Indonesian people

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<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://web.archive.org/web/20060428021930/http://www.ri.go.id/pancasila.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Source: French Wikipedia [<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancasila>].

<sup>9</sup> Source: Dutch Wikipedia [[https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancasila\\_\(Indonesi%C3%AB\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancasila_(Indonesi%C3%AB))].

<sup>10</sup> Wandelt 2019, 14.

German translation by Wolfgang Brehm<sup>11</sup>:

1. Die All-Eine göttliche Herrschaft
2. Gerechte und zivilisierte Humanität
3. Einheit Indonesiens
4. Demokratie, die geleitet wird von Weisheit und Besonnenheit in der Beratung und der Vertretung.
5. Soziale Gerechtigkeit für das ganze indonesische Volk

English translation of Brehm's translation:

1. The All-One Divine Rule
2. Just and civilized humanism/humanity
3. Unity of Indonesia
4. Democracy, which is guided by wisdom and prudence in advice and representation.
5. Social justice for the whole Indonesian people

Apart from the fact that at least some of the five "philosophical" principles make rather simple statements – for example, that the Republic of Indonesia is founded on the "unity [or oneness] of Indonesia" – it is striking that among the translations of the particularly significant first principle, only the one by Wolfgang Brehm does not speak of a "belief in the One God", i.e., this principle is not interpreted as an explicitly monotheistic one. It is also striking that the translations of the fourth principle show great differences as far as the explanation of what is called "democracy" in all translations is concerned. Obviously, the text of the fourth principle is difficult to translate, presumably because it is difficult to understand.

In the following, I would now like to subject the individual principles to the text-immanent analysis announced above, starting in each case with an interlinear translation.

## 1. Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa

### [The] Divine, which [is] the High-One (The High-One Divine)

The first principle of the Pancasila does not speak of a "belief in" at all and also not of "God". The most important and moreover decisive word of the first principle is *ketuhanan*. This is a word formation using the affixes "ke-" and "-an" on the basis of the noun *Tuhan* (God). Words with the affixes or confixes "ke- -an" are polysemous and can have nominal, adjectival or verbal character. As an adjective, *ketuhanan* means "divine"; as a verb, it could mean "overwhelmed by God"<sup>12</sup>. However, the use of

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<sup>11</sup> Brehm 2012, 128.

<sup>12</sup> The verb *ketuhanan* would be a neologism, it is not used in Indonesian. It would be an analogue of the passive verb *kesetanan*, which is formed on the basis of the noun *setan* (Satan) and has, for example, the meanings "afflicted by Satan" or "possessed by the devil".

*ketuhanan* as an adjective or verb can be ruled out in the first principle of Pancasila, since the word is followed by a relative clause introduced by the relative pronoun *yang*<sup>13</sup>. This proves the nominal character of *ketuhanan*.

The noun *ketuhanan* is explained by a combination of the adjectives *maha* and *esa*. The word *maha*<sup>14</sup>, borrowed from Sanskrit, is not used as a "stand-alone" adjective in Indonesian, just as it is in Sanskrit. It must be followed by a noun or adjective with which it forms a semantic unit. Its meaning can then be paraphrased as "to the highest degree"<sup>15</sup>. *Maha Esa* could be translated thus also with "in the highest measure one/single". Obviously, *Maha Esa* is a kind of pleonasm, since the absolute adjective *esa* (one/single), which semantically does not allow any increase, must be interpreted as a hyperlative.

With regard to the word *esa* Wolfgang Brehm is of the opinion that this is not a number word, has the meaning "unique", and that alone therefore a monotheistic interpretation of the first principle of the Pancasila is to be excluded.<sup>16</sup> Brehm's interpretation of the word *esa* was completely new to me until I read his article. A search in the Internet revealed that a few Indonesian authors, who – as far as I can judge – are not well-known linguists, share his view and thus – like Brehm himself – contradict the definition of the word *esa*, which the standard dictionary of Indonesian (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*) published by the Indonesian language authority (*Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa*) makes, namely: *tunggal; satu* (one/single). In my opinion, however, this is exactly what speakers of Indonesian understand by *esa*. The argumentation of those who share Brehm's view and exclude a meaning of *esa* as "one/only" is based on a speculative etymological consideration of the word *esa*

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<sup>13</sup> *Yang* also has the function of a link between nouns and subsequent adjectives. Also as such it proves the nominal character of the preceding word *ketuhanan*.

<sup>14</sup> *Maha* (मह) is a special form of the Sanskrit adjective *mahat* that appears in compound words and means: big, wide, long, high, deep; significant, powerful, important (see: <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/PWGScan/2020/web/webtc2/index.php>). In the standard dictionary of the Indonesian language (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*) *maha* is assigned the meaning *sangat* (very/to the highest degree and *besar* (large). There it is also referred to as a "bound form" and must be prefixed as such. According to the current Indonesian spelling rules, the text of the Pancasila would therefore have to be corrected; instead of *Maha Esa*, it should be *Mahaesa*.

<sup>15</sup> For example, in the very common phrase *mahapenting* (extremely important).

<sup>16</sup> „*Maha* und *Esa* sind zwei dem Sanskrit entlehene Adjektive, die durch das Relativpronomen *yang* mit *Ketuhanan* verbunden werden. Sie können als „groß (*maha*) und einzigartig (*esa*)“ übersetzt werden. [...] Wesentlich ist, dass es sich bei den beiden Adjektiven nicht um Zahlwörter handelt, sodass sie also keinen Bezug zum Monotheismus herstellen. Das gilt auch für „*esa*“, das vom Zahlwort „*eka*“ (eins) zu unterscheiden ist.“ [*Maha* and *Esa* are two adjectives borrowed from Sanskrit that are connected to *Ketuhanan* by the relative pronoun *yang*. They can be translated as "big (*maha*) and unique (*esa*)". [...] It is essential that the two adjectives are not numerals, so that they do not relate to monotheism. This also applies to "*esa*", which must be distinguished from the numerical word "*eka*" (one).] (Brehm 2019, 246-247)

respectively its meaning in Sanskrit and Pali.<sup>17</sup> I am not convinced by this argumentation.

But Brehm is completely right when he denies the monotheistic character to the first principle of the Pancasila. Only there is no need for an interpretation, which would have to be based on the fact that *esa* is not a number word. The word *Ketuhanan* alone already provides the "philological" proof, which consists in the fact that nouns with the affixes "ke-" and "-an" (in this case the word *ke-tuhan-an*) never refer to a person, and insofar also not to God. Taking into account this fixed grammatical rule of the Indonesian language, the first principle can only be understood in the sense of what can be expressed in English, for example, with the help of the noun "the divine"<sup>18</sup>. The first principle of the Pancasila would therefore have to be interpreted as "The High-One Divine," whereby the attributive combination of *maha* and *esa* (the "Great-One," "High-One," or "All-One") is ultimately redundant or ornamental<sup>19</sup>, because in essence – taking into account the introductory sentence in the preamble of the Indonesian constitution – it is expressed that the Republic of Indonesia is founded on a *sila*, a principle or foundation, which is the "divine. And this leads to the interpretation that the Indonesian state is based on the belief that there is the divine or numinous, that is, a metaphysical sphere, a spiritual entity, and arguably the transcendent or the beyond.

I am not aware that such an analysis of the first principle has been presented before, especially with regard to the explicit exclusion of the possibility that the word

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<sup>17</sup> It is assumed that *esa* has the function of a demonstrative pronoun in Sanskrit and refers to something "absolutely existing". It would not be a synonym of the Sanskrit word *eka*, which actually means "one". [*Eka* has also been borrowed from Sanskrit into Indonesian, where it also has the basic meaning of "one," often being used in the same way as the English prefix "mono-", for example in the word *ekabahasa* (monolingual)].

<sup>18</sup> Other fundamentally conceivable translations of *Ketuhanan* into English would be: "Godhood", "Divine Affairs", "Divinity" or other English word formations that take into account the abstract character of the Indonesian nouns with the affixes "ke-" and "-an". The fact that the primary meaning of *Ketuhanan* is also defined as *sifat keadaan Tuhan* (property of the state of God) according to the standard dictionary of the Indonesian language speaks in favor of the choice of a translation by the noun "the Divine" and in this respect – just like in English – is a nominalized adjective. When Wolfgang Brehm also mentions "Gottesreich" (God's Empire/Location) as a possible translation, he obviously assumes a very rare secondary meaning of the "ke- -an" nouns, which is that they also denote the place of where the thing denoted in the initial noun is located. Apart from the fact that native speakers of Indonesian do not conceive of *ketuhanan* as a place, the interpretation of the word *ketuhanan* as a place would lead to the Republic of Indonesia being based on a "God Realm" or a "divine sphere," an aberrant interpretation in my view.

<sup>19</sup> The redundancy of *Maha Esa* as an attribute for *ketuhanan* in the sense of "the divine" leads to the perhaps not entirely far-fetched consideration that Sukarno perhaps envisaged something under *Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa* that could be more precisely rendered by the following word formation, which is, however, completely unidiomatic due to its morphological complexity: *Ketuhanyangmahaesaan* (*Ke-Tuhan-Yang-Maha-Esa-an*). This would be an abstract noun based on the phrase *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*, the meaning of which could be paraphrased in English as "Matter of the High-One God".

*ketuhanan* can be referred to a person or a God conceived as a person at all, and that for this reason alone a monotheistic interpretation of the Pancasila must be excluded.<sup>20</sup> And if one considers the text of the Pancasila as an autonomous text, no other interpretation is possible.

Now, however, the question arises whether the possible intentions of the authors should not also be taken into account in the exegesis of a text. Intentions that could possibly differ from the intention of the text as an autonomous entity. The authors of the Pancasila are a collective in which Sukarno played the leading role as the founding father and first president of the Republic of Indonesia. He is also considered the "creator" of the first principle of the Pancasila, and the formulation of the phrase *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* comes from him.

In his famous speech *Lahirnya Pancasila* (The Birth of Pancasila) of June 1, 1945, Sukarno explained the first principle of Pancasila. His remarks and especially his use of the term *Ketuhanan* (actually: "The Divine") allow conclusions to be drawn about how he himself understood this word and probably wanted it to be understood. The decisive passages of the speech read in English translation as follows<sup>21</sup>:

*Let us state the following with regard to the independent Indonesia we are establishing: The fifth principle<sup>22</sup> of our state is: a cultivated Ketuhanan, a Ketuhanan of noble character, within the framework of which people respect each other. [...] The fifth principle shall include the following: Building Indonesia through faith in the High One God. The Principle of Ketuhanan.<sup>23</sup>*

Obviously, Sukarno does not use the word *Ketuhanan* in the meaning of "the divine". A comprehensible statement of the quoted sentences from Sukarno's speech is only given if the word *Ketuhanan* is interpreted as "belief in the High-One God". Accordingly, he speaks of a "cultivated belief in God" in the context of which one respects or tolerates the different manifestations of a basically monotheistic faith.

The interpretation of *Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa* as "belief in the High One God" initiated by Sukarno has prevailed, not only in almost all translations of the Pancasila

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<sup>20</sup> One could object that the word *ketuhanan* is formed on the basis of the noun *tuhan* (God), which is usually used for a personal and almighty God and therefore refers to the Abrahamic God; different from the gods of Hinduism which are never referred to as *Tuhan*, but as *Dewa* (deities). However, the standard Indonesian dictionary defines *Tuhan* as follows: *Sesuatu yang diyakini* (something – not someone! – that you believe in).

<sup>21</sup> The term *Ketuhanan* (actually: The Divine) is adopted in the English translation.

<sup>22</sup> The theological principle was intended to be the fifth principle of the Pancasila at the time of Sukarno's speech. During the subsequent discussions on the final version of the Pancasila, it was finally decided to make it the first principle of the Pancasila..

<sup>23</sup> *Marilah kita di dalam Indonesia Merdeka yang kita susun ini [...] sesuai dengan itu, menyatakan: bahwa prinsip kelima dari pada Negara kita, ialah Ketuhanan yang berkebudayaan, Ketuhanan yang berbudi pekerti yang luhur, Ketuhanan yang hormat-menghormati satu sama lain. [...] Prinsip yang kelima hendaknya: Menyusun Indonesia Merdeka dengan bertakwa kepada Tuhan yang Maha Esa. Prinsip Ketuhanan!* (Source: <https://www.krjogja.com/angkringang/historia/pidato-bung-karno-1-juni-1945-tentang-pancasila-vii-habis/>)

into other languages, but even up to the definition of the word *ketuhanan* in the Indonesian Standard Dictionary (KBBI), where it says in third place: *Ketuhanan = Kepercayaan kepada Tuhan* (belief in God)<sup>24</sup>. And this despite the fact that the mere word *ketuhanan* does not contain the aspect of a "belief" in any way.

*As if all words were not pockets, into which this, that, and more have been put at once!* says Friedrich Nietzsche. What has happened to the Indonesian word *ketuhanan* impressively confirms him. Apparently Sukarno arbitrarily filled the "pocket" *ketuhanan* with a new content, namely "belief in God". This was accepted by the speakers of Indonesian and would have to be accepted in principle if one agrees with Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous statement, which is: *Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache* (The meaning of a word is its use in language).

Another important source for knowing what Sukarno himself intended with the text of the Pancasila is his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on June 30, 1960. In this widely acclaimed speech, in which he even proposes to the international community that the principles of the Pancasila be applied worldwide, he states:

*Allow me to present to you the five principles [of the Pancasila]. First, the High One Ketuhanan. My people are made up of people who adhere to different religions. There are Muslims, there are Christians, there are Buddhists, and there are people who do not adhere to any religion. But eighty-five percent of the ninety million Indonesians are Muslims. Because of this, and recognizing that we Indonesians are different, yet united and unified as a nation, we have made the High One Ketuhanan the main principle of our philosophy of life. Even those who do not believe in God, because their nature is one of tolerance, have recognized that belief in the Almighty is characteristic of our nation. And that is why they have accepted the first principle [of Pancasila].<sup>25</sup>*

This quotation also proves what Sukarno means by *ketuhanan*, namely "belief in God". It also proves that Sukarno does not take offense at the fact that there are people in Indonesia "who do not adhere to any religion" and "do not believe in God". People who, out of tolerance and consideration for the majority of the population, accept the principle of belief in God.

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<sup>24</sup> See the online version of the Indonesian Standard Dictionary

*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)*: <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/Ketuhanan>

<sup>25</sup> *Perkenankanlah saya sakarang menguraikan sekedarnya tentang kelima pokok itu. Pertama: Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa. Bangsa saya meliputi orang-orang yang menganut berbagai macam agama. Ada yang Islam, ada yang Kristen ada yang Budha dan ada yang tidak menganut sesuatu agama. Meskipun demikian untuk delapan puluh lima persen dari sembilan puluh dua juta rakyat kami, bangsa Indonesia terdiri dari para pengikut Islam. Berpangkal pada kenyataan ini, dan mengingat akan berbeda-beda tetapi bersatunya bangsa kami, kami menempatkan Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa sebagai yang paling utama dalam filsafah hidup kami. Bahkan mereka yang tidak percaya kepada Tuhanpun, karena toleransinya yang menjadi pembawaan, mengakui bahwa kepercayaan kepada Yang Maha Kuasa merupakan karakteristik dari bangsanya, sehingga mereka menerima Sila pertama ini. (Sukarno 1960)*

And thus one can arrive at the following conclusion: If, in interpreting the first principle of the Pancasila, one goes beyond the statements of the autonomous text and includes the intention of the author, one must conclude, perhaps with regret, that the first principle cannot be specified to mean that the Republic of Indonesia is based on a non-personal "divine" and that therefore it cannot be a monotheistic principle. At the same time, however, incorporating the author's intention proves that the first principle should in no way obligate individual citizens to believe in God. And apart from the fact that an obligation to believe would be almost absurd in itself, this also means: no prohibition of atheism can be derived from the Pancasila.

## 2. Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab

### [A] humanness that [is] just and moral

Also with the second principle of the Pancasila an abstract noun with the affixes "ke-" and "-an" stands in the first place, namely *kemanusiaan*, which is formed on the basis of the simple noun *manusia* (human being). Its possible meanings can be represented, taking into account the definitions in the standard dictionary of the Indonesian language, by the following English nouns or terms: "humanness", "being human", "humanity" (but not in the sense of "mankind" or "human race"<sup>26</sup>).

Wandelt and Brehm have opted for the interpretation of *Kemanusiaan* as "Humanität", a German term which corresponds to the English noun "humanisme" oder "humanitarianism". Their translation into German would therefore correspond to the English formulation "Just and civilized humanisme/humanitarianism". If one trusts such a translation, the question arises why the adjectives "just" and "civilized" are assigned to the nouns "humanisme" or "humanitarianism", since these nouns are anyway characterized by these qualities. I therefore believe that the translation I propose makes a more convincing statement by speaking of a just and moralhumanness. (In English it could well be "just and moral humanity", but this term would be more ambiguous than the Indonesian *kemanusiaan* since "humanity" can also mean "mankind"<sup>27</sup>.) This in turn would lead to the following interpretation of the second principle of the Pancasila: The Republic of Indonesia is based on the principle – actually the hope or ideal – that man and the relations of men among themselves, thus ultimately mankind, may be characterized by justice and morality.

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<sup>26</sup> For "humanity" in the sense of "whole of the *human race*" /mankind the Indonesian uses the term *umat manusia* (literally: community of human beings).

<sup>27</sup> The Indonesian adjective *beradab* basically can be translated as "civilized", but it can also be translated as "moral" or "ethical". It consists of the word *adab* (أدب), borrowed from Arabic, which means, among other things, "good behavior". Therefore "moral behaviour/conduct" is at least strongly connotated.

The key terms of the second principle would thus be the adjectives *adil* (just) and *beradab* (moral).

In this context, too, by the way, the fundamental question arises to what extent it is appropriate to be guided in the interpretation of the Pancasila by considerations based on conceivable translations into English, German, or other languages. Whether an Indonesian word or phrase can be "defined" at all by a translation? Would it not be more appropriate to interpret and define the Indonesian text exclusively by the means of the Indonesian language – and thus of thinking in that language? An exegesis using or even based on another language may not be comprehensible at all by Indonesian speakers, including the authors themselves, if they do not have knowledge of that language. These are important questions and should lead to meet the results of my exegesis presented here with appropriate skepticism. Nevertheless, the analysis of a text in language A with the help of the means of language B (the language of the analyst) can be quite helpful and lead to a deeper fathoming of the text. Although and because such an analyst directs questions of the foreign-language text which the author may not have asked himself and which he sometimes could not have asked himself if he did not know the analyst's language. However, the analyst's outside perspective can lead to meaningful questions that can be helpful in deciphering the intentions of a text.

Back to the second principle and the above-mentioned translations namely "Just and civilized humanity" and "Just and moral humanness". Even though the second one, I believe, contains a more coherent statement, the first one is also not absurd in the context of a text-immanent analysis and must be accepted as a permissible interpretation of the Indonesian source text, since it cannot be refuted. Can the inclusion of contextual references point a way out of this "dilemma"? Again, it is worthwhile to look at Sukarno's speeches mentioned earlier, his speech to the United Nations General Assembly and his speech on the "Birth of Pancasila." The former, from 1960, states:

*What are the five principles [of the Pancasila]? They are very simple. First: Belief in the High One God; second: nationalism; third: internationalism; fourth: democracy; and fifth: social justice.<sup>28</sup>*

Apart from the fact that Sukarno's numbering deviates from the order established in the text of the Pancasila<sup>29</sup>, it is surprising that he summarizes the content

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<sup>28</sup> *Apakah Lima Sendi itu? Ia sangat sederhana: pertama Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa, kedua Nasionalisme, ketiga Internasionalisme, keempat Demokrasi dan kelima Keadilan Sosial.* (Sukarno 1960)

<sup>29</sup> Sukarno swaps principles number 2 and 3 here. For me there are no understandable reasons for this. In 1960 the order of the individual principles had long been established, not least in the preamble to the Indonesian constitution.

of the second principle casually with "internationalism". From this, however, it can also be concluded that he himself probably uses the word *kemanusiaan* (humanness) also in the sense of "mankind", i.e. in the sense of "the whole of the human race", all people" or "all peoples". This is also supported by the following passages from his speech on the "Birth of the Pancasila":

*The Chinese people used to be affected by the disease of cosmopolitanism in many ways, so that it was said that there was no Chinese nation, no Japanese, Indian or Arab nation, all of which were mankind. [...] One should not cling to the concept of the national, but to the concept of the feeling of global mankind.*<sup>30</sup>

In the Indonesian original, the word *kemanusiaan* is used in places where the English translation "mankind" was chosen. A translation by "humanity" in the sense of "humanisme"/"humanitarianism" would be absurd. However, it can be seen from the same speech that Sukarno also uses the word *kemanusiaan* in the sense of these nouns, namely at the point where he quotes Gandhi's saying "My nationalisme is humanity" and translates this saying of Gandhi or the word "humanity" with "kemanusiaan".

With regard to the first word (*kemanusiaan*) of the second principle of the Pancasila, the following can be concluded: According to the standard Indonesian dictionary and in accordance with contemporary usage, its meaning corresponds to the English terms "humanness" or "humanity" (but not in the sense of "human race"). Sukarno added another meaning to this word – as he had done in the case of *ketuhanan*, whose meaning he expanded to include "belief in God" – namely "mankind". Interestingly, in this case the standard Indonesian dictionary has omitted to adopt Sukarno's expansion of meaning. Thus, anyone who makes this dictionary the basis of a text-immanent analysis would have little chance of concluding that the principal author of the text of the Pancasila might also have been concerned with "internationalism" in the second *sila*. But the step to the interpretation of the second principle as "internationalism" is anyway a long one and actually hardly comprehensible. In order to do it, one must not only put into the pocket of the single word several things at once, but one must deal with the "pocket of a sentence" just as freely and arbitrarily. Sukarno has shown how to do this.

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<sup>30</sup> Bangsa Tionghoa dahulu banyak yang kena penyakit kosmopolitisme, sehingga mereka berkata bahwa tidak ada bangsa Tionghoa, tidak ada bangsa Nippon, tidak ada bangsa India, tidak ada bangsa Arab, tetapi semuanya "menschheid", "peri kemanusiaan". [...] jangan berfaham kebangsaan, tetapi berfahamlah rasa kemanusiaan sedunia. Source: (See: <https://www.krjogja.com/angkringang/historia/pidato-bung-karno-1-juni-1945-tentang-pancasila-vii-habis/>)

### 3. Persatuan Indonesia

#### [The] unitedness/oneness of Indonesia

The third principle of the Pancasila is the only one that does not begin with a noun formed using the affixes “ke-” and “-an”. Such a noun would be available, namely the noun *kesatuan*, which is formed on the basis of the numeral *satu* (one) and means “unity”. Instead, the word *persatuan* was chosen, a noun that also contains the base word *satu*, but which derives from the word *bersatu*, which means “united” or “unified”. Therefore, the noun *persatuan*, formed with the help of the affixes “per-” and “-an” contains the meaning of the English-language terms “unitedness” and “oneness (of mind and purpose)”.

It can be assumed that the authors of the Pancasila consciously and intentionally did not choose the noun *kesatuan*, but *persatuan*, and thus also renounced a stylistic uniformity of the Pancasila. The translation by Wolfgang Brehm (“Unity of Indonesia”) and especially that by Ingo Wandelt (“The Unification of Indonesia”) deviate from the intention of the text itself as well as from the intention of the authors. The third principle of the Pancasila is to be interpreted primarily as follows: The Republic of Indonesia is based on the fact that Indonesia, or actually Indonesians, have united and are united spiritually, including, of course, in matters of nation and state. And in this respect, the Republic of Indonesia is based on the “unitedness” and “oneness” of Indonesia or all Indonesians.

In his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nation, Sukarno, as mentioned above, summarized the third principle in his characteristic unconcern with the term “nationalism” (*nasionalisme*), which is after all easier to understand than his summary of the second principle as “internationalism” (*internasionalisme*). In his other important speech on the Pancasila, the speech on its “birth,” there is an interesting passage regarding the introductory word of the third principle (*persatuan*), which reads as follows:

*If we look at definitions of other people, for example Otto Bauer's definition in his book “Die Nationalitätenfrage”<sup>31</sup> [The Question of Nationalities], the latter asks the question: “Was ist eine Nation” [What is a nation?]. His answer is: “Eine Nation ist eine aus Schicksalsgemeinschaft erwachsene Charaktergemeinschaft” [A nation is a community of characters that has grown out of a community of fate] [Sukarno here quotes the German-language statement by Otto Bauer] So that, according to Bauer, is a nation. (A nation is a Persatuan of character traits which*

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<sup>31</sup> Sukarno is certainly referring to the book published in Vienna in 1907 with the title “Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie” (The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy). The author, the Austrian Otto Bauer, was a leading theoretician of social democracy in his home country and from 1918 to 1934 deputy chairman of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP).

*emerges from a Persatuan of fate).*<sup>32</sup>

At this point, Sukarno translates the German word "Gemeinschaft" as *persatuan*. In doing so, he indirectly adds a further semantic content to this word, that of "community". Whoever is guided by this "word interpretation" of Sukarno would perhaps translate the third principle of the Pancasila as "the community of all Indonesians". Would the semantic leeway, which exists with every translation and also every interpretation and exegesis, be already exceeded with it? That in itself is a difficult question. And it would be even more difficult to give a convincing answer to the admittedly imprecise question, "at what point exactly" a translation or interpretation is to be called "wrong".

#### **4. Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan/perwakilan [A] peopleness that is guided by the (magical) power of wise action in the context of deliberation/representation**

The fourth principle of the Pancasila, which Sukarno succinctly summarized as "democracy" in his speech to the UN, is the one that most Indonesians find hard to understand, and this is by no means only true for the uneducated. Even Indonesian writers, whom I asked to explain the intention of the text of the fourth principle beyond doubt, were unable to do so and admitted that they had never really understood it.

My word-for-word translation offered above is by no means the only possible one. The passage *hikmat kebijaksanaan* ("magic power of wise action"), for example, could also be translated as follows: "wisdom of reasonable action". However, this passage or a different interpretation of the same is not decisive for the understanding or the interpretation of the fourth principle, it is more or less decorative accessory.

The introductory word *kerakyatan*, which is again an abstract noun with the affixes "ke-" and "-an" and which is formed on the basis of the simple noun *rakyat* (people), is of decisive importance. It could be translated as "peopleness", "folk being", "people's being" or "folkishness" and cannot be interpreted differently in the context of a text-immanent analysis, which starts from the rules of word formation in Indonesian. In Indonesian usage, however, the word *kerakyatan* is never used in this

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<sup>32</sup> Kalau kita lihat definisi orang lain, yaitu definisi Otto Bauer, di dalam bukunya "Die Nationalitätenfrage", disitu ditanyakan: "Was ist eine Nation?" dan jawabnya ialah: "Eine Nation ist eine aus Schicksals-gemeinschaft erwachsene Charaktergemeinschaft". Inilah menurut Otto Bauer satu natie. (Bangsa adalah satu persatuan perangai yang timbul karena persatuan nasib). Source: See footnote 22.

sense<sup>33</sup>, and it is precisely this that leads many Indonesians to interpret the introductory passage of the fourth principle (*kerakyatan yang dipimpin*<sup>34</sup>) as if it said *rakyat yang dipimpin* (a people that is led), which in the context of the following text also leads to a statement that makes sense in itself.

The fourth principle is usually understood as the "principle of democracy," and this interpretation obviously corresponds to the intentions of the authors of the Pancasila. In his speech on the "Birth of the Pancasila," in which, interestingly, the term *kerakyatan* does not appear once, Sukarno speaks of a principle of the Pancasila that he calls *mufakat atau demokrasi* (consensus or democracy). That the term *demokrasi* (democracy) was ultimately not included in the text of the Pancasila is noteworthy. Instead, the term *kerakyatan* was chosen, apparently as a kind of synonym of the term *demokrasi*. From a philological or grammatical point of view, this is an incomprehensible decision that leads to confusion to this day. In the word *kerakyatan* ("peopleness"), there is nothing semantically to indicate that "rule of the people" or at least "sovereignty of the people" could be meant. Here, too, the "pocket" of a word was arbitrarily filled with a content or a meaning to which this word is not entitled already because of its morphology. In this context, one could speak of a "language game" by the authors of the Pancasila, in which the rules were not followed. The standard Indonesian dictionary has accepted this rule-breaking and defines *kerakyatan* as *demokrasi* (democracy). Perhaps because it is guided by the fact that the meaning of a word is its use in the language? However, this would not be true in this case. Only a tiny minority of speakers of Indonesian have ever used the word *kerakyatan* as a synonym for *demokrasi*. Which minority are we talking about? The authors of the Pancasila ...

Taking into account the intention of these authors, a word-for-word translation of the fourth principle could be as follows: "Democracy guided by the (magical) power of wise action within the framework of deliberation/representation. This principle would then be about a democracy characterized by wisdom, whereby "deliberation/representation" (*permusyawaratan/perwakilan*) are characteristics of this wisdom.

The phrase *permusyawaratan/perwakilan* introduced by the preposition *dalam* (in, within, in the context of) is semantically ambiguous. *Permusyawaratan*<sup>35</sup> and *perwakilan* are nouns formed using the affixes "per-" and "-an," based on the simple nouns *musyawarat* (deliberation) and *wakil* (representative). Nouns with "per-" and "-an" can be abstract nouns, but moreover,

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<sup>33</sup> The word *kerakyatan* has an adjectival character in Indonesian usage or serves as an element after a noun to form a compound, for example in the term *ekonomi kerakyatan* ("people's economy"), which describes a kind of economic system that is based on the economic power of the *rakyat* (people), whereby *rakyat* is to be understood here as "entire people", with special consideration of the "lower" classes of the population.

<sup>34</sup> *Dipimpin* means "to be led", "to be guided" or also "to be directed".

<sup>35</sup> Surprisingly, there is no entry for *permusyawaratan* in the standard Indonesian dictionary. Only the lemmata *musyawarat* and the variant *musyawarah* are listed there. The Pancasila thus contains a word that was not included in the standard Indonesian dictionary.

they can also denote the place where the thing denoted by the one in the initial noun takes place or is present. In this respect, *permusyawaratan* could mean "place of deliberation"<sup>36</sup> and *perwakilan* "place of (people's) representatives." The preposition *dalam*, which can have the meaning "in", does not stand in the way of an interpretation of the passage in this sense, and the same applies to the slash "/"<sup>37</sup>, which probably has the meaning "and" or "respectively".

With regard to the intention of the fourth principle, the interpretation of the nouns *permusyawaratan* and *perwakilan*, either as abstracta or as location names, is not crucial. More significant is the interpretation of what might be specifically meant by *musyawarat* (deliberation). This word, borrowed from Arabic, is always connoted with another Arabic loanword, namely *mufakat* (consensus). The goal of *musyawarat* is *mufakat*; consensus is to be reached in the course of joint deliberations. The term *mufakat* was also used by Sukarno when he explained the fourth principle of the Pancasila in his speech to the United Nations

*Fourth, democracy. For us Indonesians, democracy contains three basic elements: First, democracy contains the principle we call mufakat [consensus], namely agreement of opinions. Second, democracy contains the principle of representation. And finally, for us Indonesians, democracy contains the principle of musyawarah<sup>38</sup> [deliberation]. Yes, Indonesian democracy contains these three principles: Consensus, Representation, and Deliberations among the representatives [of the people].<sup>39</sup>*

*Mufakat* (consensus) is thus a connoted keyword of the fourth principle of Pancasila. Based on this, the intention of this principle could be summarized as follows: "Representative consensus democracy". It could also be translated into English in this way. Not only into English, but also into Indonesian, as follows: *Demokrasi Konsensus yang Representatif*<sup>40</sup>. And it is only through such an interpretative translation that the text of the fourth principle becomes at all comprehensible even to native speakers of Indonesian. In its present form, this text fails

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<sup>36</sup> For the interpretation of *permusyawaratan* as "place of deliberation" speaks even more than for an interpretation as abstract noun in the sense of "deliberation". For the initial noun *musyawarat* itself already means "deliberation". The affixes "per-" and "-an" would be redundant, if "place of deliberation" is not meant. However, such redundancy is not uncommon in Indonesian.

<sup>37</sup> The slash "/" between *permusyawaratan* and *perwakilan* was simply omitted in some versions of the Pancasila (See the entry *Rumusan-rumusan Pancasila* (Formulations of the Pancasila) of the Indonesian-language Wikipedia: [https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumusan-rumusan\\_Pancasila](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumusan-rumusan_Pancasila)). Omission would change the meaning of the passage considerably, for then *perwakilan* would be a kind of genitive attribute of *permusyawaratan*, and the combination of the two nouns would have the meaning "deliberations of the (people's) representation." The fact that in the course of the genesis of the text of the Pancasila the slash is omitted from time to time gives the impression that no particular care was taken in the respective formulations and that some details of the text were not always given intensive thought.

<sup>38</sup> *Musyawarah*: Sukarno uses here a variant of the very rarely used word *musyawarat*, which was nevertheless included in the text of the Pancasila.

<sup>39</sup> *Keempat: Demokrasi. Bagi kami bangsa Indonesia, demokrasi mengandung tiga unsur yang pokok. Demokrasi mengandung pertama-tama prinsip yang kami sebut Mufakat yakni: kebulatan pendapat. Kedua, demokrasi mengandung prinsip Perwakilan. Akhirnya demokrasi mengandung, bagi kami, prinsip musyawarah. Ya, demokrasi Indonesia mengandung ketiga prinsip itu, yakni: mufakat, perwakilan dan musyawarah antara wakil-wakil.* (Sukarno 1960)

<sup>40</sup> Literally: consensus democracy, which [is] representative.

to achieve its communicative goal, especially because of the semantically diffuse term *kerakyatan* (peopleness), but also because of the omission of the term *mufakat* (consensus).

The fact that the authors of the Pancasila refrained from using the words *demokrasi*, *konsensus* and *representatif* in formulating the fourth principle is basically understandable. An "agglomeration" of loan words from European languages would have been detrimental to the goal of describing an independent or Indonesian form of "democracy".<sup>41</sup> However, more suitable formulations would have been appropriate, for example: *Kedaulatan Rakyat berdasarkan hikmah mufakat antara wakil-wakilnya* (sovereignty of the people based on the wisdom of consensus decisions by its representatives). In particular, in the form of the word combination *kedaulatan rakyat* (power/sovereignty of the people), an Indonesian and thus independent equivalent of the word *demokrasi* was available, which – unlike *kerakyatan* – is characterized by clear terminology.

## **5. Keadilan Sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia**

### **Social justice for the entire Indonesian people**

The last of the five principles of the Pancasila is clearly formulated and requires no exegesis or interpretation. It is the only principle that is introduced in the text of the preamble of the Indonesian constitution by a phrase inserted or following the fourth principle, which reads as follows: "[...] and by realizing [social justice for the entire Indonesian people]. As shown above, the five principles of the Pancasila as a whole are introduced by a formulation that states that the Republic of Indonesia is "based" or "founded" on these very five principles. The insertion before the fifth principle, which seems redundant at first glance, emphasizes its importance, which could well lead to the somewhat polemical statement that Indonesia is still characterized by a lack of social justice. The phrase "for the entire Indonesian people" also seems redundant. Who else should Indonesia's state ideology be about?

Remarkable in this principle is the use of the only loanword from European languages in the text of the Pancasila, namely *sosial* (social). In addition, perhaps, that it is here again or for the second time about "justice". The adjective *adil* (just), on which the noun *keadilan* is based, already appears in the second principle ("just and moral humanness/humanity").

The fifth principle proves most clearly that the "principles" of the Pancasila, on which the Republic of Indonesia is founded, are partly ideals or goals and not always facts. Clear "principles of fact" are – at least from the Indonesian point of view – certainly "the divine" (*ketuhanan*) or the "unitedness/oneness" (*persatuan*) of Indonesia. With regard to the second and fourth principles, it could be argued whether they are ideals or facts.

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<sup>41</sup> In this context, Sukarno's "Birth of Pancasila" speech states, "If we seek democracy, it should not be Western democracy, but *permusyawaratan* [negotiations aimed at consensus] should give life to our democracy" (*Kalau kita mencari demokrasi, hendaknya bukan demokrasi barat, tetapi permusyawaratan yang memberi hidup.*)

The "small exegesis" carried out above represents - I hope - a contribution to the understanding of what the Pancasila intends as an autonomous text. The most important finding resulting from it is certainly that on the basis of a text-immanent analysis of the first principle it can be excluded that the Pancasila is about a personal God. And thus, of course, it is not about a "belief in God" or even an obligation to do so. The text of the first principle suggests the interpretation that the Indonesian state is based on the conviction that the divine or numinous, or a metaphysical sphere or spiritual entity, exists and that it must be guided in its actions by this conviction. Such an interpretation, however, does not correspond to the usual or official Indonesian interpretations of the Pancasila. This, in turn, is related to another important finding that emerged from comparing the results of the text-immanent analysis with the intentions of Sukarno, the principal author of the Pancasila. It turned out that the latter's intentions do not coincide with those of the autonomous text in several cases, for example, when Sukarno uses the word *ketuhanan* (the divine) as if it meant "belief in God." Moreover, Sukarno interprets the text he himself helped to formulate in an incomprehensible way, for example, by paraphrasing the second principle on the subject of *kemanusiaan* (humanness, humanity) as "internationalism." For him, both words and sentences are "pockets" into which soon this, soon that, soon more can be put at once. In connection with the imposing question whether this is possibly a quite widespread way of acting in Indonesia in relation to the Pancasila, I will go into it in a moment.

Before that, another result of the performed exegesis should be mentioned, even if it is a banal one. For it had to be pointed out that in several passages of the autonomous text of the Pancasila a clear assignment of meaning is impossible. This is what the text of the Pancasila basically has in common with all texts in natural languages, which, from the point of view of the philosophy of ideal language, i.e. from the point of view of philosophers like Gottlob Frege or Bertrand Russel, are "deficient", because they do not meet the strict requirements of logic. However, the text of Pancasila could be described as a text that violates the criteria of an "ideal language" to a particular degree, due to the high degree of semantic ambiguity that characterizes the Indonesian language in general and especially with regard to nominal derivation in Indonesian. This became especially recognizable by the fact that the exegesis carried out had a contrastive or comparative character by trying to determine the intentions of the text of the Pancasila by means of possible translation into English, which, as I

already mentioned in the context of the analysis of the second principle, might be methodologically contestable.<sup>42</sup>

Before doing this, let us mention another result of the exegesis carried out, even if it is a banal one. Because, of course, it had to be established that for quite a few passages of the autonomous text of the Pancasila a clear assignment of meaning is impossible. The text of the Pancasila has this in common with all texts in natural languages, which are "deficient" from the point of view of the philosophy of ideal language, i.e. from the point of view of philosophers like Gottlob Frege or Bertrand Russell, because they do not meet the strict demands of logic. However, one could describe the text of the Pancasila as a text that violates the criteria of an "ideal language" to a particular degree, due to the high degree of semantic ambiguity that characterizes the Indonesian language in principle and especially in the area of nominal derivation. This was particularly evident from the fact that the exegesis carried out had a contrastive or comparative character, in that an attempt was made to determine the intentions of the text of the Pancasila by translating it into German, which, as I already mentioned in the context of the analysis of the second principle, is methodologically contestable is.

Not only in this context I would like to point out that in the course of the exegesis I asked myself the question several times whether I might take a too "critical" and hair-splitting look at the text of Pancasila. Whether I judge too much from my own linguistic perspective and come to unfair conclusions through the one-sided look through the glasses of the German or English language and through thinking in the same. Also whether it is not perhaps somewhat arrogant if I reproach the authors of the Pancasila with weaknesses in the formulation and even incomprehensibility and presume – in the case of the fourth principle – to propose a "better" formulation. I asked myself such questions because, for example, Wolfgang Brehm came to a completely different assessment of the text of the Pancasila contained in the preamble of the Indonesian constitution. Brehm writes:

*The entire preamble is a linguistic and intellectual masterpiece that interweaves the five pillars of the Pancasila into a solid building of ideas. Its subject matter is the great challenges that the newly established Republic of Indonesia had to face and which, according to the wise foresight of the founders of the state, would retain their decisive importance for the further fate of this republic.<sup>43</sup>*

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<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, this context also raises the critical question of whether what is meant by an Indonesian word can be expressed at all by a single supposed "equivalent" in English, or whether the usually more explicit character of the same must always lead to a narrowing of meaning.

<sup>43</sup> *Die gesamte Präambel ist ein sprachliches und gedankliches Meisterwerk, das die fünf Säulen der Pancasila zu einem Gedankengebäude verwebt. Ihr Gegenstand sind die großen Herausforderungen, denen sich die neu*

In particular, Brehm's thesis that the Pancasila is an intellectual and even a linguistic masterpiece does, of course, in no way correspond to my assessment.

A remark by Magnis-Suseno, already quoted at the beginning of this article, is also worth noting. He speaks of "formulations of the Pancasila" which are "ponderous in German translation", which means indirectly that they are not so in the Indonesian original. I cannot agree with this thesis either, not only because there could be German translations that are not "ponderous", but because I consider just the Indonesian text of the Pancasila to be at least ponderous" and could ironically add that some principles – especially the fourth one – would definitely need "translation" into an Indonesian that is not ponderous in order to fulfill its communicative goal. So I do not share Brehm's or Magnis-Suseno's views in this regard. However, their views may serve to put my assessments into perspective.

I have no doubts about the paramount importance of the Pancasila for Indonesia, nor about the fact that the Pancasila had, and still has, extremely positive effects on the internal conditions of the Indonesian state and Indonesian society. In my view, however, these result almost exclusively from the first principle, which, even if it is (mis)understood as "belief in the One God," guarantees religious pluralism and thus puts a stop to an Islamic state. Of course, the other principles are also significant, but I would rate their contribution to shaping Indonesian conditions as rather small. Does the Pancasila deserve to be called a "philosophy of the state"? That certainly depends on what one means by "philosophy," to say the least. But what fascinates me about the Pancasila is the nimbus that has attached to it since the founding of the Republic of Indonesia, certainly because it has been intensively propagated by a wide variety of regimes without interruption, in its role as guarantor of Indonesia's salvation. It is also called *Pancasila Sakti*, the "magic Pancasila". An object to which magical powers are attributed is called a fetish. And a characterization of the Pancasila as a fetish is certainly not completely absurd.

Finally, I now come to the question raised above, whether Sukarno's "approach" as author and interpreter of the Pancasila stands for an approach that is quite common and perhaps even typical in Indonesia with regard to the Pancasila. The following anecdote may be worth telling in this context.

A few years ago, I gave a lecture at an Indonesian university on characteristics of the Indonesian language. I tried to show that Indonesian is by no means an "easy" language and pointed out that understanding Indonesian texts in particular is far more

difficult than understanding texts in European languages. As an example, I mentioned the fourth principle of Pancasila and took the liberty of remarking that even many native Indonesian speakers admit that they do not understand the intention of the text. Thereupon an older lady spoke up and said somewhat indignantly: "We Indonesians understand this text very well. If you don't understand it, then I guess it's up to you." I then asked the lady to please explain to me what exactly was meant by the word *kerakyatan* ("peopleness"/democracy), and what the terms *permusyawaratan* (deliberation/place of deliberation) and *perwakilan* (representation/place of representatives) meant. The lady's answer was, "It's quite simple. *Kerakyatan* means *kerakyatan*, *permusyawaratan* means *permusyawaratan*, and *perwakilan* just means *perwakilan*." To my relief, discreet laughter rose in the hall. After my lecture, I asked the organizers who the outraged lady had been. I was told that she was a colleague who had been teaching Pancasila for decades ...

Presumably, this is an extreme example of an apparent unwillingness to subject the text of the Pancasila to a linguistic-philological analysis. My impression, however, is that this is quite characteristic of Indonesian authors and scholars who publish on the subject of Pancasila. Since I myself do not have sufficient knowledge of the multitude of Indonesian publications on the subject of Pancasila, I asked Wolfgang Brehm, who has dealt extensively with Indonesian-language "Pancasila literature", for his assessment of the situation: In an e-mail, Brehm informed me of the following: "To my knowledge, there is no attempt by Indonesian interpreters of the Pancasila to analyze its text linguistically. They completely refrain from a text-immanent exegesis. This leads to the fact that quite essential material is lost to the juristic interpretation itself." Incidentally, this does not apply to the legal expert Brehm himself. He has the merit of having brought semantic questions about the textual material of the Pancasila to the fore in his analyses and interpretations of the Pancasila – and indeed as one of the first authors ever to do so.

A current example of the "method" of dealing with Pancasila that is common in Indonesia will conclude this article. It concerns the draft of a "Law on the Guidelines on Pancasila Ideology" (*Rancangan Undang-Undang Haluan Ideologi Pancasila*), which was presented in mid-2020 by parliamentarians close to the government and which has been the subject of lively and critical debate among the Indonesian public. This is not intended to be a political assessment of this process, nor an analysis of the text of this draft. Only paragraph 7 of this 60-paragraph bill will be quoted, in English translation, of course. The following quotation is an impressive example of Pancasila interpretation as it is practiced in Indonesia. A comment is unnecessary, it speaks for itself.<sup>44</sup> The three points of paragraph 7 read as follows:

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<sup>44</sup> In the translation of the quotation, the retained Indonesian-language key terms are explained by translations or translation options in square brackets. The text of this quote from a bill is also

- (1) The essential feature of Pancasila is justice and social welfare in the spirit of familiarity, which is a fusion of the principles of *ketuhanan* [the divine?], *kemanusiaan* [humanity], *kesatuan* [unity], political and economic *kerakyatan/demokrasi* [peopleness/democracy], all in one.
- (2) The main characteristic of the Pancasila is that of a *Trisila* [a "threefold principle"], namely: socio-nationalism, socio-democracy, as well as a cultivated *Ketuhanan* ["Godhood"?/a cultivated belief in God?].
- (3) The *Trisila* mentioned in point 2 crystallizes into an *Ekasila* [mono principle], namely: *gotong royong* [mutual aid/solidarity].<sup>45</sup>

What kind of exegesis might have preceded this art of fabulation?

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semantically highly ambiguous. This applies especially for some of the nouns taken from the text of the Pancasila.

<sup>45</sup> (1) *Ciri pokok Pancasila adalah keadilan dan kesejahteraan sosial dengan semangat kekeluargaan yang merupakan perpaduan prinsip ketuhanan, kemanusiaan, kesatuan, kerakyatan/demokrasi politik dan ekonomi dalam satu kesatuan.* (2) *Ciri Pokok Pancasila berupa trisila, yaitu: sosio-nasionalisme, sosio-demokrasi, serta ketuhanan yang berkebudayaan.* (3) *Trisila sebagaimana dimaksud pada ayat (2) terkristalisasi dalam ekasila, yaitu gotong-royong.* Source: <http://www.dpr.go.id/dokakd/dokumen/BALEG-RJ-20200609-010923-6831.pdf> (This is a publication of the Indonesian Parliament in which the full text of the bill is listed).

(The text above is a translation of Berthold Damshäuser's German-language article "Der Text der indonesischen Staatsideologie *Pancasila* - eine kleine Exegese published in: Orientierungen - Zeitschrift zur Kultur Asiens, 2019, pp. 251-274. In the the translation from German, the German translations of passages of the text of the Pancasila were replaced by English translations. In this process, the sharpness and precision of the contrastive analysis carried out for the exegesis on the basis of the German-Indonesian language pair was partially lost.)

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ORIENTIERUNGEN, the journal of IOA (Institut für Orient- und Asienwissenschaften) at Bonn University:

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