

**THE SELF AS TRUTH: CARTESIAN SUBJECTIVITY IN  
A.A. NAVIS'S "ANAK KEBANGGAAN"  
Diri sebagai Kebenaran: Subjektivitas Kartesian  
dalam "Anak Kebanggaan" karya A.A. Navis**

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini mengkaji subjektivitas Kartesian melalui tokoh Ompi dalam cerpen "Anak Kebanggaan" karya A.A. Navis yang termuat dalam kumpulan *Robohnya Surau Kami* (1994). Berlandaskan konsep filosofis René Descartes, khususnya *cogito ergo sum* ("aku berpikir, maka aku ada"), penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana kognisi ego-sentris Ompi membentuk pemahamannya tentang kebenaran, identitas, dan realitas sosial. Ompi memosisikan pikiran dan penilaiannya sendiri sebagai sumber kebenaran utama, serta menolak perspektif lain yang bertentangan dengan pandangan dunia yang ia bangun sendiri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif interpretatif yang dipadukan dengan studi kepustakaan untuk menganalisis teks sastra serta sumber-sumber filosofis yang relevan. Berbeda dengan penelitian sebelumnya yang lebih menekankan aspek religius, psikologis, atau kultural dalam karya-karya A.A. Navis, penelitian ini menyoroti peran kognisi Kartesian dalam pembentukan ego, kesombongan, dan identitas yang berpusat pada diri. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketika penalaran subjektif diperlakukan sebagai kebenaran absolut, hal tersebut dapat melahirkan sikap arogan, keterasingan emosional, serta ketidakmampuan individu untuk berelasi secara sehat dengan realitas maupun dengan orang lain.

**Kata kunci:** Kartesian; Rene Descartes; Navis; Kognisi; Ompi

**Abstract:** This study examines Cartesian subjectivity through the character Ompi in A.A. Navis's short story "Anak Kebanggaan" from *Robohnya Surau Kami* (1994). Drawing on René Descartes' philosophical concept of *cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"), the research explores how Ompi's ego-centered cognition shapes his understanding of truth, identity, and social reality. Ompi positions his own thoughts and judgments as the primary source of validity, rejecting perspectives that challenge his self-constructed worldview. This study employs a qualitative interpretive method combined with library research to analyze textual evidence and relevant philosophical sources. Unlike previous studies that focus on religious, psychological, or cultural aspects of Navis's works, this research emphasizes the role of Cartesian cognition in the formation of ego, pride, and self-centered identity. The findings suggest that when subjective reasoning is treated as absolute truth, it can lead to arrogance, emotional detachment, and an inability to engage with reality or others.

**Keywords:** Cartesian; Rene Descartes; Navis; Cognition; Ompi

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## INTRODUCTION

Discussions of anthropocentrism have traditionally focused on the relationship between humans and the natural world, particularly in ecocritical studies, which critique the privileging of human reason and consciousness over non-human entities. In this framework, human rationality is often positioned as the primary source of value and authority, legitimizing control and dominance over nature based on intellectual capacity (Baylee, 2018). Although these discussions are rooted in ecological ethics, they highlight a broader philosophical tendency to center meaning and truth within human cognition.

This privileging of rational consciousness can be traced to Cartesian philosophy, especially René Descartes' assertion of *cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"), which establishes the thinking subject as the foundational ground of certainty and existence (Descartes, 2013, p. 25). Cartesian subjectivity does not propose social superiority or moral hierarchy; rather, it emphasizes cognition as the starting point of knowledge (Raga-Rosaleny, 2020). Truth, within this framework, is grounded in the subject's capacity to think and reason, positioning the self as the primary locus of epistemic authority.

While Descartes' philosophy is primarily concerned with cognition, its internalization at the individual level can produce a rigid form of subjectivity in which personal reasoning is treated as unquestionable (Lähteenmäki et al., 2026). When the thinking subject assumes exclusive access to truth, alternative perspectives are easily dismissed as error rather than difference. In this sense, the hierarchical mode of thinking often discussed in ecocritical theory can be rearticulated at the psychosocial level as Cartesian subjectivity, where cognitive absolutism emerges from the subject's

conviction that its own reasoning constitutes the primary foundation of truth (Andrus, 2017). Hotanen (2019) further notes that such modes of thinking often result in emotional detachment and the marginalization of other viewpoints.

This study examines Cartesian subjectivity through the character Ompi in "Anak Kebanggaan" (1994), a short story by A.A. Navis included in the collection *Robohnya Surau Kami*. Existing scholarship on Navis's works has largely concentrated on the short story "Robohnya Surau Kami", with particular emphasis on religious criticism (Ardianta & Arifin, 2022; Arman, 2019), cultural values (Fawziah, 2017; Halimah et al., 2017), and psychological dimensions (Alfadlilah, 2024). However, these studies rarely explore questions of subjectivity, cognition, and epistemic authority in Navis's lesser-studied narratives.

The central problem addressed in this study lies in the limited examination of how Cartesian modes of cognition shape character behavior in Navis's literary works. Rather than focusing on social hierarchy or moral dominance, this research emphasizes how a character's belief in himself as the primary source of truth influences ego, pride, and interpersonal relations. To address this gap, the present study analyzes "Anak Kebanggaan", a thematically significant yet underexplored short story, to reveal how Ompi's cognition functions as a closed epistemic system.

Navis, who was born and raised in the Minangkabau culture of West Sumatra, uses these cultural tensions as a background setting in his works (Rulianto, 2019). The story, part of the collection *Robohnya Surau Kami*, is set in a suburban village that reflects the Minangkabau way of life, particularly its matrilineal kinship system, where family lineage and inheritance are traced

through the mother (Rahmat & Maryelliwati, 2019).

Navis presents a father—son relationship between Ompi and Indra Budiman. The relationship stands in contrast to the traditional Minangkabau system, in which mothers and daughters are the continuing the family line. In matrilineal societies like Minangkabau, inheritance and identity flow through the maternal line, and daughters are central to the preservation of family heritage (Rahmat & Maryelliwati, 2019). Nevertheless, in this story, the focus shifts to a father who is obsessed with the success of his son.

In “Anak Kebanggaan”, Ompi is portrayed as deeply egoistic and self-centered, driven by an unwavering confidence in his own judgments. He repeatedly boasts about his son, Indra Budiman, presenting him as intellectually and socially superior, while rejecting any criticism or alternative interpretations. This attitude reflects a Cartesian form of subjectivity in which the self’s cognition is positioned as the sole legitimate source of truth. Ompi does not negotiate meaning through dialogue or shared experience; instead, he relies entirely on his internal certainty, treating his thoughts as objective reality (Balci, 2018).

Rather than acknowledging uncertainty or contradiction, Ompi dismisses opposing views as ignorance or jealousy. His cognition reflects Cartesian subjectivity, where the certainty of the thinking self overrides intersubjective dialogue, producing a hierarchical structure of meaning within human relationships (Drichel, 2016). However, in Ompi’s case, this hierarchy is epistemic rather than social: his thinking dominates not because of social power, but because he believes his cognition alone defines truth.

What makes this analysis significant is that Ompi’s eventual downfall stems from epistemic arrogance rather than

external conflict. His rigid trust in his own cognition prevents him from recognizing limitations, contingency, or alternative realities. As Schwartz (2018) observes, excessive pride rooted in ego often leads to self-destruction. When reality ultimately contradicts Ompi’s beliefs, his constructed identity collapses, revealing the fragility of a worldview grounded solely in subjective certainty.

Although “Anak Kebanggaan” is often overshadowed by Navis’s more widely studied works, it offers a compelling exploration of how Cartesian subjectivity operates within everyday family and community dynamics. By ccc Ompi’s cognition, this study demonstrates how the belief in oneself as the sole source of truth can lead to emotional isolation, social alienation, and psychological collapse. In doing so, the story serves as a literary critique of subjectivity that lacks humility, dialogue, and openness to shared reality.

This study is positioned within the critical paradigm, as it interrogates how individuals construct meaning, authority, and truth through their own cognition rather than through shared social reality (Cooke, 2023). This research adopts Cartesian subjectivity to examine how Ompi’s sense of self and authority are formed through his internal cognitive certainty. This perspective allows the study to analyze not social hierarchy or domination, but rather the epistemological roots of Ompi’s ego and rigidity.

Cartesian subjectivity originates from René Descartes’ foundational proposition of *cogito, ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”), which establishes thinking consciousness as the primary and undeniable ground of existence (Descartes, 2013, p. 25). In this formulation, the thinking subject becomes the central source of certainty, meaning, and truth. Knowledge is no longer derived

from tradition, community consensus, or external authority, but from the individual's capacity for rational thought (Marion, 2018). As a result, the self assumes epistemic primacy: what is known is what can be confirmed by one's own cognition.

Descartes does not argue for social superiority among humans, but rather for epistemic centrality, in which the thinking subject becomes the sole foundation of certainty (Yevarouski, 2017). This distinction is crucial. Cartesian philosophy emphasizes cognition rather than hierarchy and prioritize truth rather than power. However, when internalized rigidly, Cartesian subjectivity can lead to a cognitive absolutism in which the individual treats personal reasoning as infallible and dismisses alternative perspectives as error or ignorance (Gaudemard, 2021).

For Descartes, rational thinking distinguishes humans from other beings and serves as the basis of knowledge and judgment (Descartes, 2013, p. 173). His philosophical system privileges clear and distinct ideas as markers of truth, encouraging individuals to rely on their own reason above external opinion (Dika, 2020). While this emphasis on cognition underpins modern science and philosophy, it also creates the possibility for epistemic isolation, in which the subject becomes enclosed within their own certainty.

Descartes' view of animals as non-rational automatons further illustrates how cognition determines value within his system (Descartes, 2013, p. 34). Beings without rational thought are excluded from epistemic consideration, not due to moral inferiority but to the absence of the cognitive capacity required for knowledge. This logic reinforces the centrality of rational consciousness as the defining measure of existence and legitimacy.

Importantly, Cartesian subjectivity does not reject theology. Descartes situates human reason as a gift from God, arguing that because God is not a deceiver, humans may trust their rational faculties when properly exercised (Descartes, 2013, p. 129). Human cognition is thus autonomous but not independent of divine order. Nevertheless, this trust in reason places significant responsibility on the individual subject, who becomes accountable for distinguishing truth from illusion through cognition alone.

Within this framework, error arises not from faulty reality but from misused judgment. When individuals fail to examine the limits of their cognition, they may mistake belief for truth and assumption for certainty (Steiner, 2023). Cartesian subjectivity therefore carries an inherent risk: when self-reflection collapses into self-assurance, cognition hardens into dogma (Miles, 2022).

This theoretical framework is applied to the character Ompi in Navis's "Anak Kebanggaan". Ompi exemplifies a subject who treats his own thoughts, expectations, and projections as unquestionable truth. His belief in his son's destined success is not grounded in empirical reality or social validation, but in his internal conviction. Any contradiction from others is immediately rejected, not because it threatens his social status, but because it challenges the cognitive certainty upon which his identity is built.

Ompi's arrogance, therefore, does not stem from a belief in social hierarchy, but from a Cartesian-style epistemic closure in which he positions himself as the sole source of truth. His cognition becomes self-referential: what he thinks must be correct because it originates from his thinking self. This cognitive absolutism isolates him from communal reality and prevents him from engaging

with alternative interpretations of his circumstances.

By employing Cartesian subjectivity rather than anthropocentrism, this study demonstrates that Ompi's downfall originates in epistemic failure rather than moral domination. His tragedy lies in his inability to question his own cognition, leading to illusion, emotional detachment, and ultimately psychological collapse. Through Ompi, Navis offers a literary critique of how unchecked certainty in one's own reasoning can distort reality and sever meaningful human connection.

### **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach combined with library research. The research process begins with repeated and close reading of the short story to achieve a deep understanding of the text. Through this process, the researcher identifies and records significant details relevant to the analysis. Afterward, secondary sources are collected from both offline and online materials, including theoretical texts, journal articles, and previous studies that support the research focus. The study also incorporates Navis's biography and socio-cultural background to provide contextual insight into his literary work and to support a more nuanced interpretation of the short story.

The qualitative method is appropriate because the research centers on interpreting textual meaning and analyzing character behavior, rather than calculating numerical data. As Thorne (2016) states, qualitative interpretive research focuses on insight into human behavior, values, and social contexts through rich, descriptive analysis.

In addition, this study adopts library research, which provides access to relevant theoretical frameworks, prior scholarly work, and primary texts. Libra-

ry research plays a crucial role in forming the foundation of literary studies and helps lead to meaningful and critical conclusions (Connaway & Radford, 2021).

This paper analyzes Navis's short story "Anak Kebanggaan" with a focus on the character Ompi, who exhibits strong egoistic tendencies and a rigid, self-centered mode of thinking. This analysis applies René Descartes' concept of Cartesian subjectivity, particularly his emphasis on cognition as the foundation of certainty, as articulated in the maxim *cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am") (Descartes, 2013, p. 25). Rather than interpreting Ompi's behavior as a form of social or moral superiority, this study examines how his excessive confidence in his own reasoning leads him to treat his personal beliefs as absolute truth. Through this perspective, Ompi's pride and rigidity are understood as the result of epistemic certainty grounded in flawed self-affirming cognition.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Ompi, the central character in Navis's "Anak Kebanggaan," invests his entire identity and hope in his only son, Indra Budiman, after his wife's death. He sends his son to Jakarta to pursue higher education and proudly believes in his son's future success as a doctor. Ompi frequently boasts about his son's achievements and dismisses any criticism as jealousy. When Indra Budiman stops sending letters, Ompi falls into illness and despair. The tragedy culminates when he receives a telegram announcing his son's death, leaving him speechless. This self-centered worldview is further reflected in Ompi's rejection of social criticism and his belief that his son's imagined superiority elevates them above others, illustrating a Cartesian notion of meaning grounded in flawed, self-affirming rationality.

### **Ompi's Identity and the Ego of Naming**

Ompi's refusal to accept alternative perspectives and his unwavering belief in his own version of truth illustrate how Cartesian subjectivity, when taken to an extreme, can isolate individuals from social reality and ultimately lead to personal tragedy.

Semua orang, tua-muda, besar-kecil, memanggilnya Ompi. Hatinya akan kecil bila dipanggil lain. Dan semua orang tak hendak mengecilkan hati orang tua itu (Navis, 1994).

Everyone, young and old, called him Ompi. He would be deeply hurt if addressed by any other name. And no one had the heart to hurt the old man's feeling.

From the opening of the story, Ompi is portrayed as someone who refuses to be addressed by any name other than "Ompi." This insistence reflects a rigid, self-centered construction of identity in which personal value is grounded in one's own cognitive certainty rather than in communal agreement (Yazıcı, 2020). Although Navis does not reveal Ompi's original or full name, the narrative emphasizes that any alternative form of address is unacceptable to him. For Ompi, the name "Ompi" functions as a cognitive anchor for dignity, status, and self-worth. Being addressed differently is therefore perceived as an affront to the truth he has constructed about himself.

This attitude reflects Cartesian subjectivity, where the self becomes the primary reference point for meaning and judgment. Ompi treats his internal perception as authoritative, assuming that what he believes and feels must be valid simply because it originates from his own consciousness. Any deviation from this self-defined identity is interpreted as disrespect rather than as an

alternative perspective (Abhilasha et al., 2023). His identity is therefore sustained not through dialogue or shared social values, but through an inward certainty that demands recognition from others. According to Amirkhani Shahraki et al. (2022), privileging one's own perception as unquestionable often leads individuals to marginalize alternative viewpoints and reinforce a fragile sense of superiority.

Mula-mula si anak di namainya Edward. Tapi karena raja Inggris itu turun takhta karena perempuan, ditukarnya nama Edward jadi Ismail. Sesuai dengan nama Kerajaan Mesir yang pertama. Ketika tersiar pula kabar, bahwa ada seorang Ismail terhukum karena maling dan membunuh, Ompi naik pitam. Nama anaknya seolah ikut tercemar. Dan ia merasa terhina. Dan pada suatu hari yang terpilih menurut kepercayaan orangtua-tua, yakin ketika bulan sedang mengambang naik, Ompi mengadakan kenduri. Maka jadilah Ismail menjadi Indra Budiman (Navis, 1994).

At first, the child was named Edward. However, after the King of England abdicated for the sake of a woman, the name Edward name was replaced with Ismail, after what Ompi believed to be the name of Egypt's first kingdom. When news later spread that a man named Ismail had been convicted of theft and murder, Ompi was furious. He felt that his son's name had been stained. He felt deeply humiliated. On a day considered auspicious by the elders, when the moon was believed to be on the rise, Ompi held a ceremonial feast. Thus, Ismail was renamed Indra Budiman.

This passage further illustrates how Ompi's cognition operates as the central authority in constructing meaning. For him, a name is not merely a social label but a determinant of identity, destiny, and value. When a name becomes associated with scandal or failure, Ompi

experiences it as a direct threat to the truth he has constructed about himself and his family. Rather than accepting the contingent nature of social symbols, he responds by repeatedly replacing names in an attempt to restore cognitive certainty.

Because he lives in a small village where names are generally treated pragmatically, Ompi's fixation marks a sharp contrast. He dismisses the villagers' grounded perspective and instead prioritizes distant political events and symbolic associations that have little relevance to local life. This behavior demonstrates how Ompi's Cartesian-style cognition privileges internal judgment over shared reality. As Tahat (2019) notes, parents often attribute symbolic meaning to names; however, in Ompi's case, this attribution becomes excessive and detached from social context, revealing a belief that personal reasoning alone is sufficient to determine truth.

Through Ompi's obsession with names, Navis portrays a subject who believes that reality can be reshaped through thought alone. Ompi's cognition does not engage with the perspectives of others but instead seeks to impose coherence on the world according to his own assumptions. This epistemic rigidity foreshadows his later emotional collapse, as a worldview grounded solely in personal certainty proves incapable of accommodating contradiction, uncertainty, or loss.

### **Ompi's Ego Projected onto His Son's Future**

Just as Ompi attaches his own social status to his son's name, he further inflates this identity by assigning the title "doctor" long before it is earned. This projection is not merely an expression of paternal hope, but a declarative cognitive act through which Ompi seeks to affirm

his own sense of certainty and self-worth, despite the fact that his son is still a child and has not yet entered university. Ompi is so convinced of his son's future success that he treats it as an established truth rather than a contingent possibility. Within the context of a small village, the title of "doctor" carries significant symbolic prestige, particularly when contrasted with the more common occupations of farming or manual labor pursued by many villagers' children (Jin & Chen, 2023).

Ompi is fully aware that such a professional title would elevate his family's social standing. However, rather than grounding this expectation in evidence, he relies on his own cognition as the primary source of truth. In this sense, Ompi's worldview reflects Cartesian subjectivity, in which personal reasoning is treated as authoritative and self-validating. His judgments do not emerge from dialogue or social consensus, but from an inward certainty that places his own expectations at the center of meaning. As Esmailzadeh (2025) explains, when individuals privilege their own perspective as universally valid, alternative viewpoints are dismissed rather than engaged.

Dan kalau Ompi melihat ada orang membuat rumah, lalu ia berkata, "Ah sayang. Rumah-rumah orang kita masih kuno arsitekturnya. Coba kalau anakku, Indra Budiman, sudah menjadi insinyur, pastilah ia akan membantu mereka membuat rumah yang lebih indah (Navis, 1994).

Whenever Ompi saw someone building a house, he would say, "Oh dear. The way our houses are still built is old-fashioned. If only my son, Indra Budiman, had become an engineer, he would surely help them build more beautiful homes."

Ompi does not merely boast about his son's potential to become an engineer; he uses this imagined future as a cognitive framework through which he evaluates and judges others. By positioning his son as the hypothetical solution to the village's perceived deficiencies, Ompi implicitly claims epistemic authority over what counts as progress, beauty, and improvement. His remarks about village houses are therefore not neutral observations, but expressions of a closed cognitive system in which his personal standards define reality.

As a result, the villagers are reduced to comparative figures whose existence serves only to confirm Ompi's internal convictions. This illustrates how Cartesian-style epistemic certainty, when left unexamined, can distort social relationships and ethical judgment (Mehl, 2020). Ompi's belief in the correctness of his own reasoning prevents him from recognizing alternative values or lived experiences, isolating him from the community and reinforcing the illusion of superiority that ultimately contributes to his personal collapse.

### **Ompi's Contempt for His Community**

What Ompi fails to recognize is the emotional harm his words inflict on those around him. His remarks are often laced with contempt, yet he never considers how such statements may humiliate or marginalize others. From Ompi's perspective, his opinions are entirely justified because he believes his son possesses a future far superior to that of other villagers' children. This conviction, rooted in ego and pride, positions Ompi at what he perceives to be a higher moral and intellectual level than the rest of the community. He shows little awareness of the lived realities of his neighbors, many of whom find meaning in modest living, social bonds, and communal harmony rather than status or prestige. By

measuring value solely through his own aspirations, Ompi elevates his personal cognition as the ultimate standard, rendering alternative ways of life insignificant.

Such a stance reflects an extreme form of Cartesian subjectivity, in which the self becomes the central source of judgment and truth (Rizo Patrón de Lerner, 2026). Ompi treats his beliefs, ambitions, and projections as universally valid, assuming that his internal reasoning is sufficient to determine what is right, valuable, and meaningful. This cognitive orientation mirrors what Drichel (2016) identifies as a hierarchical logic of exclusion, where one perspective is privileged as authoritative while others are dismissed or rendered invisible. In Ompi's case, this hierarchy is epistemic rather than ecological: he refuses to engage with perspectives that challenge his assumptions, because doing so would threaten the certainty upon which his identity is built.

As a result, Ompi's reasoning hardens into a closed cognitive system that replaces empathy with self-assurance and dialogue with judgment. Rather than fostering respect, his unwavering confidence isolates him emotionally and socially. His belief in the superiority of his own cognition prevents meaningful connection, making him appear increasingly detached and unkind to those around him. Ultimately, Ompi's failure is not merely moral but epistemological: his inability to question his own certainty erodes the very social bonds he seeks to transcend.

Ketika Ompi membaca surat anaknya yang memberitakan kemajuannya itu, air mata Ompi berlinang kegembiraan. "Ah, Anakku," katanya pada diri sendiri, "Aku bangga, Anakku. Baik engkau jadi dokter. Karena orang lebih banyak memerlukanmu. Dengan begitu kau disegani orang. Oooo, perkara uang?"

Mengapa tiga ribu, lima ribu akankukirim, Anakku. Mengapa tidak?" (Navis, 1994).

When Ompi read his son's letter informing him of his progress, tears of joy welled up in his eyes. "Ah, my son," he said to himself, "I am proud of you, my son. It is good that you become a doctor. People will need you, and that way you will be respected. Money? Three thousand, five thousand, I will send it, my son. Why not?"

After sending Indra Budiman to Jakarta, Ompi's confidence in his own position intensifies. He becomes increasingly convinced that his son's future success as a doctor will guarantee not only respect but also envy from others, which he interprets as confirmation of his own correctness. Any anticipated criticism is immediately reframed as jealousy, allowing Ompi to maintain his belief that his worldview is superior and unquestionable. In this way, his reasoning functions as a closed cognitive system in which alternative interpretations are excluded.

Material sacrifice, such as sending large sums of money, becomes insignificant compared to the symbolic authority attached to the title "doctor." For Ompi, Indra Budiman's imagined future is not merely a hopeful aspiration but a cognitive justification for his own sense of certainty and self-worth. His thinking reflects Cartesian subjectivity, where personal conviction is treated as truth simply because it arises from his own reasoning. Rather than engaging with social reality, Ompi relies on his internal belief system to validate his identity and interpret the responses of others.

Through this pattern, Navis illustrates how excessive confidence in one's own cognition can distort perception and reinforce illusion. Ompi does not adapt his understanding to reality; instead, he reshapes reality to fit his expectations.

This self-affirming mode of thought ultimately isolates him from the community and foreshadows the emotional collapse that follows when his carefully constructed certainty can no longer be sustained.

### **Community Perceptions of Ompi**

Despite Ompi's constant boasting about his son's future success, his neighbors respond with apparent indifference, likely due to their repeated exposure to such claims. Ompi's self-centered mode of thinking leads him to believe that his opinions are invariably correct, particularly because he regards his son as intellectually superior to other children in the village. This inflated confidence causes him to dismiss alternative perspectives and reject disagreement altogether. As Schwartz (2018) notes, excessive pride rooted in ego often precipitates personal and social downfall.

In this context, Preyer's (2019) notion of ego-centered identification is useful for understanding Ompi's behavior. Preyer explains that individuals may expand their sense of self by positioning their own values and beliefs as the central reference point for judgment. Applied here, Ompi interprets disagreement not as an opportunity for dialogue, but as a threat to the cognitive certainty upon which his self-concept depends. Consequently, when neighbors express skepticism or criticism regarding his son, Ompi responds with anger and harsh, even curse-laden language. He reads their reactions not as viewpoints worthy of consideration, but as signs of jealousy or ignorance, which further reinforces his belief that his reasoning is the only valid one.

Dan akhirnya orang jadi kasihan pada Ompi. Tak seorang pun lagi membicarakan Indra Budiman padanya. Malah sebaliknya kini, semua orang seolah

sepakat saja untuk memuji-muji (Navis, 1994).

In the end, people began to feel sorry for Ompi. No one mention Indra Budiman to him anymore. Instead, now everyone seemed to praise him.

Eventually, the neighbors grow weary of Ompi's incessant boasting about Indra Budiman. Rather than continuing to challenge him, they choose to respond with polite praise, likely as a strategy to avoid further conflict. Ompi, however, interprets this silence and accommodation as validation, believing that his views have finally been universally accepted. This reaction further reinforces his cognitive certainty and strengthens his belief that he and his son occupy a superior position within the community.

While others privately regard him as someone who boasts without evidence—given that his son has not yet completed his education—Ompi remains unwavering in his self-assessment. This episode illustrates the social consequences of Cartesian-style epistemic certainty, in which personal conviction is treated as truth and alternative viewpoints are dismissed as insignificant. Ompi's desire to affirm his identity through his son's imagined success ultimately exposes the fragility of pride built on illusion rather than reality.

### **Ompi's Emotional Conflict with His Community**

Ompi becomes visibly angered whenever others express opinions that contradict his own, revealing an egoistic disposition that refuses to acknowledge reality unless it aligns with his personal beliefs. He is firmly convinced that his son, Indra Budiman, is handsome and destined to become a doctor. Consequently, Ompi is unable to accept the fact that several young women in the village show no interest in his son; instead, he dismisses

their rejection as irrational or misguided. In his view, Indra Budiman is inherently superior to other young men in the community. Ompi imagines that once his son attains the highly respected status of a doctor, many women will compete for his hand in marriage.

However, reality presents a stark contrast: no young woman comes forward to seek Indra Budiman's hand. This disjunction between Ompi's imagined reality and actual social responses generates deep frustration and anger. His egotism leads him to believe that his worldview can be imposed upon others through perceived superiority, yet lived reality ultimately dismantles this illusion. This pattern of thinking exemplifies an inward-directed form of Cartesian cognition, in which the self is positioned as the central source of value and truth, while alternative perspectives are dismissed as inferior or irrelevant (Preyer, 2019).

Untuk membuktikan kebenaran suratnya, Ompi mengirimkan foto gadis yang kebetulan ada padanya. Tidak peduli ia, apa foto itu gambar dari gadis yang sudah kawin atau bertunangan. Bahkan juga tidak peduli ia apa gadis itu sudah meninggal. Ia kirim terus dengan harapan semoga anaknya tidak berkenan. Dan alangkah gembiranya Ompi andai-kata tidak ada sebuah pun dari foto-foto itu yang berkenan di hati anaknya. Disamping itu ia sadar juga, bahwa kepalsuan sandiwaranya sudah tentu akan berakhir juga pada suatu masa. Anaknya pasti lama-lama tahu dan dengan begitu akan timbul kesulitan lain yang tak mudah di selesaikan (Navis, 1994).

To support the claims in his letter, Ompi sent a photograph of a girl that he happened to have. He did not care whether the girl was married or engaged. He did not even care if she was already dead. He kept sending the photographs in the hope that his son would find none of them appealing.

Ompi would be delighted if not a single one of the photographs pleased his son. At the same time, he was aware that the deception he had staged would inevitably come to an end. Sooner or later, his son would discover the truth, and with that, other difficulties would arise that would not be easy to resolve.

To sustain the illusion that his son is admired by many women, Ompi sends photographs of random girls to Indra Budiman, regardless of whether they are married, engaged, or even deceased. This action demonstrates the extent to which Ompi is willing to distort reality in order to protect his ego. The imagined scenario of women competing for his son's affection functions as psychological reinforcement for his belief in superiority. For Ompi, thoughts and expectations are not merely aspirations but truths that the world ought to conform to.

Acknowledging the actual situation—that his son is neither admired nor pursued—would expose vulnerability and failure, both as a father and as a self-perceived superior figure within the community. Such recognition threatens the anthropocentric structure of his thinking, in which his personal perspective occupies the center of value and authority. Consequently, Ompi constructs a false reality to preserve his dominance, operating under the assumption that intellectual or social superiority grants him the power to define truth. Yet despite his efforts, the villagers remain unconvinced, revealing the fragility of ego-driven authority when confronted with lived social reality.

### **Ompi's Boasting as Self-Validation**

Since Indra Budiman has not yet become a doctor, Ompi's grand claims are ultimately perceived by the villagers as empty talk. The authority he imagines for himself—constructed through ego, projection, and false expectations—fails

to correspond with lived reality. As these illusions begin to unravel, Ompi's physical and emotional condition deteriorates.

la jatuh sakit, bahkan sampai mengigau. Dan oleh selernya yang patah, Ompi bertambah menderita jua. Lahir dan batin. Kini dalam hidupnya hanya satu hal yang dinantikannya. Yaitu surat. Surat dari anaknya, Indra Budimannya. Seluruh hidupnya bagai jadi meredup seperti lampu kemersikan sumbu. Dia telentang di ranjangnya, enggan bergerak (Navis, 1994).

He fell ill and even drifted into delirium. With his appetite gone, Ompi suffered even more, physically and mentally. Now there was only one thing left for him to wait for. That was a letter. A letter from his son, his Indra Budiman. His whole life seemed to fade, like the dimming flame of an oil lamp. He lay on his bed, reluctant to move.

Ompi falls ill, suffering both physically and mentally, as his entire existence narrows to a single hope: receiving a letter from his son. His life, once animated by pride and ambition, fades into passivity and despair. This moment marks the collapse of the Cartesian subjectivity he has constructed—one in which identity, value, and authority are grounded in his own cognition rather than in intersubjective or social reality. Ompi's sense of self has been sustained by his belief that his thoughts and judgments are sufficient to define truth, reflecting a distorted interpretation of *cogito ergo sum*, where thinking becomes detached from accountability to reality.

After previously sending a fabricated letter suggesting that Indra Budiman was admired by many young women, Ompi experiences temporary psychological relief. The lie enables him to preserve the illusion that his cognition still holds power—that his internal

convictions can determine how reality ought to be understood. However, as weeks pass without a reply and his letters are returned unopened, anxiety replaces confidence. The final rupture arrives in the form of a telegram announcing Indra Budiman's death. At this moment, Ompi becomes motionless and speechless, symbolizing the complete disintegration of a worldview built entirely upon self-affirming cognition.

Ompi's tragedy illustrates what Bignetti (2020) describes as the danger of centric and hierarchical thinking, in which one position is elevated as the sole source of value while others are reduced to instruments that sustain it. By transforming his son into a symbol of success rather than recognizing him as an autonomous subject, Ompi reduces Indra Budiman to a cognitive extension of his own ego. This aligns with controlling parental behavior, in which a child is treated as an object through which parental identity is validated rather than as an independent subject with agency (Bush, 2019). Within a Cartesian framework, Ompi positions his own cognition as the primary foundation of truth, subordinating others—including his own child—to maintain this illusion of certainty.

With Indra Budiman gone, Ompi loses the cognitive anchor upon which his self-centered subjectivity depended. No longer able to justify his beliefs or assert symbolic superiority, his identity collapses alongside the illusions he had constructed. The villagers, once the targets of his arrogance, now see him not as superior but as a man whose certainty lacked grounding in reality. Through Ompi's downfall, Navis exposes the fragility of ego-driven Cartesian subjectivity: when cognition is treated as the sole source of truth without engagement with social reality, its collapse becomes inevitable once reality resists submission.

### **Ompi as a Manifestation of Ego-Centered Identity**

Ompi is portrayed as a character whose identity is shaped by an intensely ego-centered mode of subjectivity. His sense of self-worth is not grounded in humility or personal development but in a cognitive conviction that he occupies a superior position relative to those around him. This perceived superiority is closely tied to his son, Indra Budiman, whom Ompi presents as the embodiment of his imagined excellence. Rather than recognizing his son as an autonomous subject who should be nurtured and guided, Ompi treats him as an extension of his own ego, social status, and anticipated success. Through this dynamic, Navis subtly critiques the danger of reducing others—particularly loved ones—into instruments through which personal certainty and self-validation are sustained.

As the narrative progresses, Navis exposes Ompi's emotional and psychological deterioration. What initially appears as a father's hopeful pride gradually transforms into obsession and self-delusion. Ompi constructs a subjective reality in which his son's projected success—his future as a doctor, his presumed admiration, and his imagined prestige—functions as unquestionable truth. Any challenge to this internally constructed certainty is immediately rejected or met with hostility, because disagreement threatens the fragile cognitive structure upon which Ompi's identity depends. When Indra Budiman's letters cease to arrive, this structure begins to fracture. The prolonged silence, the anxiety of waiting, and ultimately the news of his son's death confront Ompi with a reality that cannot be governed by thought alone.

Through Ompi's character, Navis illustrates how the persistent need to appear infallible can alienate individuals

from both reality and human connection. Ompi's belief that his judgments possess greater validity simply because they originate from his own reasoning reflects a distorted Cartesian subjectivity, in which cognition is treated as the sole foundation of truth. Within this framework, alternative perspectives are dismissed as errors, and other people are reduced to supporting roles that exist only to affirm the self's certainty (Alanen & University of Arkansas Press, 2016; Preyer, 2019). Ultimately, Ompi's imagined authority collapses, leaving him defeated by the illusion he constructed. His downfall serves as a powerful reminder that when cognition is severed from empathy, dialogue, and social reality, it risks producing not knowledge, but isolation and psychological collapse.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the character of Ompi in Navis's short story "Anak Kebanggaan" through the lens of Cartesian subjectivity, using René Descartes' emphasis on cognition and the thinking self (*cogito ergo sum*) as the primary theoretical foundation. The analysis demonstrates how Ompi embodies a distorted form of Cartesian subjectivity, in which personal reasoning is treated as the sole source of truth and validity. Ompi's identity is constructed through an unwavering belief in his own judgments, leading him to center his thoughts, ego, and assumptions above social reality and alternative perspectives.

Throughout the narrative, Ompi's conviction in his son's imagined superiority functions as a cognitive mechanism through which he affirms his own worth and status within the village. He constructs a subjective reality grounded in expectation, projection, and pride, while consistently rejecting viewpoints that contradict his internal logic. His obsession with his son's projected success

illustrates the danger of cognition that operates without reflection or relational awareness, where thinking becomes detached from reality and dialogue. In this condition, rationality no longer serves as a means of understanding the world but as a tool for preserving ego.

This study shows that Cartesian subjectivity, when absolutized, can generate psychological and social consequences. Ompi does not exercise dominance over others through force, but through the imposition of his own version of truth. He treats his perceptions as universally valid and reduces other people—including his own son—to instruments that support his self-concept. When the factual reality of his son's death confronts him, Ompi is unable to reconcile this truth with the cognitive world he has constructed, resulting in emotional and psychological collapse.

In conclusion, Ompi's story illustrates how an unchecked belief in the self as the primary source of meaning can lead to alienation from reality, community, and empathy. Through Ompi, Navis offers a subtle but profound critique of ego-centered cognition, reminding readers that reason, when severed from humility and social awareness, can become a source of illusion rather than understanding. The tragedy of Ompi lies not in his failure as a father, but in his inability to recognize the limits of his own subjectivity.

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