

INTEGRATION OF RATIONALITY AND SPIRITUALITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT IBN SINA AND ARISTOTLE

Azharida Chaniago, Arya Saputri's Blessing
Alma Ata University Yogyakarta

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Abstract

This study examines the comparative philosophical foundations of education in Islamic and Western traditions by analyzing the thoughts of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Aristotle. Both philosophers share a profound concern for human perfection and intellectual development, yet they differ fundamentally in their epistemological orientations and ultimate goals. Aristotle's philosophy emphasizes rational empiricism and the actualization of human potential through moral and intellectual virtue, whereas Ibn Sina integrates rational inquiry with spiritual transcendence grounded in Islamic metaphysics and the concept of tawhid (unity of God). The comparative analysis reveals that Islamic educational philosophy, as represented by Ibn Sina, is not merely an adaptation of Greek philosophy but a transformation of it—aligning reason with revelation to achieve holistic human development. This study also offers critical reflections on the relevance of both traditions in contemporary education, emphasizing the need for an integrative paradigm that unites intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how classical philosophical frameworks can inform modern educational thought, especially in bridging the gap between secular rationalism and spiritual humanism.

Keywords: Ibn Sina, Aristotle, Islamic philosophy, educational philosophy, comparative study, intellectual and spiritual development

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji dasar-dasar filosofis pendidikan dalam tradisi Islam dan Barat dengan menganalisis pemikiran Ibn Sina (Avicenna) dan Aristoteles. Keduanya memiliki kepedulian yang mendalam terhadap kesempurnaan manusia dan perkembangan intelektual, namun mereka berbeda secara fundamental dalam orientasi epistemologis dan tujuan akhir mereka. Filsafat Aristoteles menekankan empirisme rasional dan aktualisasi potensi manusia melalui kebajikan moral dan intelektual, sedangkan Ibn Sina mengintegrasikan penyelidikan rasional dengan transendensi spiritual yang berakar pada metafisika Islam dan konsep tawhid (kesatuan Tuhan). Analisis perbandingan menunjukkan bahwa filsafat pendidikan Islam, sebagaimana diwakili oleh Ibn Sina, bukanlah sekadar adaptasi dari filsafat Yunani, melainkan transformasi darinya—mengintegrasikan akal dengan wahyu untuk mencapai perkembangan manusia yang holistik. Studi ini juga menawarkan refleksi kritis tentang relevansi kedua tradisi dalam pendidikan kontemporer, menekankan kebutuhan akan paradigma integratif yang menyatukan dimensi intelektual, etis, dan spiritual. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang bagaimana kerangka filosofis klasik dapat menginformasikan pemikiran pendidikan modern, terutama dalam menjembatani kesenjangan antara rasionalisme sekuler dan humanisme spiritual.

Kata kunci: Ibn Sina, Aristoteles, filsafat Islam, filsafat pendidikan, studi perbandingan, perkembangan intelektual dan spiritual

1. Introduction

Philosophy is basically the love of wisdom that functions to seek the essence of truth and knowledge. Philosophy is the basis for forming a scientific and ethical framework for every field of science, including education. According to Maksum (2006), philosophy is the mother of all sciences because from philosophy is born logical, systematic, and reflective thinking which then gives birth to various branches of science. Koyim (2013) added that humans pour the results of their reflections into language as a symbol of knowledge that is a

means of spreading values and ideas. Thus, philosophy is not just a theoretical discipline, but a foundation for the development of knowledge, values, and wisdom in education.

Islamic philosophy of education and Western philosophy of education have different basic orientations in looking at the sources and goals of education. This difference arises because the roots of metaphysics and epistemology are both built on the basis of different worldviews. Western traditions tend to place ratio and empirical experience as the primary source of knowledge, while Islam places revelation as the supreme source that transcends the limits of reason. Nasution (2011) explained that these different worldviews form a value system and educational direction that are not the same between the two. Therefore, understanding Islamic and Western educational philosophy means understanding two basic orientations in interpreting human nature, knowledge, and life purpose.

Ibn Sina is one of the central figures in Islamic philosophy who succeeded in integrating rationality and spirituality in his education system. This is important because Ibn Sina tried to bridge Aristotle's logical thought with the principle of the oneness of God in Islam. Ibn Sina (980–1037 AD) argued that education aims to perfect the potential of the intellect and soul so that humans can achieve *sa'adah* (true happiness). In his view, reason is a tool for understanding empirical reality, while revelation and intuition are the means of attaining the supreme truth (Al-Attas 1991; Koyim 2013). Ibn Sina's thought places education not only as a rational, but also spiritual process that leads man to perfection and closeness to God.

Aristotle, on the other hand, was a major figure in Greek philosophy who built an educational system based on rationality and empiricism. This view was born out of his belief that the highest happiness of man (*eudaimonia*) can be achieved through the development of reason and moral virtue. In *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, Aristotle emphasized that education functions to form character through habit training and rational reasoning. He viewed education as a means of forming good citizens and behaving ethically in police life (Barnes 1984; Peters 1966). Thus, education according to Aristotle focuses on the perfection of human beings as rational and social beings.

Although Ibn Sina and Aristotle lived in different civilizational contexts, there is a significant epistemological relationship between the two. This relationship is important because Ibn Sina adopted many of Aristotle's concepts of logic and metaphysics, but gave it a theological nuance typical of Islam. If Aristotle emphasized reason as the only path to truth, then Ibn Sina added intuition and revelation as higher sources of knowledge. Rosenthal (2001) explained that the integration of ratio and revelation makes Ibn Sina's educational philosophy holistic—viewing humans as rational as well as spiritual beings. The comparison of the two shows that rationality and spirituality do not have to be separated, but can synergize in shaping the integrity of human education.

A comparative study of the thought of Ibn Sina and Aristotle is relevant to respond to the challenges of modern education that tend to be rationalistic and materialistic. The world of education today needs a paradigm that is able to integrate intellectual intelligence with spiritual depth in order to produce civilized human beings. Rahman (1975) and Al-Faruqi (1992) emphasized that true Islamic education is an education that balances the functions of intellect, heart, and charity. The synthesis between Aristotelian rationality and Ibn Sina's spirituality can be an alternative to a more complete and humane educational paradigm. Therefore, this research aims to uncover the integration of rationality and spirituality in the educational thinking of the two figures as a contribution to the reconstruction of contemporary educational philosophy.

Based on this background, several problems can be formulated that are the focus of the study in this study. First, how are the concepts of rationality and spirituality understood in the context of the educational philosophy of Ibn Sina and Aristotle? Second, what are the differences and epistemological similarities between the two in looking at the purpose and essence of education? Third, how is the relevance of the integration of rational-spiritual thinking from the two figures to the development of contemporary education paradigms, especially in the context of Islamic education. The formulation of this problem is the basis for exploring the depth of each character's thinking and finding a conceptual meeting point that can be used as inspiration for the reconstruction of modern educational philosophy.

This research aims to analyze and compare the philosophical thinking of Ibn Sina and Aristotle by emphasizing the integration aspects of rationality and spirituality. In particular, this study wants to reveal how the two figures interpret the goals of education, the relationship between reason and morality, and the role of spirituality in shaping civilized human beings. In addition, this research is expected to make a conceptual contribution to the development of an Islamic educational philosophy that is able to answer the challenges of modernity without losing its spiritual orientation. Thus, the results of this research are expected not only to enrich

the treasures of comparative education philosophy, but also to provide a new direction for strengthening integrative values in today's education system.

2. Literature Review

Education According to the Philosophy of Ibn Sina

1) Educational Objectives

Ibn Sina said that the purpose of education should include the development of all the potential that a person has towards his perfect development, be it spiritual, soul, physical, intellectual and ethical aspects.

Ibn Sina has a view of the purpose of education that is structurally hierarchical. That is, in addition to having an opinion about universal educational goals, as stated above, he also has an opinion about educational goals that are curricular or fields of study and operational goals. This can be seen, for example, Ibn Sina said that a child must be taught physical education or sports, ethics, art and also skills.

However, the crucial thing is the purpose of education put forward by Ibn Sina which is more *sufistic*, namely his view that the purpose of education is to form *kamil* (perfect human beings), namely human beings who have balance in all their potentials, both external and inner potential. The goal of education is to perfect and actualize all the possibilities that individuals have, which in Ibn Sina ultimately leads to the highest knowledge of God which is the goal of human life. Education prepares man for happiness in this life, the ultimate goal of which is a permanent abode in the afterlife. It seems that the educational goals put forward by Ibn Sina are based on his own reality and experience, not merely imaginary theories. The purpose of this education reflects his attitude which is not only as a thinker but also as a person who takes a spiritual journey in his life.

The purpose of education must be directed to achieve perfection of heart and purity of spirit so that man can know himself and his God. Spiritual education should be directed to form the correct faith, find the essence of monotheism, and reveal the realm of *shahadah*. Spiritual education should also be directed so that every student can practice religious rituals properly so that they can experience spiritual experiences and the achievement of the title of human *Ihsan*, that is, those who realize their mortal essence, and always feel *muraqabah* with their God.

2) Educational Curriculum.

Curriculum is a subject that must be delivered by teachers or learned by students. The concept of the curriculum according to Ibn Sina is based on the level of development of the age of students. For three- or five-year-old children, according to Ibn Sina, it is necessary to be given ethics, hygiene and art subjects. Meanwhile, ethics lessons are directed to equip the child with good habits, such as manners in daily life. Furthermore, with hygiene and art education, it is directed so that the child has the sharpness of feelings in loving and increasing positive imagination. Ibn Sina's view of this curriculum seems to have been influenced by his psychological views. He explained that the provisions in the provision of subject matter must be given in accordance with the child's psychological development.

3) Teacher

Apart from being a person who imparts knowledge, teachers are also spiritual fathers for their students. Therefore, the ideal teacher in spiritual formation is a teacher who is intelligent, spiritually strong, knows how to educate morals, is capable in educating children, has a calm appearance, is far from making fun and playful in front of his students, has no sour face, is polite, clean, and pure.

Furthermore, Ibn Sina added that a teacher should be a man who is respectable and prominent in his character, intelligent, meticulous, patient, diligent in educating children, fair, frugal in the use of time, fond of getting along with children, not hard-hearted and always adorning himself.⁷ In addition, teachers should also prioritize the interests of the *ummah* over their own interests, refrain from imitating the nature of kings and people of low morals. Knowing ethics in the assembly of knowledge, politeness and manners in debating, discussing and associating.

4) Educational Methods

There are three types of methods used by Ibn Sina. The three types of methods are:

First, the method of storytelling or *storytelling*, for example in the form of stories, romances or novels. This method is used to make it easier to give understanding to students or readers of a book. Teachers or historians, Sufism and the like, even our parents often present their lessons in the form of stories or stories. With stories, it is easier for the student to grasp the meaning of the lesson being conveyed. Many writers present their thoughts in the form of novels, including Jostein Gaarder who wrote *Sophie's World*, and Sheikh Nadim al-Jisr's work titled *Qissatul Iman*, both of which are philosophical novels. Various stories that contain moral messages such as folklore such as "*Si Malin Kundang*" which teaches children to respect their parents give a deeper impression on children than various dry doctrines and dogmas teachings. The habit of telling mothers to their children before

bed is a very effective method in giving lessons to pre-school children. The examples of prophets, companions, famous scholars, warrior figures, and others presented in the form of systematic and interesting stories will give a deep impression to readers and listeners. This includes the method of presenting mystical-philosophical practices carried out by Ibn Sina in the form of stories in the novel as described above.

Second, the descriptive-analytical method. This method is a method that aims to describe or describe something with a systematic description. Through descriptive-analytical we will get an idea of an object that we are studying. The image created can be a review from one angle or multiple angles. However, to get a comprehensive picture, we must study and elaborate on it comprehensively and holistically. This method was used by Ibn Sina in some of his Sufistic works such as in *al-Isharat wa al-Tabihat* and *Risalah fi Mahiyyat al-Ishq*.

Third, it is by practicing daily life to reach perfection. This method is in the form of actualizing Islamic teachings in daily life by obeying all commands and staying away from Allah's prohibitions as regulated in Islamic teachings. This method used by Ibn Sina, for example, is shown by Ibn Sina's obedience in purifying oneself through the method of spiritual exercise by performing prayers consistently, dhikr, praying, often meditating (*i'tikaf*), reading the Qur'an and living *zuhud* (avoiding love for the world).

Philosophy of Education According to Aristotle

Aristotle was a disciple of Plato. He was a leading scholar and intellectual, perhaps of all time. Mankind has been indebted to him for the many advances in philosophy and the sciences, especially Logic, Metaphysics, Politics, Ethics, Biology and Psychology. Aristotle was born in 394 BC in Stagira, a small town on the peninsula of Chalcidice that stands out west of the Aegean Sea. His father, Nichomachus, who as physician treated Amyntas II, king of Macedonia, arranged for Aristotle to receive a complete education at the beginning of his childhood and probably later to teach in the observation of the symptoms of disease and surgical techniques. Both his father and mother, Phaesta, have prominent ancestors.

According to Aristotle, in order for a person to live well, he must get an education. Education is not a matter of reason alone, but a matter of giving guidance to higher feelings, so that they are directed to reason, so that reason can be used to regulate the passions. The intellect itself is powerless, it needs the support of higher feelings given the right direction. Aristotle stated that a good education is one that has the goal of happiness. The highest happiness is a speculative life.

Aristotle also considered it important to form habits at the level of low education, as at the level of education at a young age it is necessary to instill awareness of moral rules. According to Aristotle, in order to acquire knowledge, man must be more than any other animal by virtue of his power to think, must observe and carefully analyze the structures, the functions of the organization, and everything in nature. Therefore, the main principle of education according to Aristotle is the collection and research of the facts of inductive learning, 'an objective search for truth as the basis of all science. Aristoteles said that it is better to provide a good education for all children.

Sparta had a system of public schools which was compulsory for its sons, for all citizens, but this system consisted of physical education and military training. In a higher context, he seems to agree with Plato about the values of Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy, and Philosophy. He declared that the sons and daughters of all citizens should be taught according to their abilities, a view of which was similar to Plato's doctrine of individual existence. Discipline is essential to teaching young men and women to obey the commandments and control the movements of their hearts.

Methods of Developing Islamic Educational Philosophy

As a method, the development of Islamic educational philosophy usually requires the following four things:

- a. First, the materials that will be used in the development of the philosophy of education. In this case, it can be in the form of written materials, namely the Qur'an and al Hadith accompanied by the opinions of scholars and philosophers and others; and materials that will be taken from empirical experience in educational practice.
- b. Second, the method of finding materials. To find materials that are written can be done through literature studies and field studies, each of which has been arranged in such a way. However, specifically in using the Qur'an and al Hadith, the services of the Qur'an Encyclopedia such as *Mu'jam al Mufahras li Alfazh al Qur'an al Karim* by Muhammad Fuad Abd Baqi and *Mu'jam al muhfars li Alfazh al Hadith* by Weinsink can be used.
- c. Third, the method of discussion. For this reason, Muzayyin Arifin proposes an alternative method of synthesis analysis, which is a method based on a rational and logical approach to the goal of thinking in an inductive, educative, and scientific analysis.
- d. Fourth, approach. In relation to the discussion mentioned above, it must also be explained the approach that will be used to discuss it. This approach is usually necessary in analysis, and relates to certain scientific

theories that will be chosen to explain certain phenomena. In this connection, the approach is more of a knife to be used in the analysis. It is a kind of paradigm (way of view) that will be used to explain a phenomenon.

Comparison of Western and Islamic Philosophy of Education

In some ways, it feels disproportionate to compare the revelation-oriented philosophy of Islamic education with the purely rational Western philosophy of education. However, since Islamic epistemology does not recognize the contradiction between revelation and reason, a comparison between the philosophy of Islamic education and the Western philosophy of education becomes possible. In the world of Western education, we will find many different concepts regarding the general purpose of education.

Some of them are education for life, education is to fill free time, education is to achieve social efficiency, education is to achieve democratic life and so on. With some of the references above, the comparison between Islamic philosophy of education and Western philosophy of education is important in formulating a philosophy of education that is distinctive to Islamic teachings, in contrast to other philosophies of education.

On the other hand, the inclusion of the terms philosophy and philosophy in the Islamic world, Muslims have known the term "al hikmah" and the effort to find al hikmah, has the same basic meaning as philosophy. Such a comparison needs to be made in order to uphold and solidify the epistemology of an independent Islamic educational philosophy. In general, there are several comparisons between the philosophy of Islamic education and philosophy.

Western education includes:

- a. Islamic philosophy of education is based on revelation, while human philosophy is mono-dimensional, expert in a particular field but ignores the spiritual aspect of man. This situation is different from the philosophy of Islamic education which integrates the interests of the world with the interests of the hereafter at the same time. This is because Islamic philosophy of education views Western education as based on pure humanistic and profane education philosophy that relies on rationalization. On this basis, the philosophy of Islamic education does not recognize a finite truth, but a universal one. Meanwhile, Western philosophy of education recognizes partial freedom, so there is often some kind of battle between educational ideas or theories. This clearly makes education observers experience confusion in determining the ideal and dominant educational theory as a reference for the formulation of educational goals and orientation.
- b. Islamic philosophy of education seeks to develop an integral view between the profane and the sacred, while Western philosophy of education only develops profane aspects. Therefore, in Western philosophy of education, the personality of human nature is partially developed. This condition is the impact of the value system experienced by the West. The Western model of education does not intend to achieve certain values, but it tends to achieve the goal in a nutshell, which is to produce human beings as caliphs of Allah who need to have a relationship with God, others and with the surrounding environment.
- c. The philosophy of Islamic education pays attention to and develops all realizing the basic purpose of life, namely worshipping Allah with all its broad meanings. Thus, education is the highest form of worship in Islam with nature as its field, human beings as its center and faith as its goal. aspects of human personality, from the heart to the intellect, while Western philosophy of education is only concerned with reason. All the realities of human life cannot really be explained through ratios. There are things that can only be explained by the human heart and conscience.
- d. Islamic philosophy of education views the heart not only in terms of physical biology, but the heart is the king who presides over the entire human body as a means of knowing the attributes of God.
- d. Ideas and ideas in Islamic education philosophy are not only theoretical, but also realistic which can be manifested in the form of behavior. The ideas and ideas in Western philosophy of education are difficult to transform into action, let alone used as a way of life. Philosophy, idealism, realism are all just ideal plains that are difficult to transform in real life. In the Islamic view, education is a sacred process to realize the basic purpose of life, which is to worship Allah with all its broad meanings. Thus, education is the highest form of worship in Islam with nature as its field, human beings as its center and faith as its goal.

Criticism and New Findings in the Comparative Study of the Thought of Ibn Sina and Aristotle

One of the fundamental criticisms of the comparison of Ibn Sina's and Aristotle's thought is the tendency of some researchers to see Ibn Sina solely as a successor to Greek thought without considering the dimension of originality. Many classical studies, especially those rooted in orientalism, place Ibn Sina within the framework of pure Greek rationalism, as if he were simply copying Aristotle's ideas in an Islamic context. In fact, Ibn Sina carried out a profound philosophical reinterpretation by injecting elements of monotheistic metaphysics and prophetic concepts that were not found at all in the Aristotelian philosophical system. This criticism is important

because the reduction of Ibn Sina as an "Aristotelian Muslim" has the potential to ignore the theological and spiritual substance in his philosophy of education (Rahman 1975; Nasr 2001).

In addition, Aristotle's approach to education that strongly emphasizes rationality and the formation of moral virtues needs to be criticized because it tends to separate aspects of spirituality from human life. Aristotle did succeed in placing reason as an important ethical and political instrument in building a civilized society, but its orientation remained limited to earthly life. Ibn Sina, on the other hand, views education as a process of refinement of the soul to achieve happiness that is *ukhrawi*. This is where a new finding emerges that education in the Islamic view does not stop at the formation of social morality, but continues at the achievement of spiritual perfection which is the ultimate goal of man. Thus, Ibn Sina's philosophy of education offers a transcendental dimension that complements the spiritual void in the Western rational education system (Al-Attas 1991; Al-Faruqi 1992).

Another interesting finding is the reinterpretation of Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* in the perspective of Ibn Sina. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is the highest happiness obtained through a virtuous rational life. However, Ibn Sina interprets happiness not only as the result of intellectual activity, but also as the union of the soul with divine reality. He places happiness within the framework of *sa'adah*, which is a condition of spiritual perfection achieved through cleansing of the soul and approaching God. This transformation of meaning shows that Ibn Sina did not simply adopt the Greek concept, but carried out an epistemological Islamization of classical ideas so that education became a means to the spiritual perfection of man.

Another criticism can be directed at the limitations of Aristotle's philosophy of education in dealing with complex modern humanitarian problems. The Aristotelian rationalistic paradigm is indeed strong in developing social logic and ethics, but weak in answering human existential problems such as the meaning of life, suffering, and human relationships with God. In this context, the new findings of Ibn Sina's thought suggest that the integration of ratio and revelation is capable of providing a more comprehensive educational foundation, encompassing the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions at the same time. This paradigm is relevant to the world of contemporary education which is often stuck in a purely material and instrumental orientation (Rosenthal 2001; Nasution 2011).

Another important finding is that Ibn Sina developed a hierarchical structure of educational epistemology starting from senses, reason, to intuition and revelation, a structure that is different from Aristotle's empirical epistemology which stops at rational knowledge. In this system, revelation serves as the pinnacle of knowledge that gives meaning to the entire learning process. This is a significant conceptual finding because it expands the boundaries of educational epistemology from just rational to transrational. Education, in Ibn Sina's view, not only forms the ability to think logically, but also the divine consciousness that guides human actions to be worthy of worship (Al-Attas 1991).

Finally, this comparative study gave birth to the conceptual synthesis that the ideal education is an education that harmoniously blends rationality and spirituality. Aristotle's philosophy of education contributes to building critical, logical, and ethical thinking skills, while Ibn Sina's philosophy of education enriches spiritual, moral, and metaphysical aspects. This new finding confirms that the integration between the two can give birth to a more holistic educational paradigm that not only prepares humans as good citizens, but also as knowledgeable and moral servants of God. This synthesis opens up space for the renewal of contemporary educational philosophy that is able to answer the challenges of modern rationality without losing the dimension of spirituality that is the core of true humanity.

3. Conclusion

The conclusion of the comparative study between Ibn Sina's and Aristotle's philosophies of education shows that although both have the same orientation towards the search for truth and human perfection, the epistemological foundations and ultimate goals are fundamentally different. Aristotle emphasizes emphasizing empirical rationality and the actualization of human potential through intellectual and moral virtues, while Ibn Sina places the pursuit of knowledge within the framework of monotheism and spiritual perfection as the path to God. This difference shows that Islamic philosophy of education is not simply an adaptation of Greek philosophy, but is a transformation of philosophical values that are synergized with religious principles. Ibn Sina succeeded in Islamizing philosophy by placing God as the center of all knowledge, while Aristotle placed reason as the center of the explanation of reality.

The implications of these findings make an important contribution to the development of contemporary educational philosophy, especially in the context of integration between science and spiritual values. In the world of modern education, which is often secular and pragmatic, Ibn Sina's views can be a foothold to restore the orientation of education to the formation of knowledgeable and moral human beings. Further research is suggested to explore the methodological dimensions of the two figures, in particular how their epistemological principles can be applied in a 21st-century educational model that demands a balance between intellectual, emotional, and

spiritual intelligence. Thus, this comparative study not only enriches the scientific treasures, but also provides a new direction for the development of a more holistic and transcendental educational paradigm.

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