

Ontological Analysis of the Essence of Education: The Relationship between God, Man and Nature

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the essence of education from an ontological perspective by analyzing the fundamental relationship between God, human beings, and nature. Using an ontological-philosophical approach and library research, this study draws on classical and contemporary literature in philosophy of education, metaphysics, and epistemology. The analysis shows that education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission, but a humanizing and transcendental endeavor that integrates divine values, human potential, and the natural order. Ontology-based education positions humans as rational and spiritual beings with ethical and ecological responsibility as part of divine purpose. The study concludes that education should be reformulated toward an integrative and holistic paradigm that unites spiritual, intellectual, and ecological dimensions.

Keywords: Educational Ontology, God, Human Beings, Nature, Philosophy of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Modern education is currently facing an increasingly complex crisis of meaning, characterized by value disruption, reduction in educational goals, and the dominance of pragmatic and instrumental paradigms. Education is often positioned solely as an economic instrument to meet the needs of the labor market and industry, thus ignoring the moral, spiritual, and existential dimensions of humans. As a result, education loses its basic orientation as a process of forming a whole human being and experiences a disconnection from the transcendental values that should be its foundation.

In this context, ontology as the main branch of philosophy that examines the essence of reality and existence is a fundamental foundation for reconstructing the meaning of education. Ontology addresses the fundamental question of what really exists and how the basic structure of reality is structured (Ertikanto, 2020). In the realm of education, the ontological approach provides a conceptual framework to understand the nature of human beings as educational subjects, the ultimate goal of education, and the position of science in the overall order of reality (Nasution, 2019). Thus, ontology serves as an epistemological and axiological foundation that determines the direction of knowledge, values, and educational praxis.

Without a solid ontological foundation, education has the potential to be trapped in a technocratic orientation that views humans only as productive resources. This paradigm is seen in modern education that emphasizes cognitive achievement and technical skills excessively, while character formation, moral awareness, and spiritual dimensions tend to be marginalized (Hidayat, 2021). This condition causes education to lose its transformative function and fail to answer human existential problems.

In the classical and modern philosophical traditions, reality is understood as the relational unity between God, man, and nature. God is positioned as the source of existence and absolute truth, human beings as conscious moral subjects, and nature as an orderly cosmic order and a space for the actualization of human responsibility (Al-Attas, 2021). In the perspective of Islam, humans are understood as caliphs on earth who have an ethical and spiritual obligation to maintain the balance of the cosmos through science and charity based on monotheism (Faruqi, 2020). The ontology of Islamic education with the monotheistic paradigm emphasizes the integration of theocentric and anthropocentric dimensions integrally in all educational practices (Komarudin Sassi, 2021).

Based on this ontological framework, education cannot be reduced to a purely administrative or bureaucratic process. Education must be understood as a humanization process that aims to restore a harmonious relationship between God, humans, and nature (Zarkasyi, 2019). True education is directed at the formation of human beings who have spiritual awareness, moral integrity, and ecological responsibility as part of a holistic order of reality.

The urgency of the ontological approach is getting stronger in the midst of global multidimensional crises, such as moral crises, environmental degradation, dehumanization due to technology, and the weakening of spiritual orientation in the contemporary education system (Suyadi, 2022). The dominance of materialistic and secularistic paradigms in modern science has given birth to distortions of human meaning, which are reduced to mere biological entities or economic agents (Taylor, 2018). This reduction has implications for identity crises and the emptiness of meaning in life, because education fails to build meaningful self-awareness and existential orientation (Biesta, 2016).

In addition, the global ecological crisis shows the failure of modern education in instilling a relational ethics between humans and nature. The pattern of exploitative and dominative relationships with nature reflects the disconnection of ontological awareness that nature has intrinsic value as part of an interconnected life system (Capra, 2021). Environmental damage and climate change are clear indicators of the need for an educational paradigm based on ontological awareness and ecological ethics (Widodo, 2022).

Therefore, the reformulation of an ontology-based education paradigm is an urgent need. Education must integrate empirical science with spiritual and moral values, so that knowledge is inseparable from wisdom (Hakim, 2021). Rationality without spirituality risks giving birth to intelligent humans but losing their value orientation, while spirituality without rationality has the potential to produce non-reflective dogmatic attitudes (Munir, 2022). By restoring the unity between knowledge and values, education is expected to be able to build a civilized, just, and sustainable civilization.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research method that focuses on philosophical analysis of ontological concepts regarding the nature of education and the fundamental relationship between God, humans, and nature. The literature study method was chosen because philosophical research does not rely on the collection of empirical data, but on conceptual, interpretive, and critical reasoning based on scientific texts and the works of thought of figures (Ertikanto, 2020).

The research stage is carried out through three main steps:

Collection of Library Materials

Library materials are collected from books, journal articles, and academic works that discuss ontology, philosophy of education, spiritual cosmology, as well as Islamic educational perspectives and classical-modern philosophy. The selection of literature sources is carried out critically and selectively to ensure relevance to the ontological framework of the research.

Content Analysis

Literature materials are conceptually analyzed to interpret philosophical ideas and identify patterns of relationships between God, humans, and nature. This analysis is carried

out through thematic and comparative approaches, which allow researchers to explore similarities, differences, and conceptual implications from various sources (Smith, 2018).

Synthesis Filosofis

The results of the analysis are then synthesized reflexively and critically to formulate a conceptual model of ontological education. This synthesis aims to explain the ontological implications for educational goals, curriculum orientation, and educational practices that are holistic, integrative, and based on spiritual and ecological values (Biesta, 2016).

With this methodology, the research not only presents theoretical ideas, but also formulates a conceptual framework that is applicable to the development of ontology-based educational paradigms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Essence of Education in an Ontological Perspective

Education is understood as an existential process that develops the deepest potential of human beings to achieve perfection in life (Noddings, 2020). Education is not just a cognitive or technical activity, but a complete transformation – spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual (Barnadib, 2021). Komarudin Sassi's (2021) analysis of Naquib al-Attas' work shows seven essential elements of Islamic education: the concept of religion (din), human (human), science ('ilm/ma'rifah), wisdom, justice ('adl), charity (adab), and university (kulliyah-jami'ah).

The Ontological Relationship between God, Human, and Nature

Reality is hierarchically arranged: God as the supreme source of truth (Al-Attas, 2021), humans as moral and reflective subjects (Husserl, 2020), and nature as rational and objective structures (Capra, 2021). This relationship shows that humans are not the absolute center, but part of the cosmos that must maintain balance and harmony (Nasr, 2019). The ontological view affirms that education must make man aware of his cosmic position and the spiritual, moral, and ecological integration of his life.

Ontological Implications for Educational Goals, Orientation, and Practice

The purpose of education: to form a whole human being with character, moral integrity, and spiritual awareness, not just technical competence (Al-Attas, 2021; Nasution, 2019). Educational orientation: prioritizing the development of the whole person, not materialistic or utilitarian orientation (Hidayat, 2021; Biesta, 2016). Educational practice: an integrative curriculum that blends empirical knowledge with spiritual, ethical, and moral values; reflective, dialogical, participatory learning; ecological awareness as part of education (Hakim, 2021; Munir, 2022; Capra, 2021).

Discussion

The findings suggest that the ontological approach affirms education as a holistic process of humanization, linking spirituality, morality, and intellectual intelligence. Modern education that is pragmatic and utilitarian oriented risks losing its meaning because it ignores the existential dimension of the human being. The ontological approach provides a foundation for returning education to its transformative function. The God-man-nature relationship forms a transcendental framework of values: humans are ethically and ecologically responsible, science becomes entrusted, and nature is understood as a sacred cosmic part. The ontological implications on educational practice demand: (1) Strengthening spiritual and ethical character as the main goal. (2) Integration of empirical knowledge and moral/spiritual values in the curriculum. (3) Ecological awareness and continuous learning approach.

Thus, transcendental ontology provides an alternative educational paradigm that answers the crises of modernity, including dehumanization, moral degradation, and ecological crises.

CONCLUSIONS

Ontological studies show that the essence of education cannot be understood simply as a transfer of knowledge or instructional activities. True education is an existential and

transformative process that restores the harmonious relationship between man, God, and nature, leading man to an awareness of the purpose of his existence, as well as his moral responsibility as a caliph on earth. Thus, education is not only a means of acquiring skills, but a medium for the formation of a complete spiritual, ethical, intellectual, and ecological human being. Critical reflection on modern education reveals that the materialistic, pragmatic, and utilitarian orientation has led to the reduction of education to a technocratic process that ignores the deepest dimensions of humanity. This kind of paradigm not only weakens the transformative function of education, but also contributes to moral crises, dehumanization, and ecological damage. This study emphasizes that ontological understanding is a critical foundation for restoring the meaning of education as a medium of liberation, enlightenment, and character formation. Conceptually, the integration between empirical science, spiritual values, and ecological ethics is not merely a normative ideal, but a logical prerequisite for an educational system capable of producing humans who are self-aware, morally responsible, and sensitive to cosmic equilibrium. Education based on transcendental ontology offers an integrative and holistic model that affirms that science, morality, and spirituality are inseparable in educational practice. Thus, the reformulation of the educational paradigm that emphasizes the unity of the dimensions of divinity, humanity, and nature is an urgent need. Education must function as an instrument of liberation, strengthening existence, and enlightenment of society, not just fulfilling administrative or economic goals. The future direction of education lies in the ability to build a humanistic, sustainable, and civilized civilization, in which human beings develop intact in their cosmic consciousness and moral responsibility.

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Hopefully this journal can provide benefits and contribute to the development of science, especially in the field studied. The author realizes that this paper still has limitations, so constructive suggestions and criticisms are highly expected for future research improvements.

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