

Liberalism's Perspective on Human Beings, Science, and Education

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Abstract: This journal reviews the liberalist perspective in philosophy on three crucial aspects: human beings, science, and education. Philosophy, considered as the 'parent of science,' contemplates various aspects of human life and has produced diverse views. The liberalist philosophy, emerging as a reaction to religious orthodoxy and church dominance during the Renaissance, upholds key principles that include individual freedom, justice, and human rights. This philosophy regards the autonomy of individuals as crucial in all aspects of life, including politics, economics, and religion.

Keywords: Individual, Liberalism, Philosophy

A. Introduction

Philosophy, as the mother of science, fundamentally aims to address all existing and potential issues, particularly those related to the metaphysical trilogy and the issues surrounding nature (Romdloni, 2019). Within the scope of philosophy, various schools of thought attempt to answer these questions, each with a specific emphasis on particular aspects of human life.

In its development, philosophy, the result of centuries of philosophical thinking with various aspects of the world as its object of inquiry, has produced diverse and varied perspectives. Sometimes, these perspectives support each other, but often they differ or even contradict one another. These differences stem from the different approaches they employ, even when examining the same object.

Moreover, factors such as historical context, worldview, and place of residence also influence their thinking. Please note that this classification is not definitive or official but only reflects the diversity of systems that characterize a particular philosophy of education. Philosophy is a compound word derived from the Greek language, namely *philosophia* and *philosophos* (Samuji, 2021). According to the ancient philosophy tradition, the Greek term *philosophia* was used by Pythagoras to denote motion, the search for wisdom, and the truth commonly pursued by humans.

Wisdom in its complete and perfect form only exists in the divine, while limited humans' content themselves by affirming themselves as lovers and not owners of complete wisdom and truth. Through their rationality, humans can only approximate themselves to absolute truth. They will never fully attain it once and for all (Fadli, 2021). Philosophy not only serves as a depiction but also assists humans in making decisions regarding goals, values, and actions to be taken.

Philosophy is not neutral, as subjective elements play a crucial role in the philosophical process, and science begins with foundational assumptions. Philosophy, through reasoning based on all human experiences, can thus examine problems that cannot find solutions through science (French & McKenzie, 2016). One influential school of thought in modern thinking is the liberalism philosophy. The philosophy of liberalism has played a central role in shaping the modern worldview. The term 'Liberal' comes from the English word 'liberalism' and from the French language, meaning 'liberte,' and in Arabic, it is also known as 'al-libraliyah,' which means 'freedom' (J. Abdillah, 2019).

B. Methods

This article employs the method of article review, conducted by collecting and comparing various data from philosophical journal articles related to liberalism. The data collection technique used involves gathering data and information from various sources, which will later serve as references from several relevant sources, ranging from books to national and international journal articles.

C. Results and Discussion

The concept of liberalism from various perspectives lies in its central role in shaping the modern worldview. Described by Mansoer Faqih, education according to the liberal perspective initially had no connection with social issues. Subsequently, education shifted towards a developmental model where it was devoted to strengthening the ongoing capitalist-driven development without questioning the underlying ideological nature of that development (Yuasdarini, 2021).

The history of liberalism traces back to the Renaissance era as a reaction to religious orthodoxy. At that time, church power dominated all aspects of human life, with all rules of life determined and under the autonomy of the church. As a result, individuals lacked freedom in actions, and individual autonomy was restricted, if not eradicated. This condition triggered criticism from various circles, advocating for individual autonomy in every action and life choice.

Liberalism is an ideology that subsequently desires the freedom of individual autonomy in all areas, whether in politics, economics, or religion. Generally, this form of liberalism aspires to a free society characterized by the freedom of thought for each

individual. In modern society, this liberalism flourishes within the democratic system, as both are founded on the freedom of the majority.

Every society residing in a country that adheres to this liberal ideology is free to carry out anything (as long as it does not violate the law) in various activities such as lifestyle, trade, and the adoption of religion/beliefs. In a liberal government, regulations are usually limited to essential rules. Issues deemed less important, such as determining product prices (even though they involve the livelihood of many people), are typically left to the mechanisms of market competition.

Individual autonomy is understood as freedom from external determinations and interventions, such as restrictions, coercion, or various forms of threats and manipulations, in carrying out actions (Aida, 2005). Figures associated with liberalism include Woodrow Wilson, John Locke, and Norman Angell. John Locke, shaped by his experiences during the conflict between the Puritans and King Charles I, emphasized the importance of respecting freedom, democracy, limiting political power, and tolerating differences in beliefs.

John Locke is a key figure advocating the principles of individual freedom (liberalism). Born in Wrington, England, on August 28, 1632, he was the first philosopher to systematically compile the fundamental ideas of democratic constitutions (Batubara, 2021). Locke was destined to become a hero in what I refer to as the 'liberalism narrative,' a story told by liberalism about its origins and purposes.

Locke established that the legitimacy of political authority is a necessary condition for obedience and that its legitimacy is a product of the consensus through which the authority emerges. He also asserted that the manner of its existence determines its purpose and, consequently, the scope of its authority. All of this, according to Locke (as the story goes), was explained in an exemplary manner, making him a lasting role model for understanding and conducting legitimate politics even to this day (Stanton, 2018).

With deep historical roots in the 17th and 18th-century Enlightenment, liberalism has become one of the dominant frameworks guiding political, economic, and social developments in various countries. John Locke argued that within the liberal framework, freedom is interpreted as the absence of external interference in individual actions. Freedom is seen as a right to private property, and, therefore, governance should minimize interference in individual lives.

Hence, it is crucial to have strict and comprehensive legal regulations to protect this right to private property. This form of liberalism then underlies and inspires the emergence of libertarianism pioneered by Alexis de Tocqueville, Friedrich von Hayek, and Robert Nozick. This stream places the individual at the center of thought,

advocating for individual freedom, human rights, and the rule of law as the primary principles shaping societal structures.

In this journal, we will explore the essence of the liberal philosophy, unravel its historical development, and discuss its extensive impact across various fields, from constitution formation to economic policies and social rights. Through in-depth analysis, we will understand how liberalism continues to be an influential force in contemporary thought, reflecting important values that define modern society.

Liberalism is a philosophical perspective based on the understanding that freedom and equality of rights are fundamental political values (Alwino, 2016). The philosophy of liberalism is grounded in several core principles that shape its views on social, political, and economic order. Overall, this perspective emphasizes individual freedom as a primary value. In liberalism, individual freedom is regarded as an inseparable right of every individual, involving the right to make personal decisions and pursue their own happiness without excessive interference from the government or authorities.

Characteristics of liberalism include: (1) In the ideology of liberalism, there is a principle asserting that every individual is provided with equal opportunities in various fields. (2) Similar to the first characteristic, the right of every person to receive fair treatment is emphasized. When everyone has equal opportunities, the handling of issues faced by individuals should also be done fairly (ensuring equal treatment). (3) In a state that adheres to the ideology of liberalism, there is a legal system that establishes the highest standards for respecting the freedom and equality rights of every individual in the eyes of the law (The Rule of Law). (4) In the context of a state that embraces the principles of liberalism, the ultimate power is in the hands of the people, so the appointment of those who will lead the government must receive approval from the citizens. This means the government must act or compromise with the citizens and should not act on its own desires. (5) In the framework of the liberalism system, the state is considered a means or tool used to achieve larger goals. (6) The last characteristic is that in the liberalism system, the state rejects the concept of dogmatism, which is a rigid belief that opposes anything that does not align with its convictions (Annisa, 2020).

Liberalism emphasizes personal freedom and human rights. Supporters of liberalism believe that everyone should have the freedom to make decisions in their lives without interference from the government or other authorities. Additionally, in the liberal view, it is acknowledged that the government also plays a crucial role in ensuring the protection of basic human rights (Fikri, 2020).

Individual rights are considered inherent to individuals and cannot be revoked by the state or other parties. Liberalism also believes that civil society, including community groups, non-governmental organizations, and individuals, has a significant role in

regulating and influencing political, economic, and social dynamics. In the liberal view, humans have the ability to acquire individual rights, such as freedom of expression, speech, and religion.

Several regulations above also assert that freedom of speech is a fundamental right guaranteed and protected by the state for life. The expression of freedom of speech can take the form of writing, books, discussions, or journalistic work. Every citizen has the legitimate right to express their opinions honestly, whether related to public actions taken by the government or other state institutions. Opinions or criticisms of public policies are a common reflection of government actions. This is necessary to ensure that there are no policies that contradict human rights, and such policies clearly target society (Kusuma, 2022).

In Indonesia, freedom of religion itself can be seen as an example of the liberal view of humanity (George K, 2016). From Dahrendorf's statement discussing coercion and sanctions, we can see that in everyday life, debates often arise about the truth and beliefs related to the existence of the believed God, as well as perceptions considered false for those who do not believe in it. However, it is important to note that we must understand the definition of belief, which should be protected without any pressure because belief is pure and comes from the servant's heart to God without any coercion. Since Indonesia is a heterogeneous and multidimensional country, where cultural pluralism, especially differences in ethnicity, race, religion, and language, distinguishes beliefs in various aspects (Shonhaji, 2021).

There is a tendency for research and the application of science to be often carried out without considering its underlying philosophical assumptions. Various problems, both in theoretical and practical contexts, are often analyzed from the perspective of each scientific discipline and expressed in its own technical language. Consequently, difficulties arise in the development of communication across disciplines (Wibisono, 2005).

Scientific knowledge is considered reliable because it has a logical reasoning basis and has undergone testing. Science is the result of thought processes, although not all thinking activities can be considered scientific knowledge. For example, daydreaming may be a form of rational thinking but cannot be regarded as scientific because it lacks systematic characteristics (Suriasumantri, 2021).

Science is seen as a highly logical application of human reasoning. Although human reasoning is universal, its application can vary. When the value systems differ between one society and another, scientific knowledge and technological orientations can also differ according to the development level of the respective societies. Therefore, the formation of science is needed, not just seen as an end result but more as an ongoing process.

Liberalism in science emphasizes intellectual freedom, the individual's right to explore ideas, develop theories, and generate knowledge without unnecessary external pressure or limitations. In scientific liberalism, it is acknowledged that profound knowledge can be achieved through various perspectives and approaches. Pluralism opens the door to diverse ideas, methodologies, and perspectives, enriching the understanding of a concept or phenomenon. Various points of view can be a source of innovation. By allowing diverse approaches, scientific liberalism can encourage the emergence of new ideas and creative solutions to scientific challenges.

This perspective also emphasizes the protection of intellectual property rights to promote innovation and sustainable research. In achieving sustainable knowledge development, scientific liberalism views the importance of global collaboration, communication, and open cooperation.

The current growth of science and technology is experiencing rapid development, and its impact is highly significant on the life of every individual. Therefore, it can be said that every aspect and stage of an individual's life has been influenced by the progress of science and technology. Science and technology are not simple entities as they are closely related to the genuine drive and creative instinct within humans. Questions arise about the actual relationship between science and technology, whether in interconnection, interdependence, or mutually impactful influences.

The concept of education that focuses on integration has long been an interesting research topic. The appeal of integrative educational approaches lies in their objective perspective on education. Thus, the concept of integration is not based on sentiments of specific interests or topics considered taboo. Neutrality becomes a key aspect in formulating integrative educational approaches. When neutrality is emphasized in observing integrative concepts, the main focus is on the object under study without any other subjective considerations (Khoerani, 2020).

The ideology of liberal education is an educational ideology oriented towards students on how to effectively solve problems in their own lives. The liberal concept of education actually implicitly leads to the concept of integrative education (Suriyati, 2022).

The long-term approach in liberal education is to improve the quality and maintain the sustainability of the social structure by educating each student in efficiently solving their personal problems (Hsb, 2021). Achieving educational goals in liberal thinking focuses on the ability to solve problems that are the focus of their education. This goal has various diverse impacts. From the curriculum perspective, there will be a comprehensive integration of theory and practice in the curriculum concept. The main objective for problem-solving and improving the social structure will not be achieved if the existing curriculum only provides theoretical understanding in the

teaching-learning process. It will not have any impact on education according to liberal education goals (Parecalya, 2022).

Education, as a way to shape human maturity, has many requirements that are in line with its environment. These requirements are related to the social, moral, economic, and political roles played by education (Brown, 2014). The liberal education approach assumes that education is politically neutral and has no connection to the political realm. Liberals believe that issues related to society and education are two separate matters.

According to Mansoer Faqih, the liberal view of education initially had no connection to social issues. Later, education was transformed into a development model where the focus was to support the development process advocated by capitalist groups. This was done without questioning the essence or ideology underlying the development process (Yuasdarini, 2021).

The influence of liberalism in education places more emphasis on academic achievement through competition among students than on the development of noble personalities as part of the individual's social process. The assessment to determine the best students is a result of the influence of liberalism in the world of education (Winasih, 2015). Currently, issues regarding the development of students' potential in areas other than academic achievement do not receive sufficient attention. Evaluating the success of students in the teaching and learning process is based solely on academic achievement, while aspects of personality formation and life skills are considered less significant.

The educational approach advocated by liberalism is the "banking concept of education," which limits the space for the development of critical thinking (Thayeeb, 2017). The banking model of education tends to indoctrinate and neglect the development of responsive and creative thinking. Education is seen as a routine where students are asked to accumulate knowledge without being given the opportunity to question the relevance or benefits of what they have learned. Education and training imposed by liberal ideas follow a mass production pattern and mechanisms to create education outcomes that fit market demands.

Currently, the impact of liberalization in education is becoming more apparent, with the concept of "outstanding schools" and the "link and match" principle demanding the education sector to align with industry needs. Initially, education was considered separate from political and economic issues (Khoiri, 2021). However, in its evolution, educational liberalism streams such as structural functionalism view education as a means to strengthen the norms and values existing in society. Thus, from a liberal perspective, formal education is considered an effective tool for maintaining social stability, ensuring the interests of capitalists are preserved by creating order in social life.

D. Conclusion

Philosophy attempts to address various issues, including those related to the metaphysical trilogy and nature. In the world of philosophy, there are various schools of thought that focus on specific aspects of human life. It is important to note that views and thoughts in philosophy tend to be diverse and sometimes contradictory. These differences arise from different approaches and are influenced by factors such as historical context, worldview, and place of residence. The classification of these philosophical schools provides an overview of the diversity of thought systems in philosophy of education. One significant philosophical school is liberalism, which advocates for individual freedom, justice, and human rights. This school of thought developed as a reaction to the dominance of the church and religious orthodoxy during the Renaissance. Liberalism emphasizes the importance of individual autonomy in various aspects of life, including politics, economics, and religion. This journal will further explain the liberal philosophy and its perspectives on three key aspects: human beings, science, and education.

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