

Overview of Rationalism and Empiricism Philosophy in Social Studies Education

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Article History

Received: 04/01/22 Review: 03/03/22 Revision: 06/03/22 Available Online: 15/03/22

Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan perbedaan antara kedua pandangan tersebut dan bagaimana kaitannya dengan pendidikan IPS. Hal tersebut dimaksudkan untuk memberikan analisis tentang perkembangan filsafat ilmu dan hubungannya dengan ilmu-ilmu sosial. Tinjauan pustaka digunakan untuk mendeskripsikan pembahasan secara deskriptif. Penulis mengumpulkan literatur menggunakan buku dan mesin pencari seperti; google sarjana, gerbang penelitian, dan akademisi. Hasil dan pembahasan menggambarkan bahwa rasionalisme sebagai pernyataan aksioma dasar yang digunakan untuk membangun sistem pemikiran yang berasal dari ide. Ide yang dimaksud harus jelas, tegas, dan berasal dari pemikiran manusia—Sedangkan empirisme adalah salah satu pandangan di mana seluruh atau sebagian pengetahuan didasarkan pada pengalaman menggunakan indera. Adapun hubungan antara rasionalisme dan empirisme dalam studi sosial, pendidikan adalah studi masalah sosial berdasarkan metode analitis untuk mendapatkan pengetahuan baru. Pendidikan IPS mengajarkan konsep-konsep sebagai mata pelajaran untuk sekolah menengah pertama atau sederajat. Pengajaran konsep dapat diuraikan dengan metode penyelidikan sosial. Metode ini memberikan keleluasaan untuk memperoleh pengetahuan baru baik secara induktif maupun deduktif.

Kata Kunci: Rasionalisme, Empirisme, dan Pendidikan IPS.

Abstract

This article describes the differences between the two views and how they relate to social studies education. The matter is intended to provide an analysis of the development of the philosophy of science and its relationship to social studies. A literature review is used to describe the discussion descriptively. The author collects literature using books and search engines such as; google scholar, research gate, and academia. The results and discussion describe that rationalism as a statement of basic axioms used to build systems of thought derived from ideas. The idea in question must be clear, firm, and come from

human thought—Whereas empiricism is one view where Whole or partial knowledge is based on experience using the senses. As for the relation between rationalism and empiricism in social studies, education is the study of social problems based on analytical methods to gain new knowledge. Social studies education teaches concepts as a subject matter for junior high school or equivalent. The teaching of concepts can be decomposed by the method of social investigation. This method provides the flexibility to gain new knowledge both inductively and deductively.

Keywords: Rationalism, Empiricism, And Social Studies Education.

PRELIMINARY

The development of knowledge over time continues to move forward. In this matter, humans become the axis of the conception of the search for truth. Humans continue to move in search of answers to uncertainty. Humans use various methods to see that truth is not universal, but truth can be measured scientifically. The dynamics of the search for truth by humans is carried out by proposing old theories based on facts to bring up new theories (Zainal, 2000). The process of seeking the truth is related to the activity of thinking. Thinking activities in our minds, especially critical thinking that involves analysis and synthesis. As a result, our knowledge or information and the accumulation of knowledge processed by certain methods (scientific method) will develop into science (Suriasumantri, 2010; Wiriadmadja, 2012). Meanwhile, from ancient Greece, the philosopher Aristotle defined science and philosophy as rational knowledge, or *episteme*, "an organized body of rational knowledge with its proper object," an orderly collection of rational knowledge with its proper object (Gie, 1991). So that, in Aristotle's view, the relationship between science and philosophy is very clear, with the grouping of the two sciences in one concept of *episteme*, or rational knowledge (Honer & Hunt, 2003).

Based on critical analysis, truth is not static but dynamic. This is interpreted as a disbursement that never stops at one point. For this reason, humans are aware that the reality of life is the current philosophical thinking they face. Within the humanities framework, philosophy is one of these branches of science. Philosophy gives concentration on wisdom (Asmoro, 2005). Wisdom is the ideal point in human life. It can make humans behave and act based on high humanitarian considerations (*actus humanus*), not just acting as humans normally do (*actus homoni*). (Abu, 1992). Wisdom is not obtained by being silent but starts from the thought process. The thought process aims at one estuary: the space to gain knowledge. There are two very well-known views in the search for knowledge.

This view is known as rationalism and empiricism. Both adherents of this view insist on the difference that knowledge is *a priori* and *a posterior* (Akhmadi, 2007; Zubaedi, 2007). The research that reveals the differences between rationalism and empiricism can be cited through Pellerin and Magistretti (2004). To quote Pellerin and Magistretti (2004), the debate between

empiricists and rationalists started by Aristotle and Plato, followed by Bacon, Locke, and Hume on the empirical side and by Descartes and Kant on the rationalist side, to name a few, is still ongoing. According to empiricists, theories should come only after facts. On the other hand, the rationalist view calls for the anticipatory role of theories (models), which can structure and direct experiments. However, the two approaches reflect two modes of brain function, which are influenced by the sociocultural environment (Pellerin & Magistretti, 2004). In particular, this article discusses the differences between the two views and how they relate to social studies education. This matter is intended to provide an analysis of the development of the philosophy of science and its relationship to the field of social studies.

METHOD

This article was compiled based on the literature review method. A literature review is known as a literature review that supports a specific problem in the current research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012; Zed, 2008). Thus, the author does not only collect literature using books but also with search engines such as; google scholar, research gate, and academia. The writer reduces literature sources based on rationalism, empiricism, and social studies education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the study of philosophy, the problem of skepticism is divided into two, namely: rationalism and empiricism. This sub-discussion will be explained the meaning of rationalism and empiricism. First, rationalism comes from the English adaptation of rationalism. Etymologically, this word comes from the Latin *ratio*, meaning "reason." (Good, 2002). In a broader context, the root of the meaning of rationalism refers to a view, which holds "reason is the source of knowledge and justification." Rationalism is understood according to his people as a statement of basic axioms used to build a system of thought derived from "ideas." The idea in question must be clear, firm, and must come from human thought (James, 2010; Kattsoff, 2004),

The human mind can know ideas because ideas come from reason. Intellect can bring humans to the point of true knowledge (cannot be wrong). Thus, ideas are already "there" as part of basic reality and the human mind (Magnis, 2002). Rationalists know that the mind can understand a principle, so the principle must exist (Susanto, 2011). Therefore, if the principle does not exist, then humans (people) cannot describe it. This proposition is something a priori. The principle is not developed from experience, and on the contrary, the experience can only be understood when viewed from the principle. (Tjahjadi, 2004).

Various figures presented this view with distinctive teachings based on its development, but still in the same corridor. For example, in the 17th century, there were several famous

rationalist figures such as Plato as the pioneer who was also known as "Rationalism or Platonism René Descartes (1590 - 1650) with the famous motto being "*cogito ergo sum*" (I think, so I exist). Other figures are JJ Roseau (1712 – 1778) and Basedow (1723 – 1790), Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, Christian Wolff and Baruch Spinoza. (Asmoro, 2005; Roger, 1986).

Second, empiricism comes from the English word's empiricism and experience. This word has its roots in the meaning taken from the Greek "*empeiria*" and from the word "*experientia*", which means "experienced in," "acquainted with," "skilled for" (Good, 2002). Empiricism is a view in which total or partial knowledge is based on experience using the senses. This understanding became a turning point from the view of rationalism, where Plato argued that "what the five senses perceive is only the world of symptoms, which are pseudo, unreal and imperfect" (Kattsoff, 2004).

The empiricists explain that knowledge must be true is sensory knowledge, empirical knowledge. The five senses play the most important role compared to reason because, First, all propositions that we say are the result of reports from experience or are inferred from experience. Second, we cannot have any concept or idea about something except one based on what is gained from experience. Third, reason can only function if it references reality or experience (Akhmadi, 2007; Honer & Hunt, 2003).

In his book "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," John Locke explained that all concepts or ideas that express human knowledge come from human experience. These concepts or ideas are obtained from the five senses or reflection on what is given. The human soul is *tabula rasa*, so it must be considered wrong if we have a certain concept or idea about this world. According to Locke, there are two kinds of ideas: simple and complex. Simple ideas are captured through the five senses directly (spontaneously). Through simple ideas thinking, doubting, questioning, classifying, processing what is given by the senses, and so on, reflections are born that allow for more complex ideas.

Locke concluded that simple ideas could not be wrong while complex ideas could be wrong. Another figure from the empiricists is David Hume. Through his book entitled "An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding," David Hume explains that human understanding is influenced by certain basic certainty about the external world. Humans can reach the certainty that makes human knowledge possible through human scientific instincts. There are two mental processes in humans (Honer & Hunt, 2003).

First is the impression (impression), all kinds of sensory perceptions that are more alive and direct. Second, thoughts or ideas that are less lively and less direct. Impressions give rise

to simple ideas from objects that we perceive with the five senses directly, which then the human mind can give birth to complex ideas that we do not perceive through the five senses. David Hume provides a synthesis similar to John Locke's explanation that experience can bring humans to a piece of new knowledge. The following table shows the differences between rationalism and empiricism.

Table 1. Difference between Rationalism and Empiricism

Rationalism	Empiricism
Is a priori (not dependent on sensory experience or what is implied in the meaning or idea (received)	Is a posteriori (knowledge is obtained from sensory experience)
Knowledge of the external world is determined by the truth inherent in the subject's mind (in the form of ideas) - Descartes	The human mind is analogous to a tabula rasa (blank paper). The process of knowing the outside world, experience makes an impression in mind - Locke

Source: Asmoro (2005).

Based on the table above, it can be understood how the differences between rationalism and empiricism in philosophical studies can be understood. However, to contextualize rationalism and empiricism in social studies education, it is described based on understanding the definition of social studies education. Social studies education is better known as Social Sciences. The term "Social Sciences," abbreviated as IPS, is the name of the subject at the elementary and secondary school levels or the name of the study program in higher education identical to the term "social studies" (Sapriya, 2012). The term IPS in elementary school is the name of a stand-alone subject as an integration of several concepts from social science disciplines, humanities, science, and even various social issues and problems of life (EW Abbas, 2013). Social studies material for the elementary school level does not look at the disciplinary aspect because more emphasis is placed on the pedagogical and psychological dimensions and the characteristics of students' holistic thinking abilities (EW Abbas, 2015).

The definition of social studies at the school level has different meanings, adjusted to the characteristics and needs of students, especially between social studies for elementary schools (SD), social studies for junior high schools (SMP), and social studies for high schools (SMA). (Supardan, 2014). The definition of social studies in schools means that there are subjects that stand alone, a combination of various subjects, and there are those who interpret social studies as a teaching program. (Wahid Pure, 2017). It can be seen from the approach of each level.

Social studies learning emphasizes the "educational" aspect of concept transfer. In social studies learning, students are expected to understand several concepts and develop and train

their attitudes, values, morals, and skills based on the concepts they already have. (Syaharuddin & Mutiani, 2020). Social Studies also discusses the relationship between humans and their environment. A community environment where students grow and develop as part of the community and face various problems in the surrounding environment (EW Abbas, 2018).

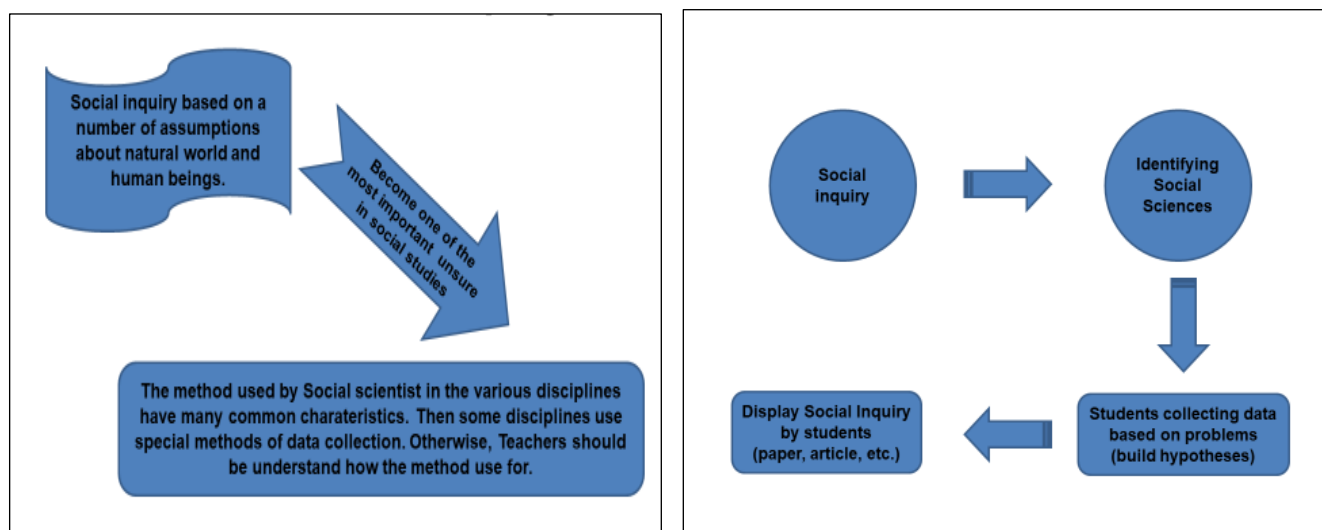
Social Studies Education objectives can be achieved well when educational materials are organized in various ways, starting from a "mono-structured, inter-structured and trans-structured approach to social science disciplines (Sapriya, 2012). But, first, a method is needed to apply this approach in a learning framework. In the context of philosophy, there are three problem-solving methods choices: deductive, inductive, and combined. This method describes the epistemological thinking process to answer the questions posed.

The scientific method is a procedure in obtaining knowledge which is called science. This method results from the marriage of the views of two major schools in the world of philosophy that are opposite, namely Rationalism and Empiricism. If the inductive method reflects the thinking pattern of the rationalists, the deductive method reflects the thinking pattern of the empiricists. It reinforces one big question, which one is more effective? Do you think inductively or deductively? In the context of social studies education, the object of the study of social problems requires direction and a basis for analysis. This foundation is conveyed as assumptions built by humans. There are three basic assumptions so that the new knowledge generated is recognized as true, namely:

1. Objects have similarities to each other.
2. An object does not change in a certain period.
3. Every symptom is not a coincidence (Suriasumantri, 2010; Wiriadmadja, 2012).

The interconnectedness of each basic knowledge assumption becomes a new knowledge network as studied in Social Sciences. The Social Sciences material's content at the Junior High School level is full of abstract messages (known as concepts). The concepts presented are diverse, from people, places, environment, time, change, and sustainability. Understanding the concept is carried out in a scientific stage mentioned by James Banks (1985) in the book "Teaching Strategies for The Social Studies: Inquiry, Valuing, and Decision Making." The basic assumptions are not only confined in experience but can be explained scientifically using the social inquiry method:

Picture 1. Social Investigation Method



Source: Banks (1985).

Based on the picture above, social studies is built based on assumptions in the surrounding environment, both in physical and non-physical studies. Both help students to develop knowledge naturally. If then it is said that children are blank papers written on, then this very contradictory to the view of empiricism which explains that humans are tabula rasa (blank paper). (Honer & Hunt, 2003; Abbas EW, 2020). Students, in this case, are children, are unique entities that have latent potential and require touch in development. The relationship between rationalism and empiricism in social studies does not come from the value of the knowledge gained. Adhering to rationalism and empiricism, both coexist as a corrective mechanism. The most important understanding is the causal relationship that continues to be followed by the facts of events. They combined rationalism and empiricism in social studies learning hopes that abstract thinking is not an impossibility. The cause and effect are in a system of ideas in the human mind.

CONCLUSION

The problem of skepticism is divided into two, namely: rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism is understood according to people as a statement of basic axioms used to build a system of thought derived from ideas. The idea must be clear, firm, and come from human thought. In comparison, empiricism is a view in which total or partial knowledge is based on experience using the senses. The relation between rationalism and empiricism in social studies social problems based on method analysis to gain new knowledge. In the content of social studies material at the junior high school level, full learning about concepts can be explained by social investigation. This method provides the flexibility to gain new knowledge both

inductively and deductively. Thus, students can understand the concept holistically, not partially.

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