

## **The Meaning of Ultimate Happiness in the Perspective of John Stuart Mill (Study on Utilitarianism Ethics)**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to discuss and find out the meaning of ultimate happiness from John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism ethics. Interpreting human happiness, instinctively is a creature that always seeks pleasure. So that in life there is no one who rejects happiness. This research uses a qualitative approach with analytical descriptive method, the technique in this research is literature study. As for the results and discussion of this research, that according to John Stuart Mill's view of the meaning of ultimate happiness called rank. Lower ranks are interpreted as temporary and upper ranks are interpreted as essential, which if they provide as many benefits as possible to a number of people will become ultimate happiness.

**Keywords:** Happiness; John Stuart Mill; Social life; Utilitarianism

### **Introduction**

Human life has been adorned with various goals and expectations. One of them is to get happiness. In general, happiness makes a desirable expectation in human life, this can be seen in the reality that states that humans continue to try their best to get happiness in their lives. Meanwhile, the happiness desired by humans is actually still at an unstable point. That is, the definition of happiness from most people has not been agreed upon. Because the dynamics in human life are diverse, the resulting happiness is different and diverse. The issue of interpreting happiness has led to prolonged discussions among philosophers, religionists, and even writers. So, it comes to the discussion that happiness is a universal and ultimate goal (Hamim, 2016).

Ibn Miskawaih's view of happiness which is the most important and essential goodness among all the goodness that makes it the ultimate goal. In the ultimate happiness, Ibn Miskawaih suggests that the ultimate

happiness can be obtained when humans are able to unite between the spirit and the body which is called the high realm and the low realm. But in the view of Aristotle, that humans can see a happiness beyond physical pleasures (Fuadi, 2018).

The meaning of ultimate happiness in this article will be brought closer to the philosophy of ethics, which discusses human actions both in terms of conscience and behaviour. Utilitarians, for example, believe that happiness is a form of moral foundation. Thus, whether an action is right or wrong can be measured by the extent to which it brings others happiness (Fuad, 2017). As in everyday life, humans are given two actions, namely bad and good actions or called system ethics. Automatic ethics has many understandings and teachings, one of which is teleological theory which talks in depth about the good and bad of a human action based on its ultimate goal. Then this theory gave birth to utilitarianism which is considered to equate goodness with benefits, meaning actions or actions that are more concerned with one's own egoism than the interests of the group. Then John Stuart Mill came to perfect this teaching by holding a truth value to be able to act selfishly, in order to be able to find ways so that many people can achieve their ultimate happiness (Saepullah, 2020).

John Stuart Mill was born in Landon, England on 20 May 1806. He had a father named James Mill who was equally involved in the world of philosophy, politics, and even economics. Mill has several works, including in 1859 Mill made a work entitled *On Liberty*, then in 1864 Mill made an essay entitled *utilitarianism*, and Mill's next writing on *Principles of Political Economy*. Mill died with a fairly mature age of 66 years in Avignon, France in 1873 (Suseno, 2021).

Several studies have discussed this matter, as listed in the literature review, namely Bayu Artha Seno, (2020) wrote "Chemical Castration Punishment for Perpetrators of Sexual Violence Against Children in Mojokerto in the Perspective of Utilitarianism John Stuart Mill." at Gadjah Mada University. In this study, it discusses the application of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism theory to chemical castration punishment including the right government action because it is a form of government effort in providing quality happiness to the general public and especially to children and parents in creating a safe and secure feeling. Although in some parties consider that the punishment violates human rights because of its impact on human torture (Seno, 2020).

Septi Mulia Sari (2019) wrote "The Concept of Freedom and Happiness in the Perspective of John Stuart Mill." at Raden Fatah State Islamic University. Writing the relation between freedom and happiness from John Stuart Mill if psychologically it is able to bring satisfaction to all parties and even axiologically it is able to bring benefits to overcome all the problems

of human life which are increasingly developing, pluralistic and even provide benefits in the form of a common happiness (Sari, 2019).

Asep Saepullah (2020) wrote "John Stuart Mill's Concept of Utilitarianism: Its Relevance to Islamic Sciences or Thought." In *Aqlania: Journal of Islamic Philosophy and Theology*. In this study, it discusses the relevance of Islamic thought such as theology, which humans understand as a science that is quite complicated and drains the human mind. Then it should be related to contemporary issues, including all the actions that humans do. Through the actions that humans do, therefore, it should be a good deed so that it will get benefits and even happiness for many people. Thus, through his utilitarianism John Stuart Mill has a relationship with Islamic thought, it is not impossible if Islam is a religion that has a universal nature, which can be felt for its goodness by other Muslims and not least by non-Muslims (Saepullah, 2020).

The research that has been exposed above, reviews happiness with various sides. Although there are similarities in terms of methodology and others, this paper will discuss happiness in the review of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism ethics. In the principle of utility refined by Mill, he sees that an action is good or not based on the quantity of benefits that can be felt to many people (Mill, 2020). For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic which caused humans to become strangers in their lives and even a lot of fraud occurred in order to stay alive during this pandemic. Therefore, for the application of utilitarianism in the midst of society, it is appropriate to apply it in the context of prioritising the majority and even for the sake of providing benefits to many people. That will bring happiness to many people.

So happiness is very much related to goodness. As some have said that the ultimate goal of ethics is "the highest good" or also known as *summum bonum* and in Arabic also known as *al khair al makhdah*. As in the view of John Stuart Mill who views that happiness can be distinguished based on quantity and also quality, because Mill prioritises the usefulness or usefulness in carrying out an action in order to determine an assessment of goodness, because it is through goodness that happiness can be achieved. Then Mill divides the scope of happiness into two parts or what is called "ranks." Namely, the lower rank is temporary happiness and the upper rank is eternal or ultimate happiness (Hadiwijono, 2016).

Based on the explanation above, this article will discuss the meaning of John Stuart Mill's ultimate happiness in Utilitarianism. This thought is interesting because it talks about happiness not only individually but has an impact on many people.

After doing the above, the next step is to compile a research formula, which contains the formulation of the problem, the main question of the study and the purpose of the study (Darmalaksana, 2020a). The formulation

of this research problem is about how John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism ethics sees the meaning of ultimate happiness. The main question in this research is how the meaning of ultimate happiness according to John Stuart Mill in utilitarianism ethics, but the more detailed questions are as follows: 1) How is utilitarianism ethics according to John Stuart Mill; 2) How is the meaning of ultimate happiness in John Stuart Mill's view. The purpose of this research is to discuss ultimate happiness in the view of John Stuart Mill, a study of utilitarianism ethics. This research is expected to provide a benefit to the treasury of knowledge.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology has five parts, namely the research approach and method, data collection techniques, types and sources of data, data analysis techniques, and finally the place and time of research. This research is a type of qualitative research and is classified as a form of library research (Darmalaksana, 2020b). Then in this study applied an analytical descriptive method (Karjono, 2020). The type of data in this research is qualitative data sourced from books, journal articles, documents and also other literature related to the topic of discussion.

### **Results and Discussionsan**

#### **1. John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism Ethics**

Teleological ethics is the mother of both hedonism and utilitarianism. Teleological comes from the Greek word "telos" which means purpose. So teleological ethics gives an opinion that the excellent ethical quality comes from the action, so it will be discussed that it is good if it achieves a desire at the end of the action. Therefore, this ethics focuses more on the final conclusion. For example, there is a teenager who behaves very well, then what is seen to judge it is through the final result of the individual's desire that he wants to achieve (Abadi, 2016).

One of the schools of teleological ethics is utilitarianism or in Latin called *utilis* which means usefulness or benefit. This means that utilitarianism is a school of moral philosophy that emphasises the principle of utility as the most basic moral principle. So this genre provides a view that whether an action is good or not is determined by the quantity of benefits produced or felt by many people (Bertens, 2015). For example, in giving something, if giving something to another person makes them offended or feel humiliated, then this action is considered unethical. So utilitarianism has characteristics that can be accepted and can even be explained scientifically, because this school has general characteristics that are rational, critical, teleological and even comprehensive (Pranowo, 2020).

Utilitarianism was presented as a systematic theory by Jeremy Bentham. Then Bentham's utilitarianism theory provides an analysis of

profit and loss that can replace human value, thus showing the weakness of this utilitarianism idea. Through Bentham's theory, humans are often used as a static dimension that can be exploited so as to be able to provide benefits to certain parties. In this sense, ethicists such as Aristotle, with his extreme views on utilitarianism, are almost identical (Pranowo, 2020).

Aristotle's view in Nichomacean Ethics argues that every research and art even in teaching and action, is considered the goal of the good, so that the good can be rightly said to be the goal (Aristoteles, 2020). By this, it can be seen that Aristotle is actually discussing the purpose of a moral action. This is one of the characteristics of utilitarianism, which has a telos. In Aristotle's view, happiness is a sense of pleasure and enjoyment. Then pleasure and also pleasure are the results of living virtuously. This is also the idea of utilitarianism which emphasises pleasure and enjoyment. But the difference between the two lies in the subject, if eudaimonism puts more emphasis on egocentric happiness. However, utilitarianism emphasises happiness for a number of people. With this, it can be seen that Aristotle is behind the idea of utilitarianism because they both emphasise the goal as an action (Pranowo, 2020).

The development of utilitarianism is always tied to teleological ethics. For this reason, utilitarianism has a category in the good and bad of actions, namely by calculating the greatest happiness through the greatest number of actions (Bertens, 2015). So this utilitarianism provides a space for responsibility, but the space is limited to the responsibility of human beings from birth to do a good deed and avoid a bad deed. In the scope of ethics, John Stuart Mill explicitly gives the view that this school moves on the principle of greatest happiness. Therefore, the development of utilitarianism today is divided into two parts, namely act utilitarianism or known as utilitarianism has the nature of action, so this utilitarianism gives a person the freedom to take action, as long as the action provides more benefits. But the rule utilitarianism or known as utilitarianism is a rule, for this utilitarianism provides a view that humans are required to act based on norms that can provide a benefit (Sudarminta, 2013).

John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism can be classified into four parts. In the first part, it should be noted that Mill's utilitarianism is a rearrangement of Bentham's utilitarianism, meaning that Mill tries to justify the notion of utilitarianism, which he considers misguided because of the mistakes that occurred in the previous utilitarianism. Then, Mill starts by making a principle of usefulness (Mill, 2020). As explained earlier, it is good if it produces happiness or benefits and bad if it gives misery. The second part is John Stuart Mill's principle of utility. This part is used to refute the negative or ugly view of utilitarianism ethics. Mill disagreed with other critics of utilitarianism, seeing it as a materialistic school of ethics only. Mill then refutes this scientifically. For him, there are two kinds of happiness in

the human world: ultimate happiness and temporary happiness (Mill, 2020).

The third part is for Mill's critique and defence. Therefore, Mill rejects the view that utilitarianism is a kind of ethics that has a selfish nature that only pays attention to individuals. Actually, the notion is not wrong when it comes to Bentham's utilitarianism. However, it becomes wrong if it is associated with Mill's utilitarianism. Because Mill's idea of utilitarianism elaborates it with philosophical arguments. Therefore, Mill is able to collaborate between actions that have a hedonistic nature without leaving the role of individuals who are able to carry out selfish actions for the sake of their interests and even for the happiness of many people. Even though his happiness is sacrificed for the greater happiness of the greater number of people who benefit.

The fourth part is the axiology and conception of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. Mill's concepts and ideas are put into concrete form. His first action departs from a hypothesis on the seriousness of humans to obtain their happiness. Then the second action is from each individual who has a standardisation of their happiness. By means of these two actions, it can be concluded that in the human subconscious there is a desire to be able to pass through the meaning of happiness itself (Mill, 2020).

## **2. Aspects of Ultimate Happiness According to John Stuart Mill**

Discussing the issue of happiness will refer to the views of Western philosophy. According to the beliefs of Western philosophers, happiness is a level for a person's highest achievement. Like the ultimate happiness in the view of Socrates that the happiness of the human soul is not only his breath, but becomes the most important element in his life. The soul for Socrates is a human essence, therefore it is obliged to prioritise the happiness of its soul in order to have a good soul. In line with Socrates, Plato also said that happiness is not only the satisfaction of lust but must be seen from two worlds, namely the body and ideas. This means that the real happiness of physical happiness which is closely related to the inner world, namely the world of ideas, must also be pursued.

Another philosopher who explains happiness is Epikuros who explains that happiness is directed towards one ultimate goal, which is to ensure human happiness through ethics as a core of his thought. So he emphasised pleasure and then John Stuart Mill himself saw that happiness should be felt by many people, whether in the world community, a country or even in a group. When examined from several views of these philosophers, it seems that they have different ways and languages in conveying their thoughts about happiness. they seem to agree that the goal to be achieved in this life is a supreme happiness.

Discussing the problem of happiness as above has been an issue that has been discussed by many writers, religionists, and even philosophers for centuries. As in the belief of Greek philosophers who view that happiness is a level to be able to reach one's highest achievement. Because the science that is all developed by philosophers will ultimately aim to find out how humans are able to achieve happiness. then in Socrates' view that ultimate happiness is the happiness of the soul. Therefore, humans must make their souls the best souls, and to achieve this happiness, virtue is needed (Hamim, 2016).

This happiness would be based on utilitarianism ethics, which assumes that the only principle of utility is the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. This is what John Stuart Mill would have advocated (Mill, 2020). Because humans want a happy life and happiness is a goal or dream in their lives, humans often quickly feel satisfied with the meaning of happiness that they believe in. Through this sense of satisfaction, humans tend not to be able to see the happiness of life with their other relationships, so that in achieving happiness humans are willing to do anything, even if it harms and even sacrifices many people (Banusu & Firmanto, 2020).

According to John Stuart Mill, all good and bad actions do not have a value in themselves. But in the benefits or delights that are obtained. This means that the benefit is happiness for a large number of people. Therefore, happiness must be felt by many people, both in society, the country, and even the world. Through that benefit, it has a clear positive impact, both for individuals and groups. So for Mill, the sacrifice for good happiness can reach utility, while others if it does not reach utility will be futile and even cause a sense of misery. Because of his moral principle that action will be right if it is in its measure to achieve happiness and becomes wrong if it reduces happiness (Mill, 2020).

In his utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill recognised the quantity of happiness taught by Bentham. However, he realised that Bentham's hedonic calculus would not work. Therefore, Mill introduced a new element into the calculation, namely, quality. If in theory it is difficult to compare a different value if it is qualitative, but in practice in everyday life it will help more or less to be sure, both for yourself and for others. because good or bad actions depend on the situation (Mill, 2020).

The hedonistic calculus mentioned earlier is Bentham's teaching on the calculation of pleasure and pain with seven elements. Through these seven elements, what needs to be considered in a calculation is its intensity, certainty, duration, fertility, purity, closeness to the person, and finally its extent. So if the sum gives a lot of pleasure then that is what should be done. But on the contrary, if the pain is felt then it should be abandoned. Actually, from the elements that Bentham put forward, there are two weaknesses,

namely the difficulty of giving value to an effect and contradicting justice. Mill therefore includes a new element that has been alluded to in the previous explanation. For this, it can be seen from the quantitative as well as the quality, so that the calculation effort can succeed appropriately. So these qualities include circumstances, glory, and so on. It is through this element that distinguishes pleasure or happiness between humans and animals. So this element is used by Mill as an answer to people who think that utilitarianism ethics is only appropriate for animals and misguided (Zubair, 1990).

Mill divides it into two spheres of happiness called ranks. In the lower rank which means temporary happiness. It is a happiness that a person has for only a short time and one day it will become a misery. This will apply if it cannot be right to place it. Like sleeping, shopping and others. It will make misery if done excessively and does not provide much benefit, then it only leads to individual welfare.

While the second rank is a higher level. Where happiness will be ultimate. For Mill, this ultimate happiness will make humans live with happiness in the long run. Such as religion, reading, academics and others. Through John Stuart Mill's thoughts on ultimate happiness related to religion, because religion also teaches to do good not despicable. Then in religion also instructs humans to provide a benefit and even happiness for many people. This is rooted in a psychological view and also has the aim of being able to gain happiness. Therefore, happiness that comes from a mental strength and also rationality is more weighty and even essential compared to happiness that comes from the impulse of pleasure alone. (Saepullah, 2020).

### **3. John Stuart Mill's Concept of Achieving Ultimate Happiness**

For Mill, gaining happiness is one of the motives for the actions that individuals take, and that the greatest happiness of each individual is a measure of the good that is beneficial in society and even at the same time makes it the goal of all moral actions. Happiness is a pleasure that is free from pain. So there are two parts to understand, the first is that an act of morality is measured by the extent to which it leads to happiness, and the second part, happiness itself consists of a feeling of pleasure and freedom from pain (Mill, 2020).

Happiness for Mill can be achieved through six parts, including: First: in this section, whether in the field of work or thought, there is a consequence between pleasure and pain. Every individual wants only one thing, namely pleasure, as a logical consequence. If in Bentham's teaching this part is called intensity. Second: in this part, if from a psychological point of view, then wherever humans are and whatever they do, it has become their disposition and humans will add to their pleasure. In Bentham's terms,



this is called duration. Third: in this section, we see that pleasure itself has an unequal quality. and it is clear that humans must determine a type of pleasure that they think is better and more suited to them. If in Bentham it is called proximity. Fourth: this part of the pleasure can be felt by many people. If something else is needed outside of pleasure then it is nothing more than a complement to the pleasure. If in Bentham it is called fecundity. Fifth: if there are two kinds of pleasure that are the same, then the reference point to be able to choose between them is the best one, by choosing the one that makes the longest impression and can also be felt for a long time without linking the judgement to the cost. This is what Bentham called purity. Sixth: pleasure or happiness is something that people who work or have worked hard in life deserve. For Bentham, this is called breadth (Zubair, 1990).

Mill sought to show that happiness has both quantitative and qualitative characteristics, so it is not just a deviation from the principle of utility by recognising that pleasures are of higher quality than others. For one individual may be more decisive about one pleasure than another even if it is obtained with great dissatisfaction. A wise person demands more than just external pleasures to make him happy. For such a person, dissatisfaction under certain circumstances is better than contentment, as in "it is better to be a contented man than a dissatisfied pig; it is better to be a Socrates than a contented fool" (Mill, 2020). How can you determine which of the two pleasures has more instructive value? Then Mill said that the decision of the two people who experienced the pleasure should be used as a reference. Because for him the comparison between the quantity of happiness is no different from the quality of happiness. So it is not only the quantity that must be considered in happiness but also the quality must be considered so that it can produce benefits for many people (Suseno, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Mill's happiness starts by formulating a principle of utility that is used as a basic principle of morality, utilitarianism is an ethical understanding that provides a view that good actions are beneficial and also profitable. Whereas bad is a behaviour that harms and gives misery. In this school, it is referred to as the theory of the greatest happiness by providing benefits to many people instead of causing suffering to others. Therefore, the ultimate happiness for Mill is called a rank. There is a lower rank of temporary happiness and an upper rank of ultimate happiness which will provide welfare in the long run, such as religion, academics, and others. Therefore, for Mill, happiness that derives from mental strength and rationality has more weight and is even more essential than happiness that derives from the impulse of pleasure alone. Therefore, the application of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism ethics in social society can be said to be

appropriate if used in the context of prioritising the majority or even listening to the most votes for the sake of peace and the benefit of as many people as possible in order to produce an ultimate happiness.

The results of this study are expected to provide benefits for social society in interpreting happiness. This research has limitations, which is less to consider a plurality of interests and even tends to harm minority groups. Therefore, it would be better if future research gives consideration to minority groups and a plurality of interests.

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