

# Martin Seligman and Avicenna on Happiness

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## Abstract

*As the ultimate goal of every living soul, happiness has its own place in the hearts of the seekers and in the thoughts of the researchers. Being an elusive term to be discussed for its subjective meaning, happiness utilizes many disciplines of knowledge to be defined and understood fully. The idea of this study was to elaborate on the concept so the researchers might compile it in such a systematic way as to permit anyone to gain knowledge from it and lead them to attain true happiness. For this purpose, there should be prominent figures to obtain from them their ideas on the related concept. They are Martin Seligman and Avicenna; both are, no doubt, exemplary figures and exact credible persons for this study about happiness. This work attempts to analyze and compare their ideas on happiness. Each of them has their own unique concept of happiness since both come from very different backgrounds of study and worldviews. The results show that since Seligman brings his agenda in secular scientific positive psychology, as he stated. While Seligman stops in the temporary world, Avicenna on the other hand, does not. This is because Avicenna based his notion of happiness on a philosophical-religious approach. He emphasized that it is only through the knowledge of true reality i.e. God, one may then achieve absolute and true happiness, although, the conception he conducted was less applicative.*

**Keyword:** *Happiness, Eudaimonia, Martin Seligman, Avicenna*

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## Abstrak

*Sebagai tujuan hidup yang paripurna, kebahagiaan menempati tempat tersendiri dalam hati para pencarinya dan dalam pikiran para peneliti tentangnya. Makna yang luas dan subjektif membuatnya agak sulit dikonsepsikan. Maka dari itu, dibutuhkan berbagai cara pandang dari beberapa disiplin ilmu agar dapat dipahami secara holistik. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah sebuah elaborasi mengenai konsep kebahagiaan yang diharapkan menjadi sumbangsih yang berarti bagi siapapun yang hendak meneliti lebih jauh mengenai konsep terkait sekaligus mencapai kebahagiaan hakiki. Darinya, dibutuhkan figur yang kompeten dan kredible untuk dibaca darinya ide, pemikiran dan konsep mengenai kebahagiaan. Adalah Martin E.P Seligman, mantan Presiden Asosiasi Psikolog Amerika dan Ibn Sina yang pantas merepresentasikan figur tersebut. Tulisan ini berusaha untuk menganalisa sekaligus membandingkan konsep masing-masing mengenai kebahagiaan hakiki. Karakter unik masing-masing cocok untuk dibandingkan karena datang dari background study dan pandangan dunia yang berbeda. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa Seligman memposisikan kebahagiaan pada agenda psikologi positif sekuler-ilmiahnya. Sementara Seligman dengan agendanya terbatas oleh dunia temporal, Ibn Sina disisi lain membawa konsep ini lebih jauh ke dalam dunia metafisik dengan pendekatan filosofi-religi. Walaupun keduanya mengafirmasi keberadaan jiwa sekaligus peran Tuhan dalam pencapaian kebahagiaan, namun ketika Seligman memposisikan Tuhan dalam dunia ide dan sebagai faktor pelengkap dalam pencarian kebahagiaan, Ibnu Sina memposisikan-Nya sebagai sumber dari kebahagiaan hakiki.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Kebahagiaan, Endaimonia, Martin Seligman, Aricenna*

## Introduction

Happiness, as the ultimate goal of every living soul<sup>1</sup> is one of the main discourses that have been searched throughout decades. Focusing on mental health produced by positive psychology, most of the late psychologists assured that the true happiness could be attained by anyone who may then increasing his positive emotions.<sup>2</sup> Numerous works were done while some are still on progress to be perfected. Seminars are hold

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<sup>1</sup> According to Al-Farabi, happiness is the happiness itself that desired by human soul in his life that nothing is greater and further to be attained save this happiness. The way is by knowing the truth of everything that might be percept by reason. See Abu Nashr Al-Farabi, *Arā' Ahl al-Madinah al-Fāḍilah wa Madlādātubā*, ver. 'Aly Bu Malham, (Beirut: Dār wa Maktabu al-Hilāl, 1995), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Carr, *Positive Psychology, the Science of Happiness and Human Strengths*, (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 2. Also the collection of some researches on positive psychology and it's strong relation with happiness that written by recent psychologists edited by C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez could be seen in C. R. Snyder et. al, *Handbook Of Positive Psychology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

in every occasion by demand, in order to developing the unparalleled levels of happiness by cultivating existing strengths of each individual.<sup>3</sup> The enigmatic condition of nowadays' society promotes those experts in optimizing their best exertion towards the true happiness.

Etymologically, as it found in 'Webster's third new international dictionary', happiness is a state of well-being characterized by relative permanence, by dominantly agreeable emotion ranging in value from mere contentment to deep and intense joy in living, and by a natural desire for its continuation. "In the distinction between this term synonyms and its (i.e., felicity, beatitude, blessedness, Bliss), defines happiness", as the general term denoting enjoyment of or pleasurable satisfaction in well-being, security or fulfillment of wishes. Felicity, a word denotes a higher, more lasting, and more perfect happiness. Beatitude refers in this sense to the highest happiness, the felicity of the blessed. Blessedness suggests the deep joy of pure affection or of acceptance god. Bliss may apply to a complete and assured felicity."<sup>4</sup> Some might found happiness as the permanent feeling or state of delight, contentment, and pleasure that emanate from the perpetuate sense of self-goodness, virtue of life and blessings of God's decrees upon man.<sup>5</sup> Although there are several synonyms mentioned, recent psychologists seemed to be agreed that happiness means different things to different people, it's subjective. In addition, modern positive psychology experts urged that the conclusion of a good sense of what happiness should be based on is that research, which can be measured empirically, rather than just a fleeting observation or philosophical speculation.<sup>6</sup>

The problems arise therefore whether happiness can actually be measured with a scale, despite how weak the scale? Some experts tend to assume a fairly strong psychological scale to measure, as a tool

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<sup>3</sup> Shigehiro Oishi & Ed Diener, 'The Optimum Level of Well Being. Can People be too Happy?', in *Journal Association for Psychological Science*, Vol 2 Number 4, 2007, 346.

<sup>4</sup> Noah Webster, 'Webster's third new international dictionary' 1961, in Ghalib Ahmad Masri et al., *The Way To Happiness, Based on "Happiness between Illusion and Reality" by Nasser Al-Omar and "Causes of Happiness" by Sheikh Abdur-Rahman A l- Sa'ad*, (Riyadh :King Fahd National Library, 1995), 22

<sup>5</sup> Ghalib Ahmad Masri et al., *The Way To Happiness...*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Kasser, 'The Good Life or the Goods Life Positive Psychology and Personal Well-Being in the Culture of Consumption' in *Positif Psychology in Practice*. Edited by Alex Lingley and Stephen Joseph, (New Jersey: John Willey and Sons. 2004), 55.

to measure the length of a standard that is expected to be used for all measurements, it's definitely unacceptable.<sup>7</sup>

Tracing back to the western science tradition, as a concept, to live a happy life might be found in the Aristotle age. *Eudaimonia*, this term used by Aristotle, constructed from *eu* (good) and *daimon* (God, spirit, demon).<sup>8</sup> Aristotle maintained that *eudaimonia* comes from identifying one's virtues, cultivating them, and living life in accord. Happiness is beyond feeling good; it is about doing good.<sup>9</sup> A life of contemplation, of perfect *eudaimonia*, is transcendent because it indicates a "divine element" within the individual and so is an ideal for which to strive. He stated, "If intellect, then, is something divine compared with the human being, the life in accordance with it will also be divine compared with human life."<sup>10</sup> The historical view of this concept appeared to be explicit that the true happiness is strongly related to the metaphysic world. The significant thing what Aristotle tried to prove was that, one cannot reach happiness in the real sense by neglecting the transcendent.

In 2002 Martin E.P. Seligman<sup>11</sup> proposed a theory of happiness

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<sup>7</sup> James Griffin, *Well Being Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 93

<sup>8</sup> James O Pawelski et.al. (ed), *Well Being In Literary Studies, The Eudaimonic Turn*, (Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Di Tella, R. et.al., 'Some uses of happiness data in economics', in "*Journal of Economic Perspectives*", (2006), 20, 25–46

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* Edited and trans. by, Roger Crisp, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 196

<sup>11</sup> Martin Seligman was born on August the 12th 1942 in Albany, New York. In 1996, Seligman was elected President of the American Psychological Association, by the largest vote in modern history. Since 2000, his main mission has been the promotion of the field of positive psychology. He is currently working with the US Government on wellbeing and resilience for the whole armed forces, focusing on the use of positive psychology to combat post-traumatic stress and suicide rates. He is best known for his best-selling publications, numerous awards and for holding presidency of the APA in 1998. He is the recipient of two Distinguished Scientific Contribution awards from APA, the Laurel Award of the American Association for Applied Psychology and Prevention, and the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Society for Research in Psychopathology. He holds honorary doctorates from Uppsala University in Sweden the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology. Seligman received both the American Psychological Society's William James Fellow Award (for contribution to basic science) and the James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award (for the application of psychological knowledge). His best seller books that become the main reference in related matter were *Learned Optimism* and *Authentic Happiness* that have been translated to more than 18 languages. See <http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/vitae.htm> and <http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/bio.htm> and <http://www.apa.org/about/governance/president/bio-seligman-martin.aspx> (accessed on Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014/ 22:34).

that is almost similar to Aristotle's *eudemonia*. According to Seligman, which he calls his works as authentic happiness, is achieved upon discovering, recognizing and cultivating one's signature strengths.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, he covered three distinct kinds of life: the pleasant life, the good life, the meaningful life. The pleasant life, it is attained by raising positive emotion about the past, future and present. While the first might be achieved by gratitude, forgiveness, and freeing oneself of imprisoning deterministic ideology, the second one may be increased by learning to recognize and dispute automatic pessimistic thoughts. On the other hand as for the present, the characterization would be by defeating the numbing effect of habituation, by savoring, and by mindfulness. The absorption, engagement, and flow come at the end as to strengthen this present part; *the good life*, is a life wrapped up in successfully using one's signature strengths; finally, the *meaningful life*, it is to expand these signature strengths to the limit in the term of service something larger than anyone who walks these ways that leads to have a strong sense of purpose in life.

Pleasant, good and meaningful lives, all individually are the factors of life satisfaction and full life.<sup>13</sup> Both good and meaningful are predicted as the stronger compared to pleasant one. Indeed, having a sense of purpose in life and flow within this life are more important in terms of life satisfaction in contrast to living a life of pleasant. But when one is living all three lives by the sense of fully engaged on all those three, results a full life, the authentic happiness. In fine, this happiness could be achieved by anyone, as long as one works on his will and really strives for it based on the three lives mentioned. Yet, the acknowledgment of metaphysic domain i.e. God is mere one of the mediums and the last endeavor, in sense to obtain the authentic happiness and not the one who determines it.

On the other side, it's said that the experience of the utmost happiness which might be obtained by anyone is beyond of one's abilities, it is completely in God's hand, as the source of true happiness.<sup>14</sup> It was

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<sup>12</sup> Martin E.P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness, Menciptakan Kebahagiaan Dengan Psikologi Positif*, Trans. Eva Yulia Nukman, First Edition, (Bandung: Mizan, 2005), 549-553

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 549-553

<sup>14</sup> Fathullah Khalif, *Ibn Sina wa mazhabubu fi nafsī; Dirāsah fi al-Qaṣīdah al-'ainiyyah*, (Beirut:

Abu ‘Ali al Husain ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Hassan ibn Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna) philosophically, came to this point based on the divine revelations. He assured that anyone might come to the point of certain happiness in this world, yet the authentic and ultimate of this condition is coming from the source, not derived from. It is when one might finally see the existence of the True One (i.e. God) with his very self in the eternal world, whilst in the temporary world, it’s about “knowing” the *al-Haq*.<sup>15</sup> Anyone who doesn’t strive to know his Lord would not experience the true happiness in his self.<sup>16</sup> The concept emerged because Avicenna clarified that the present happiness is contemporary when it deals with the worldly life.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the perception attained by human beings makes them possible to experience any kinds on any levels of pleasures and satisfactions which are leading to the happiness, but since all human living in this world would surely perish so would with the happiness itself, it’s not true happiness.

Nevertheless, he did not deny that the peak of happiness, subjectively, might still be achieved in this present life. He expanded the range so that when one always links his heart with the one he loves in the sense of beautifulness. On his book, a treatise on love, he noted that human being naturally loves beauty, and since the most significant fact to remember is that bodily beauty is merely derived from the beauty of soul, a fact which proves the superiority of the latter. As God is the highest beauty and the desire of the multitude externally, as He is also the Highest object of love and is Maximum goodness for His Sublime essence, the result would be in reaching the ultimate happiness when

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Dār al-Ahad al-Buḥairi Ikhwān, 1974), 99

<sup>15</sup> Ibnu Sīna, *‘Uyūnu al-Ḥikmah*, Ver. ‘Abdu ar-Rahmān Badawī. (Beirut: Dāru al-Qalām, 1970), 60

<sup>16</sup> Ibnu Sīna, *Mabḥaṭ ‘an al-Quwā an-Nafsāniyyah*, Ver. Edward Van Dike. (Cairo: Dāru al-Ma’ārif, 1325), p. 16. See al-Qur’ānu al-Karīm: *al-Ḥashr*:19 “*And be not like those who forgot Allah , so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.*”

<sup>17</sup> Avicenna stated that the complete, true and eternal happiness would just be experienced by soul and that when it’s separated from the body as its container. This state can’t be achieved in the worldly life since the soul is still in the body. Any pleasures, joys bliss, happiness etc. that being experienced in this life would go as one passes away. For that reason, the happiness in this world can’t really be called as true or authentic happiness etc. see Al-Husain Abu ‘Ali ibn Sīna, *Risālah al-Udhwāniyyah fī Amri al-Ma’ād*, (Egypt: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabiy, ny), 118. and See also, Abi ‘Ali Ibn Sīna, *Al-Ishārāt wa at-Tanbihāt; Sharḥ Nashiruddīn ath-Thūsī*, Ver. Sulaiman Dunya, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed, (Cairo: Dāru al-Ma’ārif, 1119), 9

eventually meet Him. Hence, one's true destiny in this life is to seek the highest beauty which leads him to the authentic happiness. In other words, Avicenna emphasized that human being might still experience the happiness in this life. The logic behind of this concept is that the more one understands about what the true happiness is, the more he is getting closer to the objective he wants to reach. It means that the authentic happiness is merely sourced from the external of being, it's about knowing and understanding own self and God that promotes an attainment of His guidance in this life. It is very true that to find the true happiness one should look for it to the "inside" rather outside, yet, isn't it God who bestows upon one that feeling of happiness since He is the One who owns everything?

Epistemologically, the concept of happiness of both figures Seligman and Avicenna is quite similar in sense that the full life in order to attain authentic happiness in this life is involving God. Regardless of this similarity, each of them has a different worldview to be discussed. While Seligman is engraving the way for nowadays people to be in touch with their positive emotion perpetuity and the signature strengths, using an adequate research to ensure that anyone might end in authentic happiness by basing on secularizing and scientific life,<sup>18</sup> and he did spoke about God at the end of his journey, yet the percept of God is mere powerful supernatural being. A thing that may be said as larger than human being, the enormously large something endowed with omniscience, omnipotence, and goodness but not the Creator,<sup>19</sup> Avicenna on the other hand, ensured that God as the primary cause who made everything into being. The theory he initially asserted that beings or things must necessarily be either necessary or contingent appears to be reasonable.<sup>20</sup> It means that God is the first and main cause for every single existence on this universe, the originator of all things. In this point, the aforementioned concept of happiness is in accordance

<sup>18</sup> Martin E.P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness...*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 542.

<sup>20</sup> Avicenna in his brilliant work proved the existence of God by using the logic that rarely used in his period; he noted that the necessary Being doesn't need anything to become or to exist. While anything save this necessary Being do need the necessary Being to exist. See al-Husain Abu 'Ali ibn Sina, *Kitābu 'an-Najāt fī al-Ḥikmah wa al-Mantiqīyyah wa al-Ṭabī'īyyah wa al-Ilāhīyyah*", ver. Majid Fakhr, (Beirut: Dār al-Afāqī al-Jadīdah, 1982), 261-263.

and depends all at once with the existence of God. The result is, should God doesn't allow and bestow anyone to attain such happiness, no one then would achieve it.

## The Basic Worldview

Generally saying, the authentic or true happiness is a state of feeling when one is in the utmost enjoyable situation. However, to attain that kind of feeling there are several processes to be taken and concept to be understood correctly. The processes or namely as ways to the happiness draw various condition of knowing certain factors. While the process of knowing itself is part of the understanding of the true concept of happiness, it goes hand in hand with the aforementioned process. The factors are encompassing the source, the barriers of true happiness and the landmarks and pre-requisites to attain the true happiness.<sup>21</sup> This whole thing is meant for anyone to not mislead to a certain condition that might result on the other way.

Considering that happiness is not merely physical experience, but it also involves soul in its way, which is metaphysic. In this case the most significant framework to be employed would be the theory of worldview. The system of belief of one's experiences that systematically accumulated throughout his life. It is someone's view comprehensively about the universe for which one is willing to live his life and die,<sup>22</sup> it's a map of how individual to live. The system itself is constructed by several elements. According to Wall, there are six fundamental elements of worldview: concept of God, knowledge, reality, self, ethic, and society.<sup>23</sup> While Ninian Smart limited these elements into the cosmos, the self and the society.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Alparslan came with five fundamental elements of worldview; those are life structure, world structure, man

<sup>21</sup> See Ghalib Ahmad Masri et.al, *The Way..*, p.3-5

<sup>22</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, 1834-1854, trans. And ed. Alexander Dru, (London:Oxford University Press, 1938), 15 . in David Keith Naugle, "*A History and Theory of the Concept of Weltanschauung (Worldview)*", (Texas: The University of Texas, 1998), p. 569

<sup>23</sup> Thomas F Wall, *Thinking Critically About Philosophical Problems*, (Wadsworth: Thomson Learning, Australia, 2001), 506. In Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, *Al-Ghazali's Concept of Causality; With Reference to His Interpretation of Reality and Knowledge*, (Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2010), 18

<sup>24</sup> Ninian Smart, *Worldview; Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, N.Y), 54.



structure, value structure and finally knowledge structure.<sup>25</sup> It seems that any theory or concept that derived from anyone with a certain worldview would surely reflect those construct elements. From aforementioned definitions about, it reveals that there is fundamental difference between atheistic and theistic worldview. It is the reference of the coverage of the definition itself.

One of the recent influential Muslim scholars, Naquib al-Attas noted that worldview is the vision that appears in one very self, by means of the external and internal sense, or of the intellect or of the heart,<sup>26</sup> of reality and the truth about *wujūd*.<sup>27</sup> In sense that what is meant by *wujūd* is not merely translated as an existence but an Existence (with capitalized “E”) and “Being”, for each term has specific meaning in the metaphysical context.<sup>28</sup> It’s something behind phenomena<sup>29</sup> as the true essence of reality. The elaboration of the worldview definition is necessary to avoid any deviations or misunderstanding of the meaning of worldview, which may cause the confusion in science (*corruption of knowledge*) that effect to whole aspect of life,<sup>30</sup> whereas this whole aspects of life in the sense of theistic worldview is necessary based on the concept of God, as Wall said:

“It (belief in God’s existence) is very important, perhaps the most important element in any worldview. First if we do believe that God exists, then we are more likely to believe that there is a plan and a meaning of life ...if we are consistent, we will also believe that the source of moral value is not just human

<sup>25</sup> Alparslan Acikgenc, *Islamic Science; Towards Definition*, (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization – ISTAC, 1996), 20-26.

<sup>26</sup> S.M.N al-Attas, *Prolegomena to The Metaphysics of Islam; An Exposition of the Fundamental Element of the Worldview of Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 132.

<sup>27</sup> S.M.N al-Attas, *Prolegomena...*, 2

<sup>28</sup> The term *existence* refers to all realities other that Absolute Reality, whereas *Existence* (with the capitalized E) refers to the first emanation of Absolute Being, usually called *al-Faid al-Aqdas* (most holy effusion). As for *Being*, it refers to *Wājib al-Wujūd* (Necessary Being). On the other hand, *being* is a universal concept pervading all degree of realities, contingent of Absolute. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy; From Its Origin To The Present-Philosophy in The Land of Prophecy*, (Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 2007), 66.

<sup>29</sup> Muhyi al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Beirut: Dār al-Sādir, N.Y.), 538.

<sup>30</sup> See: Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, ‘Pandangan Hidup, Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Pendidikan Islam, a Paper presented in “*Workshop of Knowledge and Education*”, Surabaya: University of Lukman al-Hakim Hidayatullah, 12-13 August, 2005.

convention but divine will and that God is the highest value. Moreover, we will have to believe that knowledge can be of more than what is observable and that there is a higher reality – the supernatural world. ...if on the other hand, we believe that there is no God and that there is just this one world, what would we then be likely to believe about the meaning of life, the nature of ourselves, and after life, the origin of moral standards, freedom and responsibility and so on.”<sup>31</sup>

In short, worldview refers to the framework of ideas and beliefs creating a global representation through which an individual, group or culture watches and understands the world and interacts with it. As in comprehensively meaning, it's the basic principal cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the entirety of the individual or society's knowledge and point of view. Or as Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi stated, it is a system of belief that serves as an interpretative framework that would allow us to understand ourselves and to realize our place in the world.<sup>32</sup> Therefore the throughout analysis for the concept of happiness from both figures would be framed by this theory.

### a. Both Figures on Happiness

In order to understand the whole concept of happiness, it is better beforehand, to know the meaning of the word. As Seligman took his concept from a point of view, exploring literatures of the word being discussed reveals his worldview of western philosophical thought. On the other hand, Ibn Sina's definition on happiness would also be analyzed

#### a) Seligman

The term happiness captures a huge variety of positive emotional responses, including such things as cheerfulness, serenity, optimism, and joy;<sup>33</sup> Etymologically, in the late of 14c, as adjective it's considered as luck, favoured by fortune and being in advantageous circumstances and prosperous of events. Derived from “hap” or “hab” means luck, chance, fortune; added by -y, it forms adjective, its sense of “very glad”. In 1520s some literatures recorded that the meaning of happy is greatly pleased and content.<sup>34</sup> The similar meaning is given by Webster dictionary,

<sup>31</sup> Thomas F Wall, *Thinking Critically*. ...in Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, *Al-Ghazali's...*, 17

<sup>32</sup> Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, *Al-Ghazali's...*, 17

<sup>33</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/happiness> (Accessed on August 8, 2015 08:54).

<sup>34</sup> Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary Of The English Languages, An Introductory*

it mentions that happy is an adjective which means fortunate, lucky; gay, contented, joyous, ecstatic; felicitous.<sup>35</sup> Transformed into abstract noun, happiness means pleasant and contented mental state. Francis Hutcheson (1725) used this term in greatest number in which later was associated with Bentham.<sup>36</sup> On dictionaries of philosophy found including the self-sufficiency and harmony of his own being (in Kant's ethics),<sup>37</sup> human flourishing based on self-sufficient and complete in the highest measure.<sup>38</sup> Throughout history, philosophers, religious writers and poets have attracted and pondered on the meaning of happiness and how it might be achieved. More recently, scientists, psychologists, socialist and even politicians, have joined the pursuit of this state of feeling.

The latter work done by one of prominent figures in this field Steve Moody, showing that happiness defined as a feeling of good fortune, pleasure, contentment, bliss and joy.<sup>39</sup> It's also the state of feeling as results from achieving and owning desirable things in life for a long period of time. The foremost of the whole described meaning above is that happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. It is also often defined in terms of living a good life, or flourishing, rather than simply as an emotion.

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*Dissertation On The Origin, History And Connection Of The Languages Of Western Asia And Of Europe, And A Concise Grammar English Language*, (New York: s. Converse, 1838), 869.

<sup>35</sup> See, *The New American Webster Handy College Dictionary*, ed. By Philip D. Morehead, (New York : New American Library, 2001), 365

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=happy](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=happy) (accessed on: January 5, 2016; 09:25)

<sup>37</sup> Paul a. Schilpp, *The Dictionary of Philosophy*, Edited by Dagobert D. Runes, (New York: Philosophical Library, N.Y), 122.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 51.

<sup>39</sup> Steve Moody is the author of 10 books, 4 works of non-fiction and numerous academic and self-help essays/articles. He has also written and produced an extensive series of organisational/personal development programmes for a variety of organisations and individuals; Holds a PhD in Modern German Literature from the University of London. He is the founder of The Happiness Initiative, a Not-For-Profit Organization which supports people with depressive and addictive illnesses to achieve fuller and more satisfying lives, and without any chemical dependency. Born in Halifax, Yorkshire, in the UK, he now lives beside the sea in south-west England. He listed meaning of Happiness of the myriad of dictionary entries. See Steve Moody, *The Meaning of Happiness*, (Bloomington: Author House, 2014), V

As for Steven Pinker,<sup>40</sup> it is a state of feeling to be fit with anything makes one feels good, pleasant and satisfy as well as to be content with what one is achieved.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the evolution of happiness offered by David M Buss,<sup>42</sup> although he doesn't explicitly define happiness, yet he seems to give a new sight of defining this term. In his article, he wrote:

“With a deeper understanding of the evolved mechanisms of mind that define who humans are and how they were designed to function, people may eventually acquire the ability to control some of the more destructive social conditions. Through this knowledge, people can take a few halting steps toward fulfilling the human desire for happiness.”<sup>243</sup>

It seems that according to Buss, happiness means that when someone with his mind realizing his own ability and strength, and

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<sup>40</sup> Ranked by *Time* magazine as one of its “100 Most Influential People in the World” in 2004, Steven Pinker is among the foremost authorities on language and the mind – particularly in the areas of visual cognition and the psychology of language. Three of his mainstream, non-academic books – *The Language Instinct*, *How the Mind Works*, and *The Blank Slate* – have been honored with prizes. Pinker has also twice been nominated for a Pulitzer. A Harvard College scholar, Pinker is the Johnstone Family Professor in Harvard University’s psychology department. His research has garnered him several awards, including the George Miller Prize from the Cognitive Neuroscience Society and the 1993 Troland Research Award from the National Academy of Sciences. Pinker also graced *Foreign Policy* magazine’s list of top global thinkers in 2010 and 2011. <http://www.bestmastersinpsychology.com/30-most-influential-psychologists-working-today/> (Accessed on August 8, 2015 09:10)

<sup>41</sup> Pinker stated in his work, “At first happiness might seem like just desserts for biological fitness (more accurately, the states that would have led to fitness in the environment in which we evolved). We are happier when we are healthy, well-fed, comfortable, safe, prosperous, knowledgeable, respected, non-celibate, and loved. Compared to their opposites, these objects of striving are conducive to reproduction. The function of happiness would be to mobilize the mind to seek the keys to Darwinian fitness. When we are unhappy, we work for the things that make us happy; when we are happy, we keep the status quo. The problem is how much fitness is worth striving for? See, Steven Pinker, *How The Mind Works*, (Great Britain: Penguin Group, 1998), 389.

<sup>42</sup> American psychologist David M. Buss is a leading researcher and author in the field of evolutionary psychology and human sex differences in partner selection. The 2005 book *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, edited by Buss, is considered the definitive text on the subject. Buss currently works as a professor of psychology at The University of Texas at Austin. He is also a director of the International Consortium of Social and Personality Psychologists. Buss has garnered many honors throughout his prestigious career, including the G. Stanley Hall Award, which was bestowed on him by the American Psychological Association in 1990. <http://www.bestmastersinpsychology.com/30-most-influential-psychologists-working-today/> (accessed on August 8, 2015 09:10).

<sup>43</sup> David M. Buss, *The Evolution of Happiness*, American Psychologist, American Psychological Association, Inc. 0003-066X/00/\$5.00 Vol. 55, No. 1, DOI: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.15, January 2000, 22.

boosts it in order to control anything that might be effecting his very own existence in his life. Therefore, as Seligman stated that one should recognize his signature strength and does everything toward the enhancement of his quality of life based on that signature strength.

Freud on the other hand, defines happiness as an absence of pain and un-pleasure feeling, and the experiencing of strong feelings of pleasure.<sup>44</sup> It is sort of satisfaction of needs which have been-dammed up to high degree, released in a preferably sudden by an episodic phenomenon. So when any situation that is desired by the pleasure principle is prolonged, it only produces a feeling of mild contentment. This situation results as well as derives intense enjoyment from a contrast and very little from a state of things.<sup>45</sup> In this state, the satisfaction of a wild instinctual impulse untamed by the ego is incomparably more intense than that derived from sating an instinct that has been tamed.<sup>46</sup> In other words it is an effort in avoiding a suffer feeling at any cost, hedonism.

There again, William James, with his faith of God's existence stated in his varieties, that happiness is a feeling of eternal present of enchantment where mind and soul no longer anxious about what will the future bring to one's life, and even that the primary objective of human life is happiness. It is this, which motivates human to act and endure the misery of life. Evolution is often seen as a progressive advance towards happiness.<sup>47</sup> It is according to James, then the ultimate goal of every human being.

Considering in a particular way, the earlier conceptor of this terminology, Aristotle, emphasized the idea into a meaningful happiness of life. He believed that the best way to achieve happiness in this life is through the nurturing what's best in self and optimizing it in act of virtue. Happiness in this sense was used to translate the Greek Eudaimonia, and is still used in virtue ethics.<sup>48</sup> Eudaimonia has its own concept. Apart

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<sup>44</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontent*, translated and Edited by James Strachey, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company. Inc, 1962), 23.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience; a Study in Human Nature*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1905), 9-47.

<sup>48</sup> Darrin M. McMahon, *From the happiness of virtue to the virtue of happiness; 400 BC–AD 1780*, (Daedalus 133.2 (2004), 5-17.

from hedonism, in which identifies good tidings as the only purpose, so that pleasure as the only thing that represents good and pain as its opposite are the only significant elements of every phenomena to be focused on,<sup>49</sup> *Eudaimonia* on the other hand, offers the whole complete values to attain every aspects of pleasure. A hedonic state is a non permanent state of pleasure, while eudaimonic state is one associated with ongoing well-being, engagement and contentment, since it's related to the higher cause.<sup>50</sup>

Aristotle in his book, "Politics" shows how that man, as he describes as by nature a political animal, only develops his capacities in society, rightly organized for his welfare. The aim of Politic is to discover first in what mode of life does man's happiness consist and how one would live his life.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, although the meaning of "meaningful" in this sense may vary for each thinkers; basically, all actions that benefit either for themselves or for other people may accommodate its meaning. At the end, it raises the positive feelings for individual to give more meanings in one's life as well as to maintain happiness, in other word, *Eudaimonia*.

Aristotle in short offered the definition that happiness which is referred to *eudaimonia* where in ancient Greek, it was understood the ultimate good that supplies the purpose, and measures the value of all human activity and striving. "It is for the sake of happiness" he wrote "that we all do everything else we do."<sup>52</sup> *Eudaimonia* is not a static state of the soul but a kind of activity of the soul – something like human flourishing.<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, Seligman interpreted this concept as gratification. It's when something is done simply for the thing itself without emotional

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<sup>49</sup> James O Pawelski et.al. (ed), *Well Being In Literary Studies, The Eudaimonic Turn*, (Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>50</sup> Luke Wayne Henderson & Tess Knight, 'Integrating the hedonic and *eudaimonic* perspectives to more comprehensively understand wellbeing and pathways to wellbeing', in "*International Journal of Wellbeing*", 2/3, 196-221.

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, translated by f. H. Peters, m.a, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (london kegan paul, trench & co, 8861), 29

<sup>52</sup> Aristotle, quoted from; Anthony Kenny, 'Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Utility: Happiness in Philosophical and Economic Thought', of "*St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs*", Volume 7, (UK: Andrews UK Limited, 2011), digital version, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 51.

tendencies. It's something that more in-depth and objective, concerns the development of all aspects of an individual human such as moral aspects, social, emotional, spiritual, and not merely cheerfully pleasure. Affirming this idea, Seligman states:

““Happiness” historically is not closely tied to such hedonics—feeling cheerful or merry is a far cry from what Thomas Jefferson declared that we have the right to pursue—and it is an even further cry from my intentions for a positive psychology.”<sup>54</sup>

Generally speak; it may be called as the ethics of self-development. Thus, rather than focusing the topic about the senses and the emotions as the main sources of pleasures, the gratifications, in contrast, are about enacting personal strengths and virtues. In this regard, Seligman mentioned in his book that happiness which relates closer to gratitude is sometimes misunderstood with pleasure, which commonly labelled as hedonism. According to him, while pleasure can be discovered, nurtured, and amplified since it may derived from the enjoyment of the body, gratitude on the other hand, can only be had by activity consonants with noble purpose.<sup>55</sup> This is what eudaimonia used to be understood as.

It's clear that happiness according to Seligman is to live a good life, wholly, in a state of well-being. This means that it's not solely to make things felt good or in line with choices that made, rather to make them to be more meaningful in life. The choices that make life worth living as well as to create and build the enabling conditions and situation for it. Surely, one cannot expect everything in life to be always in fortune. Seligman expressed how he chose to listen to his six year-old's excruciating piano recital for it is his parental duty and part of what gives his life meaning.<sup>56</sup> It wasn't really a pleasant or good time for him, but, it was a true happiness for Seligman as a father for his beloved daughter.

Further, Seligman affirmed that the serious religious people, according to the long period of evidence, have more chances to be in the state, for they are less depressed and happier, more optimistic and

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<sup>54</sup> Martin Seligman, *Flourish: a Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*, (New York: Free Press, 2012), 31.

<sup>55</sup> Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc, 2002), 41.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Seligman, *Flourish: a Visionary New ...*, 31.

above all contentedly with meaning in their life. As for the people who don't have any religious beliefs, yet want to lead a meaningful life, it would be a major change in their life and would be a big discovery for them. While Seligman was trying to do so, he would like to share it and announce it in a way that is very compelling for people who are secular. The result was, he has come to believe that there is a secular view that leads to God which leads to a meaningful life and sacred because it's grounded outside oneself, in the longest of runs.<sup>57</sup> In short, it's to grasp the contentment in this present life.

While digging the meaning of authentic happiness, this former president of APPA is well known currently as the father of positive psychology.<sup>58</sup> His major object now, after he launched his last book "Flourish: a Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being", is well-being, or more precisely subjective well-being. This work is about finding and offering ways to move beyond simply seeking good feelings to pursuing a better life. The same logic as happiness, but rather, it's beyond happiness, game-changing work on optimism, motivation,

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<sup>57</sup> The statement was taken from the interview with Martin Seligman himself by Wendy Schuman. Wendy is a freelance writer and editor in the New York City area. She is currently at work on a book about baby boomers reconnecting with '60s idealism and activism. <http://wendyschuman.com/articles/the-psychology-of-real-happiness-interview-with-dr-martin-seligman/> (accessed on May 8, 2015; 07:42)

<sup>58</sup> The idea actually was originated from Abraham Maslow; he helped to call attention to humanistic psychology, which focused on human strengths and potential rather than neuroses and pathologies. The term was first used in 1954, in a book chapter where Maslow noted that the "science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side..." See, Shane J. Lopez, C. R. Snyder, *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3. See also, Kate Hefferon & Ilona Boniwell, *Positive Psychology: Theory, Research and Applications*, (UK: McGraw-Hill Education, 2011), 10. Yet, Maslow has only the theory with less methodologically sound, empirical evidence to support his claims. The next generation of psychologists such as Seligman, is working to scientifically study the effects of positive emotions and the ways in which they affect health, performance and overall life satisfaction. Being credited as the Father of Positive Psychology, it wasn't until the 1998 President of the American Psychological Association, he fought against psychologys focus on deficit and illness, emphasizing the equal importance of helping people thrive above the suffers and raising the bar of their condition in positive way. This shaped his work and he has since become one of the most often-cited psychologists not only in positive psychology but psychology in general. It simply that psychologists need to study what makes happy people happy. This is the reason why he's called by The Father of Positive Psychology. See, <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/martin-seligman-positive-psychology/> and <http://healthland.time.com/2011/05/13/mind-reading-positive-psychologist-martin-seligman-on-the-good-life/> (Accessed on August 08, 2015 09:20).



and character to show how to get the most out of life, unveiling an electrifying new theory of what makes a good life – for individuals, for communities, and for nations.<sup>59</sup> This positive psychology is the root of the authentic happiness, where the whole concept is begun. Seligman stated that the theory of authentic happiness is an attempt in explaining life satisfaction, by absorbing more positive emotion, engagement, and meaning in their life,

“Authentic happiness theory is an attempt to explain a real thing—happiness—as defined by life satisfaction, where on a 1-to-10 ladder, people rate their satisfaction with their lives. People who have the most positive emotion, the most engagement, and the most meaning in life are the happiest, and they have the most life satisfaction.”<sup>60</sup>

Despite of the hectic agenda uphold by recent psychologists to differ between happiness and other positive feelings, it would be better to define what the positive psychology is, as it is the root of those states. It is a science of positive aspects of human life, such as happiness, well-being and flourishing. It is the ‘scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive. According to Seligman, it is the branch of psychology that uses scientific understanding and effective intervention to aid in the achievement of a satisfactory life.<sup>61</sup>

From the discussion above, the variety of definition and meaning of this term were given. Accordingly, it’s known that happiness involves whatever human may reach as the most desirable feeling in their present life. It is a state of positive emotions that accumulate altogether in one soul. It covers up the whole feeling of what may be defined by any dictionaries about it terminologically. Despite the fact that some psychologists negate the existence of soul itself, Seligman somehow affirmed it. Hence no doubt, that the whole journey and exploration of human life is nothing except to discover and embrace happiness, which indicates the stability of the soul possessed by one. In short, it is a state

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<sup>59</sup> Martin Seligman, *Flourish: a Visionary New ...*, i.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Seligman & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “*Positive Psychology: An Introduction*”, American Psychological Association. Inc. 0003-066X/00/\$5.00 Vol. 55. No. 1. 5, DOI: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.5, 5-14.

of a soul in satisfaction with life-as-a-whole, which covers past, present and anticipated experiences.<sup>62</sup>

### b) Ibn Sina

Being one of the most prominent figures on psychology, on the other hand, Ibn Sina used this term to refer to the related concept namely in Arabic as *sa'ādah*. This term etymologically is derived from the root *al-sa'du*, means happiness, good fortune, prosperity, felicity, help, and stars.<sup>63</sup> The verb that formed from this root is *sa'ida-yas'adu-sa'ādātu*, which means also the opposite of *bu'su wa syaqāwatu*, misery,<sup>64</sup> as what have defined by most of *al-mufasssirīn*.<sup>65</sup> *al-bahjah wa al-surūr* Joy and gladness semantically enriching the meaning of it.<sup>66</sup> Concluding this, happiness is an attainment of whatever makes one feels content and full in life.

This word originally was used by Ibn Sina to show a state of soul in comprehending the true knowledge of *al-Wujūd*, i.e God.<sup>67</sup> Ibn Sina stated that happiness is a discontinuity of vision and it's elevation from lowness to that high first-Truth entity (God) by contemplation, so that mind would always recognize Him and that all creation is from Him.

«السعادة هي الانقطاع بالجملة عن ملاحظة هذه الحسائس ووقف النظر على جلال الحق الأول، ومطالعته مطالعة عقلية، والاطلاع على الكل من قبله ليكون صورة للكل متصورة في النفس الناطقية يلحظها وهو يشاهد

<sup>62</sup> Ruut Veenhoven, "How Do We Assess How Happy We Are? Tenets, Implications and Tenability of 'Three Theories'", Paper presented at conference on 'New Directions in the Study of Happiness: United States and International Perspectives', University of Notre Dame, USA, October 22-24 2006, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Abu al-Fadl Jamaluddin Muhammad Ibn Mukrim Ibn Manzūr, *Lisānu al-'Arab*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed, (Beirut: Dār Shādir, n.y), 213.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 213.

<sup>65</sup> Some of them are: Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, "*al-Jāmi'u li abkām al-Qur'an*", Ver. Ahmad al-Bardāni and Ibrahim Atfash, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Cairo: Dār Qutūb al-Mishriyyah, 1964), 20/103; Abdullah Ibn Abbās, *Tamwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsiir Ibn 'Abbās*, in work of Majdu al-Dīn al-Fairūz Abadi, (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutūb al-'Ilmiyyah), 191; Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Tha'labi, *Al-Kashfu wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsiir al-Qur'an*', Ver. Abi Muhammad Ibn 'Ashār, (Beirut: Dar Ihyā' at-Turāth al-'Arabiyy, 2002), 5/190.

<sup>66</sup> 'Abdu al-Qādir Ibn Mulan 'Alī Ghāzi al-'Ani, *Bayānu al-Ma'ānī*, (Damaskus: Matba'a at-Taraqī, 1965), 156.

<sup>67</sup> Ibn Sina, *Uyūnu al-Hikmah*, Ver. Abdurrahman Badawi, 2nd Edition, (Beirut: Dār al-Qalām, 1980), 60

ذات الأحد الحق -من غير فتور ولا انقطاع- مشاهدة عقلية.<sup>68</sup>

Similar to most of the interpreters of the Holy book, he also polarizes between happiness with misery and made it semantically opposite. When one doesn't optimize his intellectual to know the reality behind everything in his life, he will then experience the steps of misery. The ignorance for things may lead one's life to his grievance. One without knowledge would be always victimized by his own condition and situation. Hence, if one doesn't really use his intellectual potential, he will serve misery in his life, as he's suffering from a loss of all desires of life,<sup>69</sup> the exact opposite of happiness. Not only that, he also states that anyone who always over indulge his bodily appetites, will surely experience great misery in his next life. Yet for simple souls that have no notion of intellectual desire or intellectual satisfaction, they will live in a kind of peace in the afterlife; they will neither enjoy the pleasure of satisfied intellect nor suffer the misery of intellect dissatisfaction.

Here, it can be seen that Ibn Sina focusing his conception of happiness on intellect. He described it as the gate of knowledge. Knowledge to know the essence of everything in this cosmos as well as to quench his thirst of knowing everything that might be perceived by intellect Majority of discussions in happiness carried out by Ibn Sina resulted several perspectives within the concept, yet it still appears to be a single pattern of idea. It is them who willingly optimize their intellectual function may then arrive to the ultimate truth. Thus what is meant by true happiness for Ibn Sina.

Starting from the discussion on pleasure, Ibn Sina expands his searching of happiness through it by dividing pleasure into two parts: sensual pleasure (*al-laddha al-hissiyya*) and intellectual pleasure (*al-laddha al-aqliyya*). Sensual pleasure is two types, outward and inward: an outward such as food and coition, while inward such as preserving one's dignity and self-respect.<sup>70</sup> As it has said before that the inward pleasures are higher than the sensuous, and yet these two pleasures are lower than the

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 60

<sup>69</sup> Ibn Sina, *Risālah fī al-Huṣn*..., 1

<sup>70</sup> Muna Ahmad Muhammad, *al-Hayr wa al-Shār fī Falsafati Ibn Sina; Dirāsatan Muqāranatun fī Fikri Ibn Sina*, (Beirut: al-Muassasah al-Jami'iyah, 1411/ 1991), 204

true and the highest pleasure, which is intellectual pleasure, exemplified in the achievement of the Gnostic. Ibn Sina comes then with some samples; the person, whose aims in life are chastity, or leadership, will resist that temptation of animal soul. Men of nobility and generosity will prefer the opportunity of acting generously over the indulgence of sensual pleasure. Those who are proud will think hunger and thirst trivial matters when compared with their dignity and self-respect. He then dares anyone with a question, if these inner pleasures can overcome the outer pleasures, how much the more so, must intellectual pleasures?<sup>71</sup>

In this respect, intellectual happiness is a perception (*idrāk*) and attainment (*naḥḥ*) of that which to the perceiver is perfection and a good (*kamāl al-ḥayr*) in itself. In like manner, pain is a perfection and attainment of that which to the perceiver is a harm and evil.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, knowing which of these pleasures captures one's deepest idea, would be significantly allow one to know which level of happiness that one experiences on. In sum, the farther one's soul from the material substance, the more he will experience the authenticity of happiness.

Although the utmost and complete happiness may just be perceived by intellect in its capacity as a soul when it separates the body,<sup>73</sup> Ibn Sina doesn't negate the fact that one may perceive and experience the true happiness in this worldly life, in which he stated,

والعارفون المتزهون، إذا وضع عنهم درن مقارنة البدن، وانفكوا عن  
الشواغل، خلصوا إلى عالم القدس والسعادة، وانتقشوا بالكمال الأعلى،  
وحصلت لهما للذة العليا.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, this pleasure is not completely unattainable when the soul is still in the body. For those who are occupied in contemplating the omnipotence and who keep away from all distractions, will enjoy, even while their souls are still in the bodies, a considerable share of this

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Sina, *al- Ishārāt wa at-Tanbihāt*, Annotated by Nasīruddin at-Tūsi, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Egypts: Daru al-Ma'ārif, 1119) Ver. Sulaiman Dunya, 4/9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*, ver. Abdullah Nūrani, (Tehran: Muassasah mutaala'ah Islami, 1434), 112

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Sina, *al- Ishārāt wa at-Tanbihāt...*, 8/774

pleasure. It may take root in them, and divert them from anything else, although it won't be as when the soul separates the body.

Accordingly, the classification of happiness takes its turn, Jiror Jehami explained it in his "*Mausū'ab Mustalahāt Ibn Sina*": the authentic happiness, the hereafter happiness and the worldly happiness.<sup>75</sup> Based on this classification, the attainment of worldly authentic happiness might be experienced by both body and soul as pleasure to know God as the only true entity in this cosmos.

Each of these kinds of happiness denotes the condition of soul and its superiority to the body, in which intellect as part of it. That is the exact reason why, soul, should find its proper happiness to attain the most authentic one, the one that requires for itself which may affect individual for its essence.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Sina noted that actually, each of body and soul has its own happiness, in which for the body, is when it experiences the pleasure based on sensual and for the soul, when it perceives the reality of things that comprehend physical and metaphysic. Therefore, for a baby who's his intellect is not in its complete stage, he doesn't feel the real pleasure, and that leads to negating the happiness in him.<sup>77</sup> Hence, it becomes obvious that happiness is the most precious thing for individual to be achieved and experienced in his life here and hereafter.

Similar description was given by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. He assured that happiness is not merely bodily pleasures. Although he doesn't deny that man would attain the zenith of his happiness in this world by fulfilling both body and soul necessities,<sup>78</sup> yet, the true, authentic, and ultimate happiness is that in which man may finally know his Creator with his intellect in the real sense "*ma'rifatullah*" and to finally lives in the promised garden for eternal.<sup>79</sup> It means that happiness comes from self-knowledge, the knowledge that one has a heart or spirit that is originally perfect but has become obscured by passions and desires. Happiness depends on the faculties: if one exercises the higher faculties

<sup>75</sup> Jiror Jehami, *Mausū'ab Mustalahāt Ibn Sina; al-Shaiḥ al-Raīs*, (Lebanon: Maktabatun Lebanon, N.Y.), 541

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 541

<sup>77</sup> Ibn Sina, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*..., 114.

<sup>78</sup> al-Ghazali, *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1982), 103.

<sup>79</sup> al-Ghazali, *al-Munqid Min al-Dhalāl*, (Beirut: Maktabah al-Asbiyah, N.Y.), 108.

i.e reason, and imagination, he will be happier than if he exercise our lower ones or mere physical pleasures.

One of the recent prominent figures on philosophy, Muhammad Naqib al-Attas noted that happiness does not only refer to physical entity of human, nor animal nor vegetative souls, nor even intellect, rather it refers to self-conviction of the true Reality i.e God. This way, when a slave acts upon what he conceives from this conviction, it'll lead him to the true and authentic happiness.<sup>80</sup>

Seeing through the whole concept of happiness defined by these experts on Islamic psychology and scholars, it's not exaggerating to be said that Ibn Sina more or less has influenced them by his systemization of the concept. It cannot be denied that having the complete system of psychology in the beginning, Ibn Sina escalated his idea of soul to its peak. This ultimate propounding of the idea was based on his knowledge that the ultimate goal of soul is to attain happiness in the hereafter. His consideration was that the physical pleasure which may cause happiness was temporary, even inward happiness.<sup>81</sup> It is intellect as the top prior of human soul which in turn would experience ultimate happiness. Since God ordered mankind to know about Him in their life-time, as the consequence, it's only intellect as part of human being that may conceive and apprehend this quest.

To sum up, the meaning of happiness according to Ibn Sina is based on pleasures experienced and perceived by both body and soul. And yet, one may attain the authentic and the true happiness when soul finally frees itself to know the essence of reality, from the barrier that holds him in this life, the body. The reality meant God.

## **b. The Comparison**

After discussing both views on the concept of happiness, it can be found that between them similarities and differentiations. On the definition of happiness, Seligman gives more practical meaning. It means that as a psychologist, his conception towards idea and concept is inclining and based on applicative approach. The result is that every

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<sup>80</sup> See S.M.N al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysic of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements and the Worldview of Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 107-109

<sup>81</sup> Ibn Sina, *al- Ishārāt wa at-Tanbihāt...*, 9.

definition he gives about the related concept is reliable and applicable. For instance, his notion of the meaning of happiness which close to Aristotle definition of *eudaimonia* is taken from his research applied to some samples.

Seeing from other perspective after being criticized by his colleague, Seligman came across some defects in his previous theory. It lead to his understanding that authentic happiness theory is one-dimensional: it is about feeling good and it claims that the way one chooses his life course is to try to maximize how he feels. Well-being theory is about all five pillars, the underpinning of the five elements is the strengths. Well-being theory is plural in method as well as substance: positive emotion is a subjective variable, defined by what one thinks and feels.

Meaning, relationships, and accomplishment have both subjective and objective components, since one can believe that he has meaning, good relations, and high accomplishment and be wrong, even deluded. The upshot of this is that well-being cannot exist just in one's own head: well-being is a combination of feeling good as well as actually having meaning, good relationships, and accomplishment. The way one chooses his course in life is to maximize all five of these elements. This difference between happiness theory and well-being theory is of real moment. Happiness theory claims that the way one makes choices is to estimate how much happiness (life satisfaction) will ensue and then he takes the course that maximizes future happiness: Maximizing happiness is the final common path of individual choice.

On the other side, Ibn Sina's definition of happiness is based on speculative thought. Nevertheless, this philosophical definition of his is based on deep research of the previous works of great philosophers combined with his exceptional wits. The result was that his concept on happiness has been used by prominent philosopher figures that came after him, from the east to the west. The intellectual optimization in knowing the reality and truth becomes his very particular idea on attainment of true and ultimate happiness. However, both figures are similar in a way that to have conviction and serve God is one of ways to achieve true happiness.

As for the source of happiness, it appears that Seligman offers the idea that coherent with his perspective of knowledge and background.

Psychologically, those sources come up as the reaction of the problems he faced before he entangled with positive psychology. Although Seligman gave the prescription of some sources, but with the same reason, it's obvious that each component of the sources is based on the cure of psychological problems he solved. The result would then may not applicable for others.

Ibn Sina however, as he also a philosopher, he brought this concept into its core and tried to elaborate the source around it. Thus, the sources of happiness he found were applicable anytime, anywhere. The consequence of course immersed from within. Not forgetting himself that he is a muslim he carried the responsibility of taking all ideas into his system of belief, Islam. The result was that the main source where mankind may attain true happiness is through the knowledge of and from God.

Beside that his method can be accessed through internet and widely spread to the global, it's no doubt that it is fair enough to give Seligman more credits for his exertion on showing the method on how to keep the bar of happiness floating even flourish it. His methods in his two latest works elaborate it. Identifying one's own signature strengths and maintaining PERMA are those methods that Seligman himself guarantee anyone will always feel happy and flourish. They worked well for many people in one nation with similar background. Yet, seeing those methods thoroughly, they may not work for many people as well, in different nation with different background. The reason is, although these methods are indeed covering the common senses. But since it based on experiments done to people with resemble worldviews, the methods feasibility is still questioned.

On the other hand, Ibn Sina's given methods are rotating around idea that based on observations and contemplations. To put them in practice might need some huge efforts for most people, especially for those who are not really into reading some heavy philosophical scriptures in the first place. But these methods appear to be acceptable concerning the dialectical-spirituality. The result is that these methods are more applicable to those who expect non-materialism result of happiness.



## **Conclusion**

This work is an attempt to see both views of Martin Seligman, as a current leading psychologists, and Avicenna as a Muslim polymath includes psychologist, to speak about happiness; ontologically and epistemologically. Ontologically, both are in the same boat, for the idea that it is human the soul which experiences happiness, either temporary or eternal.

As for epistemology, they do have some differences relating to their differences of intellectual background and worldview. For Seligman, as his approach on this matter was secular scientific, as such, is the result. The agenda of positive psychology that he carried out was not exactly negating the existence of the metaphysical realm; it's exclusion of God as the creator of this whole universe. The result was rather inclining towards putting God aside of his agenda by still considering Him to be something bigger than mankind. In turn, God is the completion of the whole efforts to attain authentic happiness. But since he does not believe in the afterlife, so everything he formulated as keys or and methods to attain this kind of happiness is limited to this temporary worldly life, despite the fact that the formulas are well applicable for certain people with the same lifestyle.

Nevertheless he has undoubtedly given wise words and insight for people to not always chase happiness, because one doesn't have to be always happy every single day. Misery is a good component to face in life in order to balance happiness as well as a medium to reach it. Flourishing does not mean to always be in a happy state forever, rather pursuing flow states, and serve something bigger than himself. In short, his concept of well-being is multi-dimensional; there are many parts to it. So one should understand himself and his core strengths, and use them every day to get to know more of the meaning of life.

However, Avicenna has a more advanced theory and concept for this happiness, considering his time and place where he lived. The result of his approach on the related concept exceeded this temporary life, emerging with the afterlife. Even though the ways he offered to attain the ultimate happiness seemed to be sophisticated for some people. It appeared to be more philosophically and spiritual discussed. Which in

fact, the stages to reach absolute happiness are needed to be elaborated on in details for most people.

To be more accepting of anything that happens in life while always endeavoring to be the best one can be, might be the other similarity and agreement between both. For Seligman, it's related to the passage of time; past, present and future. It is to make peace with each of them so one may always use his peculiar strength to flourish. As for Avicenna, acceptance is the first step towards true happiness so one may achieve better understanding of himself and his God.

After discussing both figures and each of their views of the related matter, it is found that their conceptions may complete each other. While Seligman gives people such a complete method on how to attain true happiness in this life with scientific and more applicable method, Avicenna on the other hand furnishes and idealizes the idea of the entire concept with more philosophical thought. That way, both authentic and ultimate happiness in this temporary life and the next would be definitely attained.

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