

# The Ethical Philosophy of Eudaimonism by Ibn Sina Based on An-Nakhjuwānī's Work *Syarḥ al-Isyārāt*

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## Abstract

*This article examines a branch of philosophy that answers practical questions about human action concerning their values, principles and norms that determine whether an action is appropriate or not, good or not, beneficial or not for oneself, namely ethics. The problem is that in many classical literatures, this branch of ethics always discusses happiness or eudaimonism; that is, the extent to which one's understanding of happiness, pleasure, and enjoyment is achieved. The question is what is the relationship between happiness and ethics, and why is it an important issue? The research originating from the textual study of two manuscript texts, namely Akmaluddīn an-Nakhjuwānī's work entitled "Syarḥ al-Isyārāt" on Ibn Sīnā's work entitled "Al-Isyārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt," will address this issue by analyzing the content within the texts. The results of this study reveal that the ethical philosophy presented is deeply influenced by Islamic nuances, although the Peripatetic tradition is also strongly present in its perspective. It can be said that the described concept of ethics is highly eschatological. As an implication, an-Nakhjuwānī's ethical philosophy also reveals the spiritual side of Ibn Sīnā, who is generally known as a highly rational philosopher. This research also uncovers that an-Nakhjuwānī's ethical discourse displays more religious terms compared to Ibn Sīnā.*

**Keywords:** *An-Nakhjuwānī, Ethical Philosophy, Eudaimonism, Ibn Sīnā.*

## Abstrak

*Artikel ini meneliti tentang salah satu cabang filsafat yang menjawab pertanyaan praktis tentang tindakan manusia yang menyangkut nilai, prinsip, dan norma mereka yang menentukan pantas atau tidaknya suatu tindakan, baik atau tidak, bermanfaat atau tidak bagi diri sendiri, yaitu etika. Masalahnya, dalam banyak literatur klasik, cabang etika ini selalu membicarakan tentang kebahagiaan atau eudaimonism; yakni sejauhmana pemahaman kebahagiaan, kenikmatan, kesenangan seseorang dicapai. Lalu apa hubungan kebahagiaan dengan etika dan mengapa itu menjadi isu penting? Penelitian yang berasal dari kajian teks atas dua naskah manuskrip karya syarahan Akmaluddīn an-Nakhjuwānī yang berjudul Syarḥ al-Isyārāt terhadap karya Ibn Sīnā yang berjudul Al-Isyārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt ini akan mengulas masalah ini, dengan menganalisis isi pada teks tersebut. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa filsafat etika yang dipaparkannya sangat kental nuansa keislamanannya walaupun cara pandang tradisi Peripatetik-nya sangat kuat. Bisa dikatakan bahwa konsep etika yang dijelaskan adalah sangat eskatologis. Implikasinya, tulisan filsafat etika an-Nakhjuwānī ini turut mengungkap sisi spiritual Ibn Sīnā yang biasanya dikenal seorang filosof yang sangat rasional. Penelitian ini juga mengungkap bahwa dalam uraian etika an-Nakhjuwānī lebih terlibat terma-terma agamanya dibanding Ibn Sīnā.*

**Kata Kunci:** *An-Nakhjuwānī, Eudaimonisme, Filsafat Etika, Ibn Sina.*

## Introduction

Ethical philosophy is a practical philosophy concerning the concepts of good and bad, permissible and impermissible, valuable and valueless actions performed by humans.<sup>1</sup> However, since Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in Greek, to Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, and Ibn Sīnā in the Islamic era, they have always discussed happiness when addressing ethics. Ibn Sīnā, whose philosophical focus lies in Aristotelianism, reaffirmed his eudaimonistic ethics in one of his monumental work, *Al-Isyārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*. He emphasized the ethical perspective in the fourth section of the book, titled by Sulaymān Dunyā as *al-Tasawwuf*.<sup>2</sup> In his work, Ibn Sīnā elaborated on happiness through three sections: The first section discusses the

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Lacey, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 103. See also at G E Moore, *Ethics*, ed. William H. Shaw (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Isyārāt Wa Al-Tanbīhāt*, ed. Sulyman Dunya (Cairo: Dar al- Ma'arif, 1994).

fundamental concept of happiness. The second section explores the three levels of achieving happiness, namely the worshipers (*ʿābid*), the ascetics (*ṣābiḥ*), and the knowledgeable (*ʿarif*). The third section delves into the secrets of those who have attained true happiness. Ibn Sīnā's exploration of eudaimonistic ethics was later elucidated by Akmaluddīn an-Nakhjuwānī, a physician and philosopher during the late Seljuk Sultanate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in his work titled *Syarḥ al-Isyārāt*.

This work still exists in two manuscripts preserved in the Nuruosmaniye library, a manuscript library adjacent to the Sulaymaniyyah Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey. The first manuscript is a handwritten text by Akmaluddīn an-Nakhjuwānī himself in the year 1302 AD / 701 AH (No. 0875), and the second manuscript was copied by Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Maḥmūd al-Rāzī in the year 1303 AD / 702 AH (No. 2689). These two manuscripts have been researched in a dissertation at the Institute of Social Sciences, Suleyman Demirel University, Turkey, in 2019.<sup>3</sup> Through the study of those manuscripts, research on Ibn Sīnā's ethical philosophy will be further explored. The focus will be on the latter part of the manuscript, specifically on the topic of ethics and the fundamental concept of happiness.<sup>4</sup> An-Nakhjuwani's *Syarḥ al-Isyārāt* unveils the complexity of knowledge during the decline of the Seljuk Dynasty. It is like sending a message to the researchers that the political situation is not directly related to the state of scholarship.

Additionally, this work helps bring to light the fact that Ibn Sina's scientific works were highly influential in that time, with many scholars providing commentaries on them. Equally important, this An-Nakhjuwani's work bridges the gap between the perception that Ibn Sina was excessively rationalistic, lacking a strong foundation in religion, and the notion that Ibn Sina's critics, particularly

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<sup>3</sup> Akhmad Rofii Damyati, "Ekmeleddîn En-Nahcuvânî'nin Şerhu'lişârât Adli Eserinin Tahkik ve Tahlilî", Doctoral Dissertation (Isparta: Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, 2019), pp. 163-436. Damyati, 163-436.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp. 372-390.

Al-Ghazali, completely dismantled philosophy, especially after Al-Ghazali's critics upon philosophers. In reality, by exploring An-Nakhjuwani's work, particularly in the context of ethics, Ibn Sina's philosophical thought becomes highly compatible with religion and increasingly widely accepted. For these reasons, this research becomes essential for researchers in the field of Islamic philosophy.

Recent research on Ibn Sina's ethical philosophy has been extensively conducted, especially in recent years. However, research on An-Nakhjuwani's interpretation of Ibn Sina's ethical philosophy concept is still lacking as of the time this article is being written. Just to mention a few examples of research related to Ibn Sina's ethical thought, there is the book by Janne Mattila titled *The Eudaimonist Ethics of al-Fārābī and Avicenna*. In this book, Ibn Sina is depicted as a philosopher who remains consistent with an ethical theory that cannot simply be seen as a mere adaptation from ancient Greek thought. On the contrary, Ibn Sina is considered to have developed a complex theory that blends Greek philosophy with Islamic philosophy. The book also concludes that his ethical concept cannot be separated from concepts of psychology, cosmology, and metaphysics.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Ibn Sina also developed a concept that in contemporary ethical discourse is referred to as "metaethics".

This might be similar to the research conducted by Ismail Lala et. al. in the article titled "Transcendental Happiness in the Thought of Ibn Sina and Ibn 'Arabi," which explores the concept of transcendental happiness in philosophy by comparing Ibn Sina and Ibn Arabi. The result shows that in the context of ethics, a person's true happiness cannot be separated from the concept of emanation that involves the Creator and the created. According to this research, similar to Ibn Sina's position, it is concluded that transcendental happiness requires the divestment of materiality, which corresponds to the concept referred to as "metaethics"

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<sup>5</sup> Janne Mattila, *The Eudaimonist Ethics of Al-Fārābī and Avicenna* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

above.<sup>6</sup> Metaethics, when translated into action, is what is needed in education, especially in character education. This aligns with the research findings of Nurul Ain Norman in her article titled “Ibn Sina’s Theory of The Soul: A Taxonomy of Islamic Education,” which examines the urgency of Ibn Sina’s ethical concept from a psychological perspective in the context of Islamic education.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, this ethical concept should be used as a reference in building the character of a nation, as depicted in the research by Mohd Hasrul Shuhari et al., in their article titled “An Ethical Aspect Of Character Building: Ibn Sina’s Perspective.” The research presents Ibn Sina’s ethical concept as one of the proposals for fostering the character of the Malaysian society from an early age.<sup>8</sup> All of these align with the research conducted by Senata Adi Prasetia et al., in their article titled “Ibn Sina’s Psychology: The Substantiation of Soul Values in Islamic Education.” The research presents that the spiritual substance within the soul will inspire the actual world of human beings, including self-education in transforming real life.

According to this study, psychological aspects will significantly contribute to guiding students towards becoming complete human beings (*insān kāmil*).<sup>9</sup> As for the research on An-Nakhjuwani’s thought, there are only two works available. The first is a doctoral dissertation at Suleyman Demirel University, Turkey, in 2019, titled *Ekmeleddîn En-Nahcuvânî'nin Şerhu'l-İsyârât Adli Eserinin Tabkik ve Tablîli* (A Critical Edition and Analysis of Ekmeleddîn En-Nahcuvânî’s

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<sup>6</sup> Ismail Lala, et. al., “Transcendental Happiness in the Thought of Ibn Sina and Farabi,” *Religions*, Vol. 14, No. 729 (2023), pp. 1–20.

<sup>7</sup> Nurul Ain Norman, “Ibn Sina’s Theory of the Soul: A Taxonomy of Islamic Education”, *ICR Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2021), pp. 275–289.

<sup>8</sup> Mohd Hasrul Shuhari, et. al., “An Ethical Aspect of Character Building: Ibn Sina’s Perspective,” *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2019), pp. 1–5.

<sup>9</sup> Senata Adi Prasetia, et. al., “Ibn Sina’s Psychology: The Substantiation of Soul Values in Islamic Education,” *Attarbiyah: Journal of Islamic Culture and Education*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2022), pp. 171-189.

Commentary on al-Isyārāt). The second is an article published in the *Tasfiyah* journal in 2018, titled “Akmaluddin Al-Nahjuwani dan Kitab Syarhu al-Isyarat” (Akmaluddin Al-Nahjuwani and the Book of Syarhu al-Isyarat).<sup>10</sup> Neither of them discusses the ethical aspect of Ibn Sina, let alone his eudaimonism philosophy.

## Discussion

### Examining the Greek Ethical Tradition

Before elaborating further, it is necessary to examine the trends of ethical philosophy in Greek, which can be considered as influenced by Socrates-Plato-Aristotelianism. So far, the developed ethical philosophy is based on the concept of wisdom, which gives birth to virtues that, in practice, lead to happiness. Through internalized wisdom, individuals develop good character traits and ultimately achieve a meaningful happiness, which is the ultimate goal of human life. With the desire to attain this happiness, individuals think and act seriously to realize their aspirations and act in accordance with ethical instincts. This ethical framework known as *eudaimonia* (Greek: εὐδαιμονία) in the Greek tradition, which refers to the ethics of happiness, as Aristotle explained.<sup>11</sup>

In Plato’s Republic, as a means to explain Socrates’ ideas, Plato emphasized that an ideal state must begin with individuals who have first come to know and practice commendable wisdom. This is because individuals are a reflection of society. In other words, the virtues present in society must be referred back to those individuals who have successfully acted justly towards themselves, their souls, and their bodies. Thus, the theme of “happiness” becomes important here. According to Plato, through Socrates’ philosophy, happiness is achieved by following virtue, and it is not

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<sup>10</sup> Akhmad Rofii Damyati, “Akmaluddin Al-Nahjuwani Dan Kitab Syarhu Al-Isyarat,” *Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2018), pp. 75–96.

<sup>11</sup> Aristoteles, *The Eudemonian Ethics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter L. P. Simpson (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publisher; Transaction Publisher, 2013).

merely about external self-care but rather self-management on an internal level.<sup>12</sup>

Aristotle, in his work *The Nicomachean Ethics*, states that indeed people differ in their views on happiness, which serves as the foundation of ethics. Some are oriented towards external matters such as pleasure, wealth, and honor. For the sick, happiness lies in good health; for the poor, happiness lies in wealth; for the dishonored, happiness lies in honor. However, all of these external happiness are not genuine in nature. If they were to serve as the basis of ethics, it would result in an ethics of an animalistic nature. According to Aristotle, there is a genuine happiness beyond these animalistic aspects, and that is when a person achieves the highest virtue. This virtue refers to those who are able to act justly and wisely towards themselves (*al-Mu'tadil al-Ḥākim li Nafsihī*).<sup>13</sup>

From their philosophical traditions, it is evident that ethical discussions among them are always related to the concept of happiness. Muslim philosophers who absorbed Greek philosophy, such as Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, and Ibn Sīnā, were also not far from this concept of happiness. This is because the philosophical tradition that developed during that time was still closely tied to the traditions of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, although its development naturally had more diversity and Islamic elements, particularly in the hands of Muslim philosophers.

An-Nakhjuwānī, because he indeed wrote a commentary on Ibn Sīnā's book *Al-Isyārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, also follows the course of Ibn Sīnā's exposition, which starts the discussion of ethics by elaborating on this concept of happiness. In his elaboration of Ibn Sīnā's book, Quranic terms are frequently used to enrich and evaluate Ibn Sīnā's thoughts. After discussing happiness, the concept of the human soul as the agent of that happiness becomes highly

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<sup>12</sup> Francis Macdonald Conford, *The Republic of Plato* (New York, London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 139.

<sup>13</sup> Aristoteles, *Al-Akhlāq Ilā Niqūmākubūs*, Tr. Aḥmad Luṭfi al-Sayyid (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1924), vol. 1, p. 194.

important. It is within this concept of the soul that the concept of ethics in *masyriqī* (Eastern) philosophy gains momentum, as this ethics of happiness converges with the spiritual concepts of Islam. Consequently, this implies the convergence of the “ocean” of philosophy and Sufism. Therefore, it is not surprising that Sulaymān Dunyā titled Ibn Sīnā’s book on ethics with “tasawwuf” (Sufism), as the terminology used by Ibn Sīnā carries a strong Sufi influence.<sup>14</sup> Sulayman Dunya’s argument is quite reasonable, as if we observe closely, there is a convergence between three important disciplines in Islam: Sufism, theology (*kalam*), and philosophy.<sup>15</sup> Ibn Sina, as a philosopher, cannot be separated from the issue of Sufism, especially when discussing ethics.

### Interpreting Happiness

In constructing the concept of ethics, An-Nakhjuwānī needs to evaluate the perspectives of various schools of thought regarding happiness, just as Ibn Sīnā also critiques them. According to An-Nakhjuwānī, there are several groups of perspectives on happiness. First, there are those who view happiness merely as physical pleasure. Second, there are those who believe that honor constitutes happiness. Third, there are those who maintain that happiness is attained through intellectual satisfaction. From these perspectives, An-Nakhjuwānī concludes that the differences in understanding happiness lie in the acceptance or rejection of the notion of an afterlife (*al-Ma’ād*).<sup>16</sup> If one does not accept the idea

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<sup>14</sup> Ibn Sina, *Al-Isyarat Wa Al-Tanbihat*, vol. 5; Shams C Inati, “Remarks and Admonitions Mysticism: Part IV: Mysticism” (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Andi Eka Putra, “Tasawuf, Ilmu Kalam, Dan Filsafat Islam (Suatu Tinjauan Sejarah Tentang Hubungan Ketiganya),” *Al-Adyan* 7, no. 2 (2012): 91–102.

<sup>16</sup> The concept of *ma’ād* is usually associated with the concept of *mabda’*. *Mabda’* refers to the principle or beginning of existence, which is commonly known as al-Wajib al-Wujud, that is, Allah. On the other hand, *ma’ād* refers to the ultimate return of all existence to this First Principle. For more details, refer to Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Mabda’ Wa Al-Ma’ād*, ed. Abdullah Nūrānī (Tehran: Tehran University, 1984); see also Assistant Teacher, “Reflection of Islamic Metaphysics In The Works of Ibn Sina,” *American*



of an afterlife, they will consider all forms of pleasure to be limited to worldly matters. Conversely, if they acknowledge the existence of a return after death, then there is another form of pleasure beyond worldly enjoyment.

Therefore, An-Nakhjuwānī divides the perspectives on happiness into three groups: (1) happiness oriented towards physical pleasure, (2) happiness oriented towards reason and spirit or spirituality, and (3) pleasure oriented towards both simultaneously. Here, An-Nakhjuwānī mentions reason and spirit in the same category. It can be interpreted that An-Nakhjuwānī envisions reason and spirit as closely related and important instruments for the highest happiness. Reason (*‘aql*) and spirit (*rūḥ*) both serve as internal instruments of humans, alongside the heart (*qalb*) and soul (*nafs*), where the spirit functions to appreciate spiritual matters.<sup>17</sup>

From the above conclusions, several groups of schools of thought on happiness can be further detailed as follows: (1) Pure materialists, who only accept happiness if it takes the form of material things that can be sensed by their senses. This group completely denies and does not accept the existence of an afterlife (*ma‘ād*) as Ibn Sīnā conveyed; (2) Those who acknowledge *ma‘ād*, but their perspective is mundane, where their orientation remains

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*Journal of Pedagogical and Educational Research* 8, no. Jan., 2023 (2023): 48–51.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Ghazālī extensively explains the internal instrument of the human being in his book *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, where he places the heart as the entity that should rightfully govern the self of a person. Al-Ghazālī states that the heart has soldiers, both visible and invisible. All of them should be directed and regulated in accordance with their inherent nature of creation. This is because all the soldiers in the human body were created to obey the instructions of the heart. Whoever succeeds in managing them is truly spiritually wise. See further Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn: Kitāb ‘Ajāib Al-Qalb* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011); Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, Prolegomena to The Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2001). In the contemporary context, those spiritual terms become an integral part of the development of Islamic psychotherapy. See further Shahril Nizam Zulkipli, et. Al., “The Development Theory of Al-‘Aql, Al-Qalb and al-Nafs in Islamic Psychotherapy”, *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, Vol. 12, No. 11, 2022, pp. 2435-2449.

in the world; (3) Those who acknowledge *ma'ād*, but for them, happiness is solely based on rationality. We often find people like this among Aristotelian philosophers who feel they have reached the peak of happiness when they can rationalize their views and even defeat other people's arguments; (4) Those who acknowledge *ma'ād*, but for them, happiness should be based solely on spirituality. People like this may not be rational at times, but they feel happier because they find happiness at the spiritual level; (5) Those who acknowledge *ma'ād* and recognize all types of happiness, whether physical or non-physical, intellectual or spiritual. Of course, what An-Nakhjuwānī means here is intellectual-spiritual happiness, where they truly understand divine wisdom, both external and internal. As Al-Ghazālī conveyed, intellectual-spiritual is the true essence of human substance (*ḥaqīqah jamhar al-insān*). The others are foreign to them.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the last group is the safest group in An-Nakhjuwānī's view. This group can certainly reject the perspective that limits happiness solely to physical form. For ordinary people, material pleasure is the closest and most easily directly experienced pleasure. Therefore, ordinary people consider it as the strongest pleasure in their minds. However, as Ibn Sīnā conveyed in various arguments, it turns out that material pleasure is very weak and easily overlooked in the presence of other non-physical pleasures. Ibn Sīnā presented several cases as evidence of how weak physical pleasure can be. Firstly, if someone is engrossed in playing chess and is offered food or even something with a sexual connotation, they would reject it because their desire is to win the chess game.

Secondly, when the pleasure of food or sexuality is right in front of them, but they can resist it because there is someone they cherish. Thirdly, when the food pleasure is ready to be eaten, but there is someone else who needs it more and is highly respected by

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<sup>18</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Kimīyā' Al-Sa'ādah*, ed. Najāḥ 'Iwād (Cairo: Dār al-Maqtam, 2010), p. 24.

everyone, so this person refrains from indulging and gives the food to that person. All of these demonstrate that material pleasure can be overcome by the desire to win, in the case of the first scenario, which is an imaginative pleasure; by a sense of respect and honor, in the case of the second scenario, which is another unseen pleasure; and by the desire to give, in the case of the third scenario, which is the pleasure within the generous soul of someone. From these three cases, it can be proven that the material pleasure experienced by humans in their daily lives is easily overshadowed by other non-material pleasures.<sup>19</sup>

Both at the level of physical pleasure, imaginative pleasure, and intellectual pleasure, pleasure will be present when two conditions are fulfilled, as Ibn Sīnā stated. Firstly, understanding (*idrāk*), and secondly, attainment (*naḥl*). According to An-Nakhjuwānī, the understanding of individuals varies and is diverse. That is why he refers to it as a genus (*al-jins*). There is a gradation in the use of their understanding, ranging from not using it at all to using it to the maximum. Therefore, the attained pleasure will also vary. In fact, the attainment can be the opposite, which is suffering or displeasure (*alam*). Even if a pleasure has been attained but not understood by someone, it still does not yield happiness. For example, if there is water in front of someone but he is not thirsty, his instrument of understanding (*idrāk*) does not recognize the pleasure in that water. Moreover, the water can become a disaster when there is an excess, such as in the case of a flood. Or if their understanding already recognizes the sense of need or thirst, but there is no water, then

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<sup>19</sup> Compare with Al-Ghazālī's arguments in his proof of prophethood. To prove the truth of prophethood, Al-Ghazālī examines each of the human knowledge instruments, starting from the five senses, imagination, reason, and up to spiritual capabilities. It is concluded that the experience of prophethood is the highest attainment. This is because at this level of experience, one can directly witness (*muṣyāhadah*) the truth. In contrast, the achievements of other instruments all have limitations, with the most limited being the achievements of the five senses. For further details, refer Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Munqidz Min Al-Dalāl Wa Al-Muṣiḥ Bi Al-Aḥwāl* (Beirut, 2015), pp. 110-116..

the pleasure of that water is also not achieved. And this means that the second condition is also absent; the pleasure of water is absent from them. This illustrates the mutual symbiosis between the instrument of recognition and its object.

There is an additional condition for pleasure to be truly achieved, which is not being occupied with something else (*syāghīl*). For example, the sense of thirst is already present, and the water to be consumed is also available, so the enjoyment of that water should have been attained. However, if one is preoccupied with something else and it disrupts, such as being in a chaotic war situation, there is no time to drink the water. In this case, it can be guaranteed that the pleasure of the water is also absent from him. Pleasure also cannot be present if there is something contrasting with that pleasure (*maḍād*), thus becoming an obstacle to the arrival of that pleasure. For instance, if the water is ready to be consumed, but their tongue is in pain, then the pleasure of quenching thirst, which sometimes turns into a disaster, is overshadowed by the bitter sensation that permeates their tongue.

So it can be concluded that a pleasure is truly considered pleasurable when it can be understood, obtained, free from disturbance, and without any obstacles. All of this applies to all instruments of human knowledge, whether at the level of external senses, internal senses, intellectual faculties, or spiritual faculties. All the instruments of knowledge that serve as tools to detect happiness are already available within human beings. Therefore, the conditions for achieving human happiness depend on the individual, whether they have the will or not. It is evident here that the potential of each individual in the process of attaining their respective perfection is equally possible.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Compare with Immanuel Kant's concept of Deontological Ethics, which states that something is considered good because humans are obligated (*deon*) to fulfill their duty as human beings to do good. According to Kant, human actions are motivated by underlying motives. All of this is attributed to the credibility of one's soul, not the usefulness of the object itself. On the contrary, the utilitarianism school of thought,

## Intellectual Happiness

Intellectual happiness is happiness that surpasses physical happiness. This is because the intellectual realm is no longer partial, limited, or temporary like the physical realm of human senses. The intellectual realm is a substantial angel, as Al-Ghazālī said.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, to attain true happiness, human beings must go through that internal instrument which is impartial, timeless, and limitless, namely intellect. Since intellect is higher than the senses, the happiness experienced at the sensory level will be perceived by intellect and not vice versa. Thus, by acknowledging the possibility of happiness transcending the senses, the door to intellectual happiness is opened, where reason becomes its recognizing instrument. According to An-Nakhjuwānī, the way to define it can be done using the framework of defining bodily happiness, where intellectual happiness involves the subject as the perceiver (*mudrik*), the object perceived as it is (*mudrak min haytsu huwa*), understood through the process of comprehension (*idrāk*), attainable (*nayl*), free from disturbance or anything contrasting with it (*syāghbil* and *taḍād*).

The aforementioned definition will be encountered by an individual who achieves the task of purifying the soul. As we know, ethical philosophy is essentially a practical philosophy that discusses the process of the soul's ascent through the steps of happiness. An-Nakhjuwānī conveys that the attainment of intellectual pleasure is the most perfect pleasure that can be achieved by the human

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like Jeremy Bentham, argues that the goodness of an action is determined by its object, namely the utility or usefulness inherent in the object itself. See Immanuel Kant, "Section I: Transition from from Common Rational to Philosophical Moral Cognition", *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907); see also Abderrahmane Benlahcene et. al., "A Narrative Review Of Ethics Theories: Teleological and Deontological Ethics", *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 23, Issue 7, Ver. 6 (July. 2018) PP 31-38.

<sup>21</sup> The arabic text is: *jawbar 'aḥḍar min jins al-malā'ikah*, see Al-Ghazālī, *Kimīyā' Al-Sa'ādah*, p.25.

soul. In this highest achievement, the substance of human reason can perceive the apparent truth, which is Allah, to the extent that is attainable.<sup>22</sup> This is because the attainment of perfect happiness at this level has no peak. This is because Allah is the Infinitely Unlimited; the perfection and beauty of Allah cannot be limited by anything. Therefore, each individual's attainment will be greatly different. Due to Allah's absolute perfection and boundlessness, it stands in contrast to the physically limited world.

The high substance (*al-jawhar al-ʿāliyah*) experiences a descent or degradation to the level of the world in the form of perfection and beauty, and when a person encounters Allah's perfection and beauty, that is when the experience of intellectual-spiritual happiness is felt. In Sufi literature, when someone encounters the beauty and perfection of Allah, they will perceive the true truths of His divine manifestation (*tajallī*), and they will adorn themselves with the beauties that He loves (*taḥallī*), which in philosophy is referred to as imitating the actions of Allah (*attasyabbub*), as conveyed by Al-Tahānawī.<sup>23</sup> Someone who has reached this stage means that the High Substance (*al-jawhar al-ʿāliyah*) is already present, and every individual, without exception, has been equally endowed with their potential by Allah.

If the potential to attain the presence of the High Substance is already available, it is possible for a person's soul to achieve it, but the pleasure at that level has not yet been experienced. An-Nakhjuwānī explains that this may be because the soul lacks preparation (*ʿadam al-stiʿād*) to attain it. In other words, such individuals do not exert effort to maximize the potential that Allah has provided within their souls. However, in reality, every individual

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<sup>22</sup> This view is similar to the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) regarding *iḥsān*, which is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then surely He sees you. For a detailed explanation, refer to Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId's explanation, *Syarḥ Al-Arbaʿīn Al-Nawāwīyah Fī Al-Aḥādīth Al-Ṣaḥīḥah Al-Nabawīyah* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Rayyān, 2003), p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Ali Al-Tahanawī, *Kasysyaf Istilabat al-funun wa al-ʿUlum*, ed. Ali Dahruj (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan Nasyirun, 1996), vol. 2, p. 1287.

has different inclinations. Some are inclined towards momentary pleasures, considering physical things as enjoyable, as mentioned in the first group above, and this is the majority in human life. The readiness of individuals for momentary pleasures is referred to as *al-isti'dād al-qarīb* by Ibn Sīnā. On the other hand, there are those who have prepared themselves to attain non-transient pleasures and seek higher enjoyment. They make every effort to realize their desires and make the necessary preparations. In this context, it is referred to as *al-isti'dād al-ba'īd*.

In the philosophical context, these preparations involve maximizing one's perspective or intellectual acuity in welcoming divine light. According to Ibn Sīnā, the more a person increases their intellectual capacity to receive this divine light, the higher their readiness to attain happiness (*tsumma kullamā izdāda al-na'ir istibsyāran izdāda li al-sa'ādah isti'dadan*).<sup>24</sup> Therefore, a person who does not exert effort to make the necessary preparations will not experience the intended pleasure, even though they may mistakenly believe that they have reached that pleasure. An-Nakhjuwānī states that individuals who lack such efforts may be due to negligence, unwillingness, or rejection, such as materialists, idealists, nihilists, and others who all reject human attainment at non-physical levels. Plato illustrates this with the allegory of prisoners in a cave, where their vision is limited to the objects in front of them, occasionally seeing passing shadows reflected by the light of a fire behind them, without realizing it. If these prisoners were reminded, they would consider the reminder to be false. This is the condition of the souls whose understanding is confined to physical things; they will not appreciate anything beyond the physical, including happiness.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Syifā: Al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. Said Zayed Muhammad Yusuf, Sulayman Dunya (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-'Ammah li Syu'ūn al-Maṭabi' al-Āmiriyyah, 1960), vol. 2, p. 429.

<sup>25</sup> For more comprehensive illustration of Plato's ideas, refer to Plato, "The Allegory of The Cave", *The Republic of Plato*, tr. Francis Macdonald Conford (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1945); Vassilis Karasmanis, "Plato's Republic: The Line and The Cave", *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and*

A person who is reluctant to pursue pleasures beyond the material realm will eventually forget and not experience longing (*syawq*) and love (*'isyq*) for that ultimate happiness, thus completely disregarding the perfection of their intellect (*kamāl al-'aql*). Ideally, someone who puts forth maximum effort to attain such a high level will have a longing and affection for what lies within it (*fay'āra labū syawq ilā mā hunāka wa 'isyq ilā mā hunāka*), and ultimately, they will be unwilling to turn towards the opposite (*fasyaddabū 'an al-iltifāt ilā mā khalfabū jumlatan*).

An-Nakhjuwānī confirms that individuals who are unprepared for this high level and whose longing is only for what is low will experience misery (*alam*), both while their soul and body are still united (*ḥālah 'adam al-mufāraqah*) and after the separation of the soul from the body (*ḥālah al-mufāraqah*). Dependence and bondage to worldly pleasures make the soul suffer, and this suffering persists even in the hereafter. Therefore, true happiness at the high level can be achieved by eliminating these bonds. The unequal attainment of human beings, once again, is due to unequal preparation. If the preparation is maximal (*al-isti'dād al-tām*), then high-level happiness will be attained. However, if the preparation is deficient (*al-isti'dād al-nāqis*), then the achievement will not be maximal.

Just as Ibn Sīnā conceived of happiness, An-Nakhjuwānī also explains that the state of the soul with maximum readiness is attained through the knowledge of wisdom, as well as understanding the secrets of creation and knowing the principles and ultimate return (*wa al-isti'dād al-tām yahsul bi faḍail al-ḥikamiyyah al-muḥaqqaqah wa al-ittilā' 'alā sirr al-'ijād wa ma'rifah al-mabda' wa al-ma'ād*). A soul in this state should embody the morals of Allah, which means emulating Allah in the endeavor to delve deep into knowledge and purifying oneself from the grip of the body to the utmost extent.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, as Ibn Sīnā stated, when one follows this path of ethics,

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*Science*, Volume 21, No. 3, 04 March 2011, pp. 147-172.

<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Syarif Al-Jurjani, *Al-Ta'rifat* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan, 1985), p. 174.



the soul will develop habits that effortlessly give rise to various activities without the need for prior deliberation (*malakah yaṣdur bihā min al-nafs af'alun ma bi subūlah min ghayri taqaddumi ru'yah*).<sup>27</sup>

Such is only the saved soul, as An-Nakhjuwānī explains, a soul that is free from destructive vices, not immersed in bodily desires. This kind of soul is the one that preserves its innate purity and makes it the foundation for the attainment of its spiritual perfection. The *fiṭrah* (natural disposition) is easily overshadowed by the interests of the body (*syahwah*). If that situation happens, this kind of soul may forget its true origin. According to An-Nakhjuwānī, the material world can become a veil that covers the *fiṭrah* and obstructs intellectual delight. A soul that is engulfed in constantly indulging its desires is unwilling to pursue perfection at higher levels.

However, in An-Nakhjuwānī's view, even a foolish person who, despite their ignorance, still believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment, affirms the Prophet and follows the religious law, can be considered a pure fool and still deserving of happiness in the afterlife. From here it seems that An-Nakhjuwānī's stance reflects his position as a theologian rather than a philosopher. While a philosopher is portrayed as someone who purely employs reason as the analytical tool for truth, a theologian departs from revelation to determine truth. In Islam, regardless of a person's level of ignorance, as long as they have faith, they are still deserving of happiness.

### Three Types of Soul Conditions

From the explanations above, An-Nakhjuwānī concludes that the condition of the human soul can be divided into three types. First, the soul that exists at the highest level of *'irfan* (mystical knowledge). Second, the soul that is disbelieving and indulges in sinful behavior, with its desires constantly inclined towards

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<sup>27</sup> Sinā, *Al-Syifā: Al-Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 429.

animalistic behavior and the corruption of its own soul. Third, the soul that oscillates between the two aforementioned types of souls. Thus, the longing (*syawq*) of the soul towards the desired object depends greatly on the type of soul. If there is an effort to reach the higher levels of spiritual realization (*irfan*), then the soul's longing for the Most High will be awakened. This, of course, requires cleansing the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) from all negative qualities (*radzāil*). Those who successfully rid themselves of these negative traits are at the highest level among human souls. They attain virtue through their own wisdom and exhibit a divine-like behavior in their lives. Such individuals will have a keen perspective even before their physical death, as mentioned by Allah in the Quran.<sup>28</sup> The soul whose longing has reached its true perfection will be enveloped in a feeling of love (*'isyq*) for that perfection. In the context of happiness, Ibn Sina's school of thought on happiness is the realization of the perfection of knowledge and reasoning.<sup>29</sup>

Conversely, the soul that is entangled in negative qualities and makes no effort or refuses to cleanse itself, its longing is not directed towards intellectual-spiritual matters, but towards animalistic traits and vices. It does not even long for true perfection, let alone love it. Therefore, according to An-Nakhjuwānī, such a soul is at the lowest level. However, there are souls whose longing fluctuates between their carnal desires and the pull towards purifying their souls. These souls come in various forms, which Ibn Sina referred to as souls oscillating between the call of divinity and worldliness (*bayna jihatay al-rubūbiyyah wa al-safālah*).

## Evaluation

From An-Nakhjuwānī's explanation of Ibn Sina's ethical philosophy above, it is evident that the discussion is predominantly

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<sup>28</sup> See the Quran, Surah Qaf [50: 22], which means: "Indeed, you were heedless of this, so We have removed from you your cover, so your sight, this Day, is sharp."

<sup>29</sup> Norman, "Ibn Sina's Theory of the Soul: A Taxonomy of Islamic Education."

focused on the concept of happiness experienced by individuals. It can be understood that the discussion of happiness is inevitable because there is no human being who does not desire happiness. As the desire for happiness in humans is unavoidable, their actions inevitably aim towards the achievement of their happiness. It is these efforts that give rise to ethics, which are characterized by virtuous, worthy, valuable, moral, and character-driven actions.

The details of ethics will emerge when virtues exist within an individual's actions. Virtues, in this context, refer to wisdom that has manifested as behavioral outcomes, automatically reflected in everyday life. Therefore, Ibn Sīnā's explanation, presented through An-Nakhjuwānī's discourse, becomes significant as a foundation for more detailed ethical theories, particularly those related to theories of the human soul that have successfully attained a high level.

In An-Nakhjuwānī's elaboration, there appears to be a more religious tone compared to Ibn Sīnā. His thoughts are scattered with terms heavily influenced by the language of the Quran, such as *itsār*, *ākhirah*, *fajir*, *kāfir*, and *muslim*. It is not uncommon for him to quote verses from the Quran and hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is quite understandable since, despite being a philosopher following the Ma'thuridi school, he lived after Al-Ghazālī, Al-Āmidī, Al-Rāzī, and others who had previously subjected philosophical ideas from the Greek tradition to stricter scrutiny. From this perspective, it can be said that An-Nakhjuwānī was part of the wave of Islamization of knowledge, contributing to the development of scientific knowledge in accordance with Islamic teachings. In the context of the Islamic worldview advocated by Syed Naquib Al-Attas in recent decades, An-Nakhjuwānī's perspective arises from a way of looking at reality and truth that is based on several sources of knowledge, such as authentic traditions (*ḵbābar ṣādiq*), intellect, intuition, and common sense. This can be seen as a new Islamic approach to the world of science.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to The Metaphysics*

However, it cannot be denied that the discussions in An-Nakhjuwānī's elaborations bear a strong influence from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. That is because indeed the manuscript that is the object of this study is a philosophical manuscript, where the philosophical tradition at the time when the manuscript was written was still dominated by Peripatetic philosophy. The ethical ideas presented in An-Nakhjuwānī's text do not differ much from what was expounded by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The virtues elaborated in Ibn Sīnā's ethics are also the ethics discussed by them. However, Islamic elements have penetrated deeply into the realms of Greek ethical philosophy. Therefore, both Ibn Sīnā and An-Nakhjuwānī have an eschatological perspective in their ethical thinking, meaning that their ethics are oriented towards the afterlife, as stated at the beginning of the text where the dividing line between eschatological and non-eschatological ethics lies in accepting or rejecting the concept of the afterlife (*al-ma'ād*).

If Sulaymān Dunyā titled the fourth part of Ibn Sīnā's *al-Iṣyārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* as "Tasawwuf" (Sufism), it is understandable, although it has been criticized by some researchers because the realm of Sufism is distinct from philosophy. However, Ibn Sīnā's ethical discussions are heavily infused with Sufi terms such as *'irfan*, *'ābid*, *zā'ibid*, *muḥaqqiq*, and others. An-Nakhjuwānī, even though he did not title his commentary as "Tasawwuf", provides explanations that are even more aligned with Sufism compared to Ibn Sīnā, as evidenced by his elaborations.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Ibn Sīnā's ethical philosophy is not far different from that expounded by classical philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, namely

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*of Islam; Nirhamna Hanif Fadillah, et. al., "The Concept of Science in Islamic Tradition: Analytical Studies of Syed Naquib Al-Attas on Knowledge," Tasfiyah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam 7, no. 1 (2023): 25–62.*

the ethical philosophy of eudaimonism, a philosophy centered on the discussion of happiness. However, it is developed with Islamic influences. Akmaluddin An-Nakhjuwānī, in his commentary on Ibn Sīnā's work, emphasizes Islamic thinking even more by incorporating numerous textual references focused on the issue of happiness. To answer the question of why this ethical discussion revolves around the issue of happiness, it is because happiness is central to both classical philosophy and Islam. This is because every human being, on a personal and communal level, aims for happiness. Therefore, to attain happiness, in accordance with the level of achievement, individuals must think deeply to determine what is good, valuable, and beneficial.

The eudaimonistic ethical philosophy begins this journey with self-purification, as discussed by Akmaluddin An-Nakhjuwānī in the first part of the ethics section in the manuscript of his commentary. Therefore, this study only covers the conceptual aspects of ethics in the manuscript. The second part, which consists of two additional chapters discussing the stages of those who have reached high levels of happiness and the signs of those who have attained the highest level, has not been addressed at all. These untouched sections await further research by subsequent scholars to uncover their contents.

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