



THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH AND HAPPINESS IN SENECA'S ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY PERSPECTIVE

KONSEP KEKAYAAN DAN KEBAHAGIAAN SENECA PERSPEKTIF FILSAFAT
ISLAM

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore Seneca's and Islamic philosophy's views on wealth and happiness. It uses a qualitative literature review method by collecting data from various literature on Seneca's works and Islamic philosophy. It uses philosophical, historical, and epistemological approaches, as well as data processing and analysis techniques, namely induction and deduction. The results of the study show that Seneca emphasizes that wealth is not the source of true happiness, but rather a means to achieve virtue and a good life. This study finds that both emphasize that happiness does not depend on material wealth. Seneca argues that true happiness comes from desire and self-control, while Islamic thought emphasizes *tawakal* (trust in God) and contentment with what one has. Although there are similarities in moral and ethical values, differences arise in metaphysical and spiritual approaches, where Islam emphasizes a relationship with God as the source of happiness.

Keywords: Wealth, Happiness, Islamic Philosophy

ABSTRAK (BAHASA INDONESIA)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pandangan Seneca dan filsafat Islam tentang kekayaan dan kebahagiaan. Menggunakan metode kualitatif kajian pustaka dengan mengumpulkan data dari berbagai literatur karya-karya Seneca dan literatur filsafat Islam. Menggunakan pendekatan filosofis, pendekatan historis, dan pendekatan epistemologi. Serta menggunakan metode pengolahan dan teknik analisis data yakni induksi dan deduksi dalam mengolah data. Hasil penelitian yaitu Seneca menekankan bahwa kekayaan bukanlah sumber kebahagiaan sejati, melainkan alat untuk mencapai kebajikan dan kehidupan yang baik. Penelitian ini

menemukan bahwa kedua tekanan pentingnya kebahagiaan tidak bergantung pada kekayaan materi. Seneca berargumen bahwa kebahagiaan sejati berasal dari keinginan dan pengendalian diri, sementara pemikiran Islam menekankan tawakal dan kepuasan dengan apa yang dimiliki. Meskipun terdapat kesamaan dalam nilai-nilai moral dan etika, perbedaan muncul dalam pendekatan metafisik dan spiritualitas, di mana Islam menekankan hubungan dengan Tuhan sebagai sumber kebahagiaan.

Kata-kata kunci: *Kekayaan, Kebahagiaan, Filsafat Islam*

A. INTRODUCTION

Wealth and happiness are two pillars of human life that drive people to achieve both. There are various paradigms that can illustrate the concepts of wealth and happiness. Wealth and happiness are often linked, as both are discussed in many circles that believe that having more material possessions can improve one's quality of life and provide access to various things, and are considered to be the pinnacle of happiness.

The meaning of happiness is still not entirely clear. Various opinions from many people about happiness show that people often make mistakes in their efforts to achieve it. Many consider happiness to be physical pleasure and enjoyment. In the pursuit of happiness, humans sometimes take shortcuts, such as chasing positions, honor, and wealth through improper means, including corruption. For them, status and wealth are considered sources of happiness. However, do all of these things truly reflect true happiness in human life? (Banusu & Firmanto, 2020)

Discussions about happiness have various perspectives. Everyone strives to achieve goodness and happiness in their lives. Some people define happiness as abundant material possessions, a successful career, and higher education. Happiness is vital in human life. To prevent negative and extreme things, individuals usually set limits on the type of happiness they want to achieve. A happy life means being able to avoid and manage negative emotions, including depression (Mauliyana & Indah, 2023).

Wealth and happiness are two concepts that are often linked in human life. However, views on the relationship between material wealth and happiness vary depending on philosophical perspectives and values. One thinker who has an interesting view on this is Seneca, an ancient Roman philosopher known for his profound views on wealth, happiness, and a wise attitude towards life.

Seneca, an ancient Roman philosopher of the Stoic school, viewed wealth as something relative and emphasized the importance of self-control and inner contentment as the keys to happi-

ness. According to Seneca, true wealth is not material possessions, but rather the virtues that exist within human beings. Virtues such as honesty, kindness, perseverance, and justice are sources of eternal wealth and are more valuable. This shows that virtues provide far greater benefits than material wealth, which is temporary and can be lost (Seneca, 2023).

In the concept of wealth and happiness in Seneca's philosophy, he offers an in-depth view of how one should manage wealth and achieve true happiness. Seneca argues that wealth is not the goal of life, but rather a tool that can be used to achieve higher goals.

In the context of Islamic philosophy, the view of wealth and happiness also has a strong foundation, with deep spiritual and ethical values. Islamic philosophy offers a view that encompasses both material and spiritual aspects in achieving happiness. Wealth is seen as a gift from Allah SWT that must be used wisely in accordance with religious and moral values. Meanwhile, happiness in Islam is achieved through a balance between a vertical relationship with Allah and a horizontal relationship with humans, as well as self-control in facing worldly temptations (Rahman et al., 2022).

Thus, the author attempts to examine more deeply the concepts of wealth and happiness in Seneca's perspective and Islamic philosophy, aiming to explore the similarities and differences between the two views and how these principles complement each other to provide a deeper understanding of wealth and happiness in human life.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Wealth and Happiness in Western Philosophy

The concepts of wealth and happiness have been topics of deep discussion in Western philosophical tradition from ancient times to the contemporary era. Several Western philosophers have contributed to the evolution of thinking about the relationship between material wealth and true happiness, which has undergone significant changes in line with social, economic, and cultural changes in the Western world. In the tradition of ancient Greek philosophy, Socrates believed that true happiness does not lie in material wealth, but in wisdom and self-knowledge (Bertens, 2018).

Entering the Hellenistic era, the Stoic school of thought pioneered by Zeno of Citium emphasized that true happiness lies in one's ability to accept fate and live in harmony with nature. The Stoics viewed material wealth as neutral, neither good nor bad in itself (Tafsir, 2021). In the Middle Ages, Western philosophical thought

was greatly influenced by Christian teachings. St. Augustine argued that true happiness can only be found in a relationship with God, while worldly wealth is considered a temptation that can lead humans away from salvation (Suseno, 2013).

The Renaissance and Enlightenment eras brought significant changes in thinking about wealth and happiness. John Locke introduced the idea that humans have a natural right to life, liberty, and property, which laid the foundation for the modern understanding of wealth as an individual right (Hardiman, 2004).

Overall, Western philosophy has not reached a final agreement on the relationship between wealth and happiness. However, most philosophers agree that material wealth alone is not enough to achieve true happiness. Other aspects such as wisdom, morality, self-development, and meaningful interpersonal relationships also play an important role in achieving true happiness for humans.

Wealth and Happiness in Islamic Philosophy

According to Islamic philosophy, wealth and happiness have a close but complex relationship. Islam views material wealth not as the ultimate goal of humanity, but as a means to achieve true spiritual happiness (Hawwa, 2022). In Islamic teachings, all forms of wealth and natural resources are essentially the property of Allah, and humans are only entrusted to manage them wisely for the common good (Hawwa, 2022).

Al-Kindi also expressed a similar view on happiness. He defined happiness as a rational way of thinking, using true reason to emulate God's actions to the extent that human understanding allows. The goal is for humans to achieve perfect virtue (Auliati & Hambali, 2023).

Happiness, according to al-Ghazali in his book entitled "The Chemistry of Happiness," translated by Haidar Bagir from the original book entitled "Al-Kimiyya Al-Sa'adah," explains that happiness can be achieved when humans can overcome their animalistic desires and demons within themselves, then transform them into angels. Al-Ghazali argues that the highest form of happiness is ma'rifatullah, meaning that humans have opened their veil to the Creator and can see with their hearts (Hidayah, 2022).

Islamic philosophy views wealth and happiness in a holistic framework that combines material, spiritual, and social aspects. True wealth is understood as wealth of the soul and character, while true happiness is achieved through a balance between worldly and spiritual needs, as well as through positive contributions to society.

C. METHOD

The method used is to examine and analyze data from written sources or library research (Nur, 2024). This type of research is qualitative in nature, sourced from libraries and materials in books, journals, theses, and dissertations. The technique used is data collection by gathering several written works from books, journals, and articles related to this theme and used as references. The approaches used in this paper are: philosophical, historical, epistemological, and psychological approaches.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Wealth and Happiness According to Seneca

Seneca, a Roman philosopher famous for his Stoic teachings, had profound views on wealth and happiness. In his work, Seneca emphasized that true wealth is not the possessions or material things that a person owns, but the virtues that exist within human beings. Seneca described virtue as a source of eternal wealth that provides far greater benefits than material wealth, which can be depleted or lost (Seneca, 2023).

Seneca's views on wealth and happiness are interesting and still relevant today. For Seneca, wealth is not the main goal of life, but a tool that can be used wisely to achieve true happiness. All life experiences are seen as blessings to be grateful for, both in joy and sorrow. By being grateful, humans will realize that life must be lived as it is without demanding things that are beyond their capabilities. This is in line with Seneca and the Stoics' teachings that happiness is not based on material things, but on character. With a character that is free and unattached to everything that is temporary, a person has made their life meaningful. Thus, life will feel blessed and happy (Mulyatno et al., 2023).

In an environment full of busy routines and materialistic urges, Seneca emphasizes that true happiness is rooted in inner wisdom and the freedom it brings. Seneca also underlines the importance of reevaluating our views on wealth and luxury. Amidst the relentless pursuit of material prosperity in modern life, Seneca asserts that true wealth is found within ourselves, in the richness of our inner lives. Seneca encourages us to break free from society's tendency to equate happiness solely with material possessions and to shift our perceptions (Seneca, 2022).

Seneca states that happiness comes from our ability to regulate and cultivate emotional balance within ourselves. This happiness

does not depend on social status or material wealth. Instead, inner freedom is achieved through understanding and acceptance of one's fate, as well as the ability to align oneself with personal values and principles. Seneca states that true happiness can be achieved through self-control over our desires and by not being influenced by external changes.

According to Seneca, a happy person is one who can make correct judgments about everything, meaning that a happy person is one who, whatever their current circumstances, is content and at peace with their life. A happy person is also one who controls all their affairs according to the dictates of their reason (Seneca, 2020).

Thus, Seneca's concept of wealth and happiness emphasizes the importance of developing virtue, controlling emotions, and enjoying simplicity in life. Seneca teaches that true happiness cannot be found in material possessions, but in virtue and simplicity in life.

A Comparison of Seneca's Concept of Wealth and Happiness and Islamic Philosophy

A comparison of the concepts of wealth and happiness between Seneca, a Stoic philosopher, and Islamic philosophy provides deep insight into how these two traditions understand the values of life. Both encourage a deeper search for meaning. The main principle of Stoicism is "living in harmony with nature," which emphasizes the importance of reason or rationality.

Islam also highly values the role of reason, which serves to increase one's faith and is one of the ways to achieve peace of mind. There is harmony between Stoicism and Islamic teachings, especially in terms of self-control. In Stoicism, there is the concept of *amor fati* (love of fate), which is the acceptance of destiny, while in Islam, gratitude is an important principle. Both teach us to accept the realities of life wisely, cultivate gratitude, and develop inner peace in the face of various challenges (Fitri et al., 2021).

Seneca, a Stoic philosopher from Rome, and thinkers in the Islamic tradition have different but complementary views on the relationship between wealth and happiness. In his teachings, Seneca emphasized that wealth is not the source of true happiness. According to him, material wealth often brings more difficulties than happiness. In his letters, Seneca recounted that a good life lies in virtue and self-control, not in the possession of wealth. Seneca states, "Wealth is not an end, but a means to achieve virtue, not an end in itself." Seneca believes that focusing on virtue and moral values is far more meaningful, because only in this way can one find true

inner peace. In this context, true happiness lies in the development of character and personal integrity (Seneca, 2023).

Philosophically, Seneca argued that material wealth is not the key to true happiness. He emphasized the importance of living simply and focusing on developing internal virtue. According to Seneca, "True wealth is poverty regulated according to the laws of nature." Seneca believed that the excessive pursuit of material possessions can actually hinder the attainment of authentic happiness. Thus, deeper values and meaningful relationships with oneself and others become more important than material accumulation (Seneca, 2021).

In contrast, Islamic philosophy has a more holistic perspective. In Islam, wealth can be seen as a gift from Allah that must be managed wisely. This concept focuses on social responsibility and the use of wealth for good purposes. In the Qur'an, many verses emphasize the importance of sharing wealth and doing good deeds. Allah encourages his followers to give alms and help those in need, showing that wealth should be used for the common good, not just for personal gain (RI, 2010).

Both traditions also emphasize that true happiness comes from within, not from external sources. Seneca emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with nature and maintaining peace of mind, while in Islam, true happiness is achieved through peace of mind (sakinah) that comes from faith and obedience to God. In the Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said, "Wealth is not the abundance of possessions, but true wealth is the wealth of the soul (Al-Qazwini, 2023).

On the other hand, Islamic philosophy has a more nuanced view of the relationship between wealth and happiness. Islam recognizes that material possessions can be a means to achieve goodness, but also warns against the dangers of excessive materialism. Al-Ghazali, a prominent Muslim philosopher, stated that true happiness begins with knowledge of Allah and achieving closeness to Him (Bisri, 2022).

Thus, both philosophical traditions share the view that wealth does not guarantee happiness, but their approaches differ. Seneca emphasizes self-control and virtue as the keys to happiness, while Islamic philosophy integrates social responsibility and a relationship with God into the pursuit of happiness. Both teach that true happiness does not lie in material possessions, but in the quality of life lived and contributions to others.

By combining the concepts of wealth and happiness from Seneca's thinking and Islamic philosophy, we are invited to reflect on the true meaning of a happy life. By prioritizing virtue and spiritual relationships over the accumulation of material possessions, we can find deeper meaning in life and achieve eternal happiness.

Both emphasize that wealth should not be the ultimate goal, but rather a means to achieve deeper happiness. In this journey, moral values and good deeds become the foundation that guides us towards a more meaningful life, while strengthening relationships with others and creating a positive impact on society. Thus, we are not only pursuing temporary satisfaction, but also building a lasting legacy of happiness.

E. CONCLUSION

The concepts of wealth and happiness in Seneca's thinking and the Islamic philosophical perspective show that true happiness does not lie in the accumulation of material possessions, but rather in the development of virtue, spiritual relationships, and contributions to society. Both emphasize the importance of living with integrity, moderation, and gratitude, as well as using wealth as a means to achieve higher goals. Thus, this understanding invites us to prioritize moral and spiritual values in our lives, so that we can achieve eternal and meaningful happiness.

Despite differences in approach and cultural context, Seneca's thinking and Islamic philosophy share significant similarities in their views on wealth and happiness. Both emphasize that true happiness does not come from the accumulation of material possessions, but from the development of virtue, self-control, and meaningful relationships with others. While Seneca focuses more on individual virtue and acceptance of reality, Islamic philosophy underscores the importance of charity and social concern as part of faith. Both invite us to see wealth as a means to achieve higher goals, not as an end in itself.

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