



Research Paper

Happiness and its role in a successful society: looked at through the lens of virtue ethics and utilitarianism

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Abstract

Modern society faces the challenge that people cannot understand the essence of happiness. Virtue ethics and utilitarianism are long thought to be contradictory with each other, and this leads people to confuse with the attitude they should hold toward ethics. This paper aims to clarify the concept and role of happiness in the society and discover the best form of utilitarianism in promoting happiness. Through the method of literature review, this paper reaches the conclusion that virtue utilitarianism, which is the combination of eudaemonist utilitarianism and virtue ethics, is the best form of utilitarianism plausible in maximizing one's happiness. Virtue utilitarianism is also an improvement on act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism, which should be valued by more people.

Keywords: Utilitarianism, virtue ethics, happiness

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I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, it is second nature for civilized people to behave appropriately, but pursuing happiness and avoiding pain are also natural instincts for humans. For centuries, this thought has led to controversy surrounding the term "happiness" and philosophers have proposed different theories like hedonism, emotional-state theory, and eudaemonist utilitarianism to explain its essence. From these theories, there is no general agreement on what happiness is. In the debates around happiness, eudaemonist utilitarianism and virtue ethics excel in addressing its importance in society and revealing the relationship between happiness and other concepts like pleasure. Virtue ethics, which was proposed by Plato, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Aristotle, considered how virtues relate to happiness. For classical utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham was a hedonist utilitarian and proposed ways to calculate pleasure. John Stuart Mill improved on the basis of Bentham's philosophy by holding a kind of eudaemonist utilitarianism that included the qualitative aspect of happiness.

The paper will compare the concept of happiness as a stable state of being in virtue ethics and eudaemonist utilitarianism. In the paper, I contend that virtue utilitarianism is a plausible form of utilitarianism which is better than act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism in maximizing people's happiness.

In the first part of the paper, the main goals are to clarify happiness in virtue ethics and to suggest that happiness should be accepted as a concept similar to eudaemonia. In the second part, the paper will analyze the problems related to classical utilitarianism like the theories of Bentham and Mill. The third part introduces act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism, presenting their drawbacks as well. In the last part, after identifying the advantages of virtue utilitarianism, the paper proposes that the best method is utilitarianism of the virtues (UV).

1.0 Happiness in Aristotle's virtue ethics

1.01 Happiness and pleasure

When people talk about happiness, they generally refer to pleasure. Happiness in modern society is almost entirely identified as pleasure, a feeling of positive emotion. Asking a person "are you happy" means the same as acquiring an answer to whether the subject is having a good feeling. Pleasure, which replaces happiness in daily interaction, is a concept that relates closely to good feelings in a short period of time and is accepted by most people today as an essential component or even the goal of life. *Carpe Diem*, which suggests people should seize the day, reflects the general public's idea that people should enjoy pleasure each second.

However, is pleasure equal to happiness? Any careful consideration will deny the replacement of happiness as pleasure. Although pleasure is important and fundamental to have, it cannot serve as a goal that everyone pursues in life. People gain pleasure from having meals, playing games, and travelling, but most pleasures in daily activities are too trivial and short-lasting. There are people who refuse to rely on pleasure to live their lives since they believe there are other goals that make their lives more fulfilling than being an oyster that experiences pleasure in any moment.^[1] Being addicted to drugs can bring intense short-term pleasure, but rational people turn away from this pleasure because it contains an enormous risk which greatly outweighs the benefit. Hedonism appeals to the distinction between long-term pleasure and short-term pleasure, most arguing that long-term pleasure overrides short-term pleasure to avoid this problem. Qualitative hedonism, quantitative hedonism, and Epicureanism have different ideas on pleasures, which will not be further discussed in this part of paper. However, even accepting this difference doesn't render long-run pleasure equal to happiness because happiness is a stable state of being, but pleasure is a sensation like pain. In this regard, happiness and pleasure are distinct.^[2]

Furthermore, "causal depth" is a serious problem when we treat happiness purely as pleasure or a good feeling.^[3] Causal depth suggests that people cannot distinguish the different kinds of impact on a person from displeasing things. According to the theory of considering happiness as pleasure, when a person gets the information that his father passed away and breaks up with his girlfriend at the same time, there is only a difference in intensity of the unpleasantness. However, the two events have distinctive implications for the person's life which pleasure cannot reflect. To John Stuart Mill, who was a eudaemonist utilitarianism, this problem can be avoided. But for hedonists, this can be an attack on pleasure.

For Aristotle, pleasure is good since it is against pain which is bad and it is pursued by all creatures. As Aristotle explained in *Nicomachean Ethics*, pain was in itself an object of aversion to all things, and therefore its contrary should be choiceworthy. We choose the thing that is choiceworthy neither on account of nor for the sake of something else and pleasure is a thing which meets this standard. As a result, pleasure, the opposite to pain, is something good and choiceworthy.^[4] However, his thought missed the neutral middle ground introduced by Epicurus. Epicurus believed the neutral ground between pain and pleasure is the safest. The pleasure can serve as a means to the ends of doing things as well. People can use pleasure to condition themselves to better habits and thereby better behaviors. Though Aristotle's view about pleasure is controversial, there is no denying that pleasure is something good. Besides, he thought pleasure is an element of happiness, but they are different in his sense. Although pleasure and happiness are both good, achieving happiness also requires the goods of body, external goods, and fortune apart from pleasure. As a result, Aristotle didn't hold that pleasure and happiness are the same.

From the above analysis, it is clear that in virtue ethics, though pleasure is considered as a good, it isn't the final end and cannot be used to represent happiness.

1.02 Happiness and life-satisfaction

Before discussing life-satisfaction, the problems related to desire-satisfaction theory must be identified. People all have desires ranging from money to power. Desire-satisfaction theory relates happiness with fulfilling one's desires; in other words, getting things one wants. Although this is a step further from regarding happiness as pleasure, it contains apparent weaknesses. First of all, whether fulfilling desires can contribute to happiness is doubtful to philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer. As Schopenhauer famously argued, people cannot get rid of pain since people feel pain when they are fulfilling desires. The inability to fulfill desires and the process of pursuing desires generate pain. However, the only end of desire is death. People tend to create more and more desires in life, adding to the amount of pain in life. This is referred as the hedonist treadmill. Schopenhauer's nihilism criticizes desires and therefore weakens the desire-satisfaction theory. Another problem with this theory is that there are bad desires in the world, and it is problematic whether fulfilling these desires counts as gaining happiness. Hitler desired eliminating Jews from the world but fulfilling this desire is against humanity and led to his infamous reputation. The question of bad desire poses problem to desire-satisfaction theory.

The life-satisfaction theory improves on the desire-satisfaction theory and offers a more compelling view. To be satisfied with your life is to consider if it is going well by your standard; it is a kind of global evaluation of one's life.^[5] Many happiness studies in psychology and social science utilize the report from subjective life-satisfaction as an indication of happiness. However, looking closer at this method calls into question life-satisfaction theory.

From the outset, people's response to life-satisfaction is dependent on situations. When people are in the bottom of their lives, they rate their overall life-satisfaction as negative; when people are promoted or going in the upper way of life, they tend to rate their life-satisfaction more positively. In other words, people change attitudes toward life-satisfaction based on contexts over short periods of time. The standard of life-satisfaction varies so quickly that it cannot effectively reflect one's overall state of happiness. Even constantly asking people if they are satisfied with lives can affect the result as well since people may feel annoyed and rate the

life-satisfaction negatively. Besides, life-satisfaction theory makes happiness a judgement. Judging one's happiness based on self-reported satisfaction not only suffers from problems related to subjectivity, but also compromises the definition of happiness which cannot be judged since happiness is a constant state of being linked with moods and emotional lives.

Aristotelian ethics maintains that fulfilling one's desire is good. In Aristotle's sense, one who is eudaemon (one who achieves eudaemonia) must be contented with his life and have effective desires which he thinks are worthwhile. One has to realize his first-order desires as well as second-order desires in order to achieve eudaemonia. Some first-order desires lack virtues and need to be reformed to establish better emotional habits. First-order desires are habituated desires that can be counterproductive. Second-order desires are desires about desires. They are reflective desires which can change the first-order desires by replacing them with new habits that promote happiness. Smoking is a first-order desire. Maintaining good health by quitting smoking is a second-order desire. Aristotle argued that a eudaemon individual is a person who can knowingly satisfy his deepest desires which are moderation between the vice of excess and the vice of defect. But when people have deepest desires that are self-destructive, like drug addiction and unprotected sex, no matter if they realize them or not, fulfilling these deadly desires does not seem like a clever choice to achieve happiness. As a result, happiness requires more than life-satisfaction or desire-satisfaction.

1.03 Happiness and eudaemonia

As we have discovered in the former sections, happiness is more than pleasure and life-satisfaction. Aristotle often refers to happiness as eudaemonia in *Nicomachean Ethics*. When a person reflects upon his life and thinks about his goals, he will discover that his life goes in one direction toward a final end. Although it isn't clear for most people, Aristotle demonstrated that eudaemonia is something everyone will agree on eventually as the final end in life. The aim of exercise is good health, and the aim of good health is a part of wanting to be happy. The notion of happiness is a final end because people search no further. In addition, Aristotle thought the notion of final end prevents the problem of hedonic treadmill which cannot be avoided in other ways. However, happiness or eudaemonia isn't considered as the final end for many people in modern society since some of them, like workaholics and moral saints, intentionally give up happiness for larger goals.

To be an eudaemon, the individual meets certain standards and is also in a certain state of mind.^[6] This person should have a fully matured mind and is able to exercise virtues in his life and to engage in meditative activities like studying philosophy. It should be agreed that an eudaemon person is happy because of the following points. First, an eudaemon enjoys his life and holds an affirmative attitude toward his life. Second, an eudaemon fulfills his major desires and perceives the fulfillment. Finally, an eudaemon is in the positive mental state as people who are happy.

Is achieving eudaemonia the same as obtaining happiness? Here Aristotle differed from the modern view. Aristotle regarded happiness as a stricter objective notion. He believed that happiness can only be gained from a philosophical life which is the best life, and the majority of people can only have a lower form of happiness due to their nature. The most serious problem with Aristotle's view of eudaemonia is distinguishing higher and lower forms of human inborn nature. Aristotle's elitist biology is overthrown by modern biology. In contrast, people today are inclined to form their own subjective standards of happiness. We tend to think that a person can obtain happiness when he meets his own standard of happiness. If Sisyphus has the standard that rolling stones gives him happiness, modern people will believe that he achieves happiness by doing so.

Can we use happiness in the sense of eudaemonia? Aristotle's idea of eudaemonia is narrow and suffers from his biological misconception, but accepting happiness as eudaemonia is a better way than others in virtue ethics. Eudaemonia doesn't change in different circumstances like life-satisfaction. No matter what circumstances we are in, eudaemonia requires us to live life well and virtuously. Furthermore, treating happiness as eudaemonia allows people to construct an unspecific aim of life but realizes the goal is beyond theoretical things like money and pleasure at the same time. Also, it is important to note that the translation of eudaemonia can be "happiness" or "well-being" or "flourishing" and this paper will mainly use "happiness" to refer to eudaemonia. Eudaemonia, therefore, is more permanent and doesn't depend on the circumstances we encounter in the moment. In virtue ethics, it is better to regard happiness as eudaemonia instead of pleasure or life-satisfaction.

1.04 Happiness and virtue

In eudaemonist thinking, happiness is a way of living your life well instead of only feeling good and getting satisfied with your life. To arrive at this final end in life, living virtuously is a way of achieving happiness or eudaemonia. Virtues aren't just dispositions in people's lives. Rather, they are active features that largely remain consistent for people to act in certain ways. In this definition, people who possess certain virtues are expected to act in accordance with them. Virtues serve as a starter for people to live a happy life and living a life with virtues like courage and justice is better than a life with no virtue or even vices. However, the role of

virtues in modern society is diminishing. People who reject virtues may acquire more opportunities to achieve success in contemporary society. Sneaky people in the workplace can be easily promoted. Parents want their children to live with virtues like courage, loyalty, and honesty instead of growing up with vices, but know when not to follow virtues to gain success.

The ways that virtues contribute to a happy life or reach eudaemonia remain debated. People change their emotions and disposition in life due to changes in circumstance. When a person has close relationships with friends and family members, he is likely to hold a positive mood and thinks he is enjoying happiness; when the person finds himself with financial problem, his disposition may become irritable and anxious. A person's dispositions and emotions are factors that determine whether he can live a happy life. Virtues that are moral habits happen to make up one's emotions and dispositions, indirectly linking to happiness because emotions and dispositions can support the behaviors which reflect the virtues. For instance, liking to help others sustains the behavior of lending friend money when they are in need, and this expresses the virtue of generosity. If a person is honest, he is likely to enjoy a better relationship with friends since he treats them sincerely and his amiable disposition can strengthen their relationships. These instances can increase one's happiness only in "friendship of good" which, according to Aristotle, excludes friends who exploit each other. Therefore, having virtues like generosity and honesty can contribute to one's happiness. Furthermore, in Aristotle's idea, the goal is to habituate oneself with virtues so that one can find pleasure in fulfilling moral desires. One becomes eudaemon when his human nature the king of which is reason is used in the pursuit of virtues. In this circumstance, one can live a happy and satisfied life, emerging in eudaemonia.

Virtues also teach people how to deal with physical materials properly and provide an internal motivation for people to live happily. Virtue ethic theorists believe that happiness is connected with the way people utilize the materials. When virtues motivate people to do things actively with their materials, like spending their income with restraint rather than possessing their wealth passively or spending in excess, they increase people's happiness in life. This can be shown from the case of John Rockefeller. Rockefeller possessed large amounts of wealth, but merely having these materials didn't increase his happiness. Virtues like generosity served as an active motivation for him to donate the money, or redistributing wealth, that benefited society in general. This contributed to his life happiness more than if he had acted as a miser. Nevertheless, in modern society, people pursue for wealth but do not understand how to handle them properly. As Daniel Kahneman discovered, \$75000 per year is sufficient for an average American family and more money doesn't promote happiness.^[7] This reminds people that merely pursuing wealth cannot make people happier and people need virtues to help them cope with wealth. Overall, virtues are indispensable in living a happy life according to virtue ethics, but they are valued less in modern time.

II. HAPPINESS IN CLASSICAL UTILITARIANISM

Classical utilitarianism is often thought of as the opponent of virtue ethics. In this section, the paper will mainly discuss Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, who differed in their views of utilitarianism. Bentham was a hedonist utilitarian who argued that happiness is nothing except pleasure, whereas Mill held that pleasure is nothing but happiness in Aristotle's sense of self-fulfillment without the biased biological elements. The word "happiness" is equal to the meaning of pleasure in classical utilitarianism. Through analyzing Bentham and John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, the paper will try to emphasize why classical utilitarianism shouldn't be accepted as a valid standard of maximizing happiness in daily life.

2.01 Bentham's greatest happiness principle

Jeremy Bentham was famous for his utilitarian principle which highlights the greatest amount of happiness for everyone. The reason most philosophers claim Bentham was a hedonist is because Bentham's utilitarianism embraces psychological and ethical hedonism. Hedonism, in general, means that happiness is pleasure. Psychological hedonism asserts pleasure and pain are the motivations for people to act and ethical hedonism points out that morality is increasing pleasure and minimizing pain. Another notable feature of Bentham's utilitarianism which relates to his hedonism is that it mixes happiness, pleasure, and well-being as one thing, which is pleasure. He believed that all pleasures are the same in quality. As he notoriously argued "pushpin is as good as poetry"^[8], pleasures do not vary in quality and only differ in duration and intensity. From Bentham's hedonism, we can see that he clearly regards happiness as pleasure which lays the ground for his felicific calculus that describes the elements or dimensions of the value of pain or pleasure.^[9]

After clarifying happiness is pleasure and all pleasures are the same, Bentham proposed the principle of "greatest happiness of the greatest number." According to this principle, when people are trying to maximize their happiness, they should calculate the quantity of happiness and choose the behavior which can generate the greatest happiness for most people. For instance, when a country's government is considering whether to pass an income tax act, the officials should make the decision based on the interests of the many when they are more intense and longer lasting. For Bentham, this approach is scientific because it enables calculation. The felicific

calculus, when employed in daily life, suggests people can calculate their total pleasure by listing out a series of pleasures and grade them from 1 to 10 based on seven measures: Intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, extent, and purity. In this way, people can measure their happiness in a quantitative scale. Bentham thought this method also has the advantage of overcoming elitism. Pleasure is pleasure regardless of whose pleasure it is. Bentham treated the pleasures of the nobility the same as the pleasures of peasants.

However, the problems with Bentham's utilitarianism are simple to spot. First, pleasures aren't the same and different activities provide people with different senses of pleasure. For example, when we compare the activities of studying philosophy and playing video games, people can acquire pleasure from both activities, but the quality of pleasure from studying philosophy is higher and people derive more things like knowledge which cannot be attributed to pleasure in the former. As a result, it is reasonable to believe that studying philosophy is dissimilar from playing video games apart from the quantitative difference. Moreover, the greatest happiness for the greatest number has the problem of sacrificing the interests of the minority group, which potentially jeopardizes the growth of society. Admittedly, some people are going to rule the society and democracy in which the majority has control is the best possible regime for modern people. However, this doesn't mean that the minority's interest should be given up since the minority group can foster the growth of society as well. Finally, for Bentham's felicific calculus, not everything valuable can be quantified, and subjectivity renders quantitative pleasure incomparable between people. Can people quantify and compare the pleasure they get from watching *Gone with the Wind* and *Bonnie and Clyde*? It is unlikely to do so. People have different frames of reference when rating their pleasure and one qualitative difference can make the felicific calculus incomparable. People's standards, moods, and conditions all affect felicific calculus. Although duration and intensity can be measured on the same index, felicific calculus cannot reveal the qualitative difference which Mill proposed.

2.02 John Stuart Mill's improvement on classical utilitarianism

In *Utilitarianism*, Mill argues that "By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness pain, and the privation of pleasure."^[10] It appears that Mill believed happiness is the promotion of pleasure and the absence of pain. Unlike Jeremy Bentham, though, Mill developed his eudaemonist utilitarianism based on empiricism and suggested that pleasure is happiness in Aristotle's idea of self-fulfillment without the biological aspect.

Mill was known for his proof of utilitarianism which includes six steps. First, pleasure alone is pursued. Second, so pleasure is desired. Third, whatever is desirable is good. Fourth, so pleasure alone is good. Fifth, greater pleasure is better than lesser pleasure. Sixth, so the optimific outcome is the greatest good for the greatest number. At first sight, this proof seems to be consistent with utilitarianism, but there are problems related to the third and fifth to sixth steps. The transition from "pleasure is desired" to "whatever desirable is good" meets the Naturalistic Fallacy. The Naturalistic Fallacy refers to the criticism toward people who infer that A is good from any proposition of A's natural properties.^[11] Desirability is the natural property for pleasure, but only this one factual premise doesn't bring to the evaluative conclusion that "whatever desirable is good." Facts don't motivate logic to get to an effective conclusion, but values do. Compared to values, facts cannot determine what is good or bad. Furthermore, the move from fifth to sixth step has the problem of Fallacy of Composition which means assuming what is true of the parts must be true of the whole. Each individual may not desire the optimific outcome for the group, and instead may focus on the optimific outcome for himself.

When given the choice of becoming Socrates or living as a happy pig, most people will choose to live the life of Socrates, which may not involve as much pleasure as the pig's life but has a higher quality of pleasure. Innately, people find pleasures are not the same in quality and there are much more valuable experiences in Socrates' s life. John Stuart Mill advanced from Bentham that different qualities of pleasures can be separated without being comparable quantitatively. In his book *Utilitarianism*, he distinguished higher pleasure from lower pleasure based on qualitative difference. In Bentham's idea, pleasure with more intensity and duration is higher pleasure and vice versa. However, Mill proposed the competent judge theory to differentiate these two kinds of pleasures. Competent judge refers to someone who has experienced both activities and knows which one contains a higher pleasure and which one contains the lower pleasure. A competent judge can determine which pleasure is more desirable and superior based on his own standard. This leads to several unanswered questions. First of all, it isn't clear who can qualify as a competent judge. Mill thought that competent judges are refined and educated in his days, so the competent judges should be privileged people. This falls to elitism. Also, if there are two or more people who have experienced both activities and disagree on which contains higher pleasure in quality, there is no way to let them negotiate an agreement. Consider a case in which people want to find out whether reading the novel *Gone with the Wind* or watching the film version imparts higher pleasure. One competent judge who concentrates on the artistic value of the film is likely to disagree with another competent judge who stresses the importance of syntax in the book. The bell curve means that people can ignore the outlier third when the two-third of majority agrees on something. Using the bell curve to help competent

judges negotiate makes the problem more complex since some competent judges' ideas are overlooked and these competent judges are useless in making distinctions of pleasure in quality.

Another problem related to Mill's qualitative utilitarianism is if there is qualitative difference, Mill placed intellectual pleasure much higher than sensual pleasure. As G.B. Shaw responded to Mill that Mill had never experienced low pleasures in their fullest and he would judge them superior if he had. In his distinction between higher and lower pleasures, Mill meant that people who have experienced intellectual pleasures, which are uniquely higher pleasures for humans, will not give up all of them for any quantity of sensual pleasures which are lower pleasures. However, Mill seemed to underestimate the importance of sensual pleasures. None except the saint would sacrifice all of the sensual pleasures like getting food when one is hungry and relaxing when one is tired in exchange for any amount of intellectual pleasure. It is strange to think there is anyone who would trade all lower pleasures with higher ones because humans instinctively need lower pleasures to survive.

Mill also didn't propose a value which accounts for the qualitative difference of pleasure. If the only variables are duration and intensity, pleasures can have quantitative difference but not qualitative difference. In order to assess the qualitative difference of pleasures, Mill needed to find the value that makes one pleasure higher than another pleasure qualitatively. The value cannot be pleasure itself but something else that makes some pleasures better qualitatively than others.

III. ACT UTILITARIANISM AND RULE UTILITARIANISM

3.01 Act Utilitarianism

As the simplest form of utilitarianism, act utilitarianism refers to people choosing the act which produces the best outcome when compared with other acts to maximize their happiness. The aim of act utilitarianism is to maximize outcome like pleasure and utility by calculating precisely. Act utilitarianism is both attractive and objectionable since it is easy to use in life but contains a list of flaws.

The most notorious feature of act utilitarianism is that it requires people to calculate moment by moment to find out the best possible outcome.^[12] However, this is unrealistic and can lead people to choose the "smart act" which involves contingency. Encouraging people to rely on act utilitarianism and calculate moment-to-moment is incompatible with human biology. Human beings conduct most behaviors in a short period of time and cannot extend a calculation to a long-term habit. Some people in the short run may persist in calculating the consequence before acting, but in the long run almost no one can have the capacity of continuously doing so because there are decisions which demand people to act quickly. The calculation also poses a problem with contingency, which leads to conflicts with moral instinct in collective situations. In a collective action situation, an individual's action contributes to the total result but is relatively insignificant compared to the total account. According to act utilitarianism, this motivates the individual to find the shortcut which can generate the best outcome for everyone and the person himself by refusing to follow what the majority does. People are likely to confuse their own interest with the interest of the whole, resulting in the decrease of happiness in total. This can be extended to the country level as well. After most countries signed the agreement to protect whales, Japan's failure of cooperation and continuously hunting whales could gain the best interest for the world and Japan simultaneously based on act utilitarianism. However, this action was irresponsible and caused harm to the marine environment.

The second drawback related to act utilitarianism is its detrimental implementation to relationships in life. People form genuine relationships between family members, lovers, friends, etc. The foundation of these relationships lays on factors like sincerity, care, and love. Pleasure, though it is included in these relationships, is not the whole concern and the focus of maximizing outcome in act utilitarianism can pose the risk of losing these relationships. This is because when people act according to the principle of act utilitarianism, they calculate the best outcome in every second. When they realize that they can acquire more pleasure in pursuing another relationship by resigning the present one, they will abandon the present one, eventually destroying their relationship network and reducing their overall happiness. Consider another case brought forward by Peter Railton. A wife stays in a loveless marriage because doing so is felicitous for the family. She keeps this secret from her husband because doing so is felicitous for him. According to act utilitarianism, she should continue doing this because the pleasure she got from the family's well-being outweighs the pain she has in the relationship. However, this is not practical and can give rise to conflicts in the relationship.

Another problem with act utilitarianism is that act utilitarianism has the inability to successfully calculate future consequences because of people's cognitive bias and incomplete information. When people are choosing the act that maximizes the outcome, they are likely to miscalculate due to the intellectual limitations. For instance, if people have the experience of being deceived by fake charity organization, they will choose the act of discontinuing the donation for charity because they think it is the best way. However, their well-being is going to be maximized if they continue donating, so the calculation can be negatively influenced by intellectual limitations. Also, act utilitarianism is difficult to implement in life since it can be easily misused. When people depend on act utilitarianism, they are likely to be driven to think the best outcome for them is the best outcome

for all people. As a result, the outcome cannot bring the greatest number of good for the greatest number of people.

Therefore, people cannot depend on act utilitarianism in maximizing happiness. Classical utilitarians like Bentham and Mill weren't act-utilitarians who only focus on acts. Instead, classical utilitarians were more like indirect utilitarians who focus on the best utilitarian decision process and things like motives, rules, and policies, which will be discussed further in next section.

3.02 Indirect utilitarianism

Before analyzing rule utilitarianism, it is vital to clarify the difference between indirect utilitarianism and act utilitarianism. Indirect utilitarianism focuses on motives, rules, desires and other things. It differs from act utilitarianism in that it suggests the best utilitarian decision process produces the best act. It avoids the problem of negative effects in life because the evaluation of decision process can generate a more thorough picture of the subject's life than calculating the act's outcome at every moment. For instance, friends who adopt indirect utilitarianism are more likely to maintain the friendship than those who abandon the relationship based on act utilitarianism. Although people who follow act utilitarianism may gain higher-level of happiness in the short run, they lose their overall happiness in the long term. This is further explained by the rule of thumb in indirect utilitarianism. The rule of thumb is simple in its meaning: people follow the common-sense morality. When people are in love, rules of thumb require people not to calculate the happiness but to preserve it; when people see someone drowning in water, rules of thumb demand people to save him instead of spending time calculating.

Nevertheless, one problem distinguishes indirect utilitarianism from rule utilitarianism: collective self-defeating.^[13] Indirect utilitarianism advocates the best act from the best utilitarian decision process which in turn leads people to disregard the rules. If everyone in the world acts according to indirect utilitarianism, the world will be worse off. Take the case of doing voluntary works. Indirect utilitarianism states that people should transfer the time spent on voluntary works to themselves since this can contribute to more utility in their lives. However, if everyone in the world follows this, there will be no volunteers and the stability of society will decline. In this situation, indirect utilitarianism also neglects that people are likely to feel guilty by avoiding voluntary works. Rule utilitarianism, though, avoids this problem and is better than act and indirect utilitarianism.

3.03 Rule utilitarianism

Rule utilitarianism requires individuals to live the life which coordinates with rules to maximize the actual or expected utility. Under rule utilitarianism, an individual should conform to the rules when universally accepted. The moral rules can be replaced by ideal code. The result of everyone following it is better than the consequence of everyone following other rules. Rule utilitarianism can be separated to two kinds: ideal rule utilitarianism and primitive rule utilitarianism. Ideal rule utilitarianism seeks moral ideal as an end and it is more radical and revolutionary. In contrast, primitive rule utilitarianism is moderate and initiates incremental change within the system.

The classical objection toward rule utilitarianism is that either it collapses into act utilitarianism or it is not utilitarianism at all since it requires people to ignore acts that maximize utility but are contrary to rules. The first objection suggests that rule utilitarianism is redundant. The opponents' argument is that rule utilitarianism just needs one rule which is maximizing happiness and therefore it is similar to act utilitarianism. Rule utilitarianism responds that it gives context in a community in contrast with act utilitarianism which fixates isolated individual. When an individual fails to cooperate with others, he can maximize his own happiness and the world's happiness at the same time according to act utilitarianism. Rule utilitarianism reveals that if everyone ignores the ideal code or the rule, the world's happiness cannot be maximized, and the world will be in chaos. For instance, killing one bomb-carrier by ignoring the rule can save lots of lives according to utilitarian calculation. However, when everyone disregards the rule forbidding killing, the world will not be a safe place. Rule utilitarianism also differs from indirect utilitarianism because it doesn't suffer from collective self-defeating. When everyone in the world follows rule utilitarianism, no one will engage in criminal activities and the society will become stable and safe. Nevertheless, though rule utilitarianism can escape the collective action problem, it renders people to only respect others because of rules. People's dignity will be lost, and no one will honor others based on humanity.

Compared to the first objection, the second objection that rule utilitarianism is not a kind of utilitarianism seems more severe. In a world which has no universal acceptance toward rules, following rules is going to decrease the total utility instead of promoting it.^[14] This is because people are required to give up acts that maximize utility when the acts are in conflict with rules. If following rule utilitarianism cannot provide people with the best outcome, it runs into conflict with its definition of maximizing utility. Suppose sacrificing an innocent person's life can bring happiness for everyone on Earth and there is the rule that forbids killing. In

this circumstance, rule utilitarianism doesn't seem like a utilitarianism since it cannot maximize utility.

Rule utilitarianism is often troubled with people's general acceptance. ^[15] Does general acceptance mean that everyone accepts the rules? Considering general acceptance as universal acceptance is impossible. In real life, we cannot picture that everyone accepts the same rule, so this renders rule utilitarianism utopian. General acceptance toward rules is sufficient and universal acceptance is unrealistic. No matter what degree of general acceptance is taken, people need to pay the price for security and freedom that society under rule utilitarianism provides. Privileged people can break the rules under general acceptance, and this cannot be eliminated in rule utilitarianism.

IV. VIRTUE UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism, in this situation, seems to be in dilemma. Neither act utilitarianism nor rule utilitarianism is suitable for us to accept as the theory to maximize happiness in life. Here let us shift the focus from utilitarianism to virtue ethics. Virtue ethics has long been contrasted with utilitarianism. However, the contradiction is overestimated and by blending virtue ethics and utilitarianism, eudaemonist virtue utilitarianism is actually not an implausible form of utilitarianism. Virtue utilitarianism can avoid problems related to classical utilitarianism, act utilitarianism, and rule utilitarianism, and it is a better choice for people to accept in society.

4.01 Eudaemonist virtue utilitarianism

In people's daily life, they act according to customary morality. Kantianism, consequentialism, and utilitarianism aren't used by many people in modern society. If people rely on act utilitarianism, they will not enjoy a healthy relationship with others; if people depend on rule utilitarianism, they will be confused when rules conflict. Lots of problems are unanswered by act and rule utilitarians, leaving people to search for another path in ethics. Virtue utilitarianism seems like a better direction here.

Virtues, which are thought to be connected with one's disposition and emotion, actually have the function of elevating one's happiness, as previously shown. Virtue utilitarianism says people should live virtuously, and act after calculation or customary morality only in specific situations. People should adopt the virtues which generally maximize utility but turn to calculation or customary morality in special occasions.

As mentioned earlier, the contingency problem is a factor that renders the act utilitarianism unacceptable. This problem can lead people to fail to follow others' behavior in collective action situations and act in a selfish way to promote their own interests. It produces Prisoner Dilemma situations where the best outcome is ignored for the second best and it is rational to do so. When virtues are involved, this dilemma can be solved. The shift from calculation to virtues holds that virtues should be cultivated collectively and the general observance will promote social well-being. The right virtues like courage and moderation innately motivate people to act in a non-contingent way. When facing the problem of water shortage, no one in the world has the power to restore the water level. In this situation, instead of arguing that an individual cannot change the problem and it is better for his utility to use as much water as he needs, virtues guide people to save water in different practices. If everyone follows the virtue utilitarianism, the water shortage problem is likely to be solved more efficiently and the total amount of utility in the world can be maximized because following virtues make people to engage in practice which is virtuous in nature.

Some people will question how can virtues regulate people's actions and how general acceptance of virtues is possible for virtue utilitarianism. What distinguishes virtues from rules is that virtues are within one's morality whereas rules are outside forces. The virtues within people's morality facilitate or forbid them from acting in certain ways. For instance, integrity forbids an individual from cheating in tests. It is impossible to persuade a person who accepts integrity to engage in cheating through calculating the results of cheating or not simply because integrity forbids cheating. Unlike rules which are imposed from outside, virtues don't create problems related to partial acceptance since adopting virtues is always better than ignoring it. In some aspects, virtues are similar to rules. The best way to understand their relationship is that, as Mill suggested, virtues help us follow the rules and rules tell us what the virtues should be.

Virtue utilitarianism is also a plausible utilitarianism because of its practical use in social life. Virtues are closely linked with people's happiness and well-being, and when people possess virtues like generosity and act in coordination with them, their overall happiness can be increased in life. For instance, when a person is moderate, he can control his material desire and keep himself in a positive state of mind. Moderation means to conquer excess pleasure and it is a necessary part of eudaemonia. As a result, people with virtues like moderation can attain eudaemonist happiness.

4.02 Some deeper illustration

Now we need to focus on the special occasions which demand calculation of utility or common-sense morality. The utilization of the utility-maximizing calculation depends highly on context. People should rely on

calculations only in occasions in which acting virtuously cannot help to make the decision. One situation of this is when a close family member of yours falls into the water and there is another stranger drowning at the same time. Supposing none of them know how to swim, a virtuous person with benevolence should struggle over who to save. In this situation, computation can reveal that saving your family member is a choice that can maximize your happiness since saving him or her can lead to a higher level of happiness. The use of computation in this circumstance can make the person seem less apathetic and more acceptable to society. However, in some more extreme cases in which acting virtuously and calculating utility both cannot be applicable, customary morality is the primary source of action. When someone is trapped in a burning house, virtues motivate you to help but calculation forbids you from doing this. In this circumstance, people act on the basis of rule of thumbs and save the person.

Another benefit with virtue utilitarianism is that it increases people's sensitivity to happiness.^[16] Unlike rules which are strict in their demand, virtues are more salient to situations because of different environment that people are brought up. American people and Chinese people develop virtues which are different in content. American strongly concentrate on virtues like courage, integrity, freedom which originated from American history, ranging from American Revolution to westward expansion. On the other hand, Chinese people tend to focus more on humbleness and friendliness because of entrenched religions like Confucianism. Factors like social development, religion, and economics all affect culture and how people evolve their values and virtues in different cultures. Intersubjective agreement is a part of how people in the world gradually possess different sets of virtues and makes people more sensitive to the various sources of happiness.

Virtue utilitarianism, from the above analysis, is a plausible form of utilitarianism because it avoids the collective self-defeating problem, reduces the extent of calculation, connects more closely to social life, increases people's sensitivity to well-being, and copes with special occasions well enough. It not only overcomes the challenges which diminish the persuasiveness of act and rule utilitarianism, but also makes a person more likely to do the right thing in context than being a calculator.

V. CONCLUSION

Virtue ethics suggest that people should treat happiness as more than the conventional sense of pleasure and life-satisfaction. Happiness is better understood as eudaemonia, and we should avoid reductionism in our discussion of happiness. Classical utilitarianism that Bentham and Mill advocated is problematic but their ideas lay the ground for development of act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. However, virtue utilitarianism offers a more promising form of utilitarianism compared to act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. In contemporary society, people should accept virtue utilitarianism to guide their behaviors.

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