

We Need A Game Show With A Lightning Round Question: "Happiness or Pleasure? - Why?"

Post by "Cassius" of February 3, 2023 at 11:11 AM

I think this question has come to my mind in this way because of the quote from Seneca we discussed in the [last episode of the podcast](#) as to the definition of "friend" and to the word-splitting game of "mice" and "syllables" and "cheese."

Taking this completely out of context of all our past discussions, it's tempting to equate happiness = pleasure, because both words can be considered to be concepts, and they are concepts that are certainly related. But they can also be considered to be feelings, although the -ness on happiness implies more of a "state" than a discrete sensation.

If this were not a question of some relevance, we probably would not see all the arguments we see which some insisting that one or the other is the real definition of the goal, which the other is a subsidiary concept. We see Epicurus using different words, so we see him use both "happiness" and "pleasure" in varying contexts. But we also see important texts which seem to make a point of considering "pleasure" as the goal, which other texts can be read to point to "happiness."

Seneca is clearly right to be concerned about logical hair-splitting, and it is easy to drop back and say that logical hair-splitting is what the debate between "happiness" (or ataraxia or eudaemonia or whatever) vs pleasure is all about.

But nevertheless there seems to continue to be a sharp debate as to which word is appropriate.

Is the answer to "Happiness? or Pleasure? Why?" simply:

"It doesn't matter - you're just wasting time splitting hairs."

Or for the sake of clarity in talking with people about these issues do we need a concise and clear statement of why two words are being used instead of one?

If so, what is that concise and clear statement?