

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

Post by "Cassius" of February 4, 2023 at 12:02 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Diogenes of Oinoanda doesn't help to clear up things for me, because it doesn't saying what it means by happiness.

Yep it is too bad we don't have more context at the beginning. But my expectation would be that if we had more of the "point in issue" we would see that this is a very abstract debate being stated in very philosophical, rather than practical, terms.

It seems to me in day to day life we consider "living pleurably" and "living happily" to be totally interchangeable. But the reason we are having this discussion is that philosophers see a need to plant a flag and reduce everything down to a single word-concept that they can rally and organize around. I think that's a legitimate perspective too.

One way of looking at all this seems to me to be: Everything at the philosophic level seems to revolve around war-games between "Virtue" and "Piety" and "Reason" (or "Logic" or "Idealism"). Epicurus rejected those and decided it made the most sense to designate his flag as "Pleasure." He might well have called his flag "Happiness" but it's not a very good strategy to choose the same flag everyone else is carrying, and "Happiness" and similar words are claimed by everyone from every camp. If you're going to fight a war or make your point clear in philosophy you need a very clear and understandable flag. The choice of the word "Pleasure" both makes the correct point and throws the issue in the face of those who disapprove of it.

A lot of people tend to want to blur all these issues because they want to be polite and diplomatic. That's understandable too, and when the situation calls for that then "happiness" may make sense. But if you forget what context you're talking in, and use the word "Happiness" when you in a philosophical debate, then you don't do much but guarantee that the real point in issue will never be examined and decided.

It's one thing to choose to blur the issues when you think you are trying to lead someone along gradually to understand the point in issue. But I feel sure it is not lost on those who disapprove of Epicurus that as long as they keep the discussion solely about "Happiness" then no serious philosopher will ever take the Epicurean position seriously.

A book title like "Living for Pleasure" makes a point that a title like "Living for Happiness" never could.