

Explaining In Summary Form How A Man In Extreme Pain Can Be Said To Be "Happy"

Post by "Cassius" of April 20, 2024 at 5:38 AM

Admin Edit: This thread was branched off from the Cosma Raimondi discussion at the link below. The purpose of this thread will be to discuss how to summarize the proper way to describe the wise man who is in the midst of torturing pain, and to come up with a summary to get people started on the distinction suitable for referencing on the front page of the forum.

Post

[Cosma Raimondi's Letter to Ambrogio Tignosi](#)

A Letter to Ambrogio Tignosi in Defence of Epicurus against the Stoics, Academics and Peripatetics

[translated by Martin Davies \(from Google Books\)](#)

epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/4084/

I have very little leisure at the moment to argue my views on the subject which your letters raise, being taken up with more weighty and much more difficult matters. I do not mind saying that I am very much occupied with my studies in astronomy. But since I have always followed and wholly approved the...



Cassius

August 29, 2023 at 7:42 PM

One interesting aspect of [Cosma Raimondi's](#) letter is that it appears that he emphatically rejects the view that a man can be "happy" even under torture. (This starts at 4:22 in the recording.)

We've been discussing that issue recently, and it is interesting to consider whether Raimondi was familiar with Diogenes Laertius' statement on that subject and rejected Laertius' accuracy, or something else is going on.

Quote from Diogenes Laertius (Bailey)

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3818-explaining-in-summary-form-how-a-man-in-extreme-pain-can-be-said-to-be-happy/>

[118] And even if the wise man be put on the rack, he is happy. Only the wise man will show gratitude, and will constantly speak well of his friends alike in their presence and their absence. Yet when he is on the rack, then he will cry out and lament. The wise man will not have intercourse with any woman with whom the law forbids it, as Diogenes says in his summary of Epicurus' moral teaching. ...

Raimondi does not write as if he is disagreeing with Epicurus, but explaining and praising him, so this discrepancy with Laertius seems likely relevant to our discussions of the many shades of meaning of "happy," eudaemonia, "blessed," etc.

I do get the impression that Raimondi is embracing a sweeping view of pleasure that fully includes the health of the body and mind (therefore any experiences which are not painful), so I don't think Raimondi is off base.

To me, likely the key to resolving these issues lies in proper parsing and perspectives on the conceptual issue happiness. To my reading no one is arguing that the experience of being in Phalaris' bull, or experiencing kidney disease, is not painful. The issue seems to reside in being able to articulate properly the definition of "happiness" as being based on "pleasure" but not requiring constant agreeable stimulation, just like the definition of "god" is based on "blessed" but not requiring omnipotence and omniscience and other similar errors.

Maybe there are other ways to explain this discrepancy.

Has anyone here ([Don](#) ?) looked closely at the Greek which Bailey is translating in the quote above?

Post by “Don” of April 20, 2024 at 8:36 AM

[Epicurean Sage - Torture](#)

Hicks: Even on the rack the wise man is happy. Yonge: That even if the wise man were to be put to the torture, he would still be happy. It's important to...

sites.google.com

Post by “Cassius” of April 20, 2024 at 9:06 AM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3818-explaining-in-summary-form-how-a-man-in-extreme-pain-can-be-said-to-be-happy/>

Hicks definitely has the upper hand that on the rack the wise man *will* still cry out.

And pointing to the different connotations of eudaemonia/happy/blessed makes sense.

I wonder why Cosma Raimondi did not explain it that way, but to figure that out would require diving into the (Latin?) text.

Post by “Cassius” of April 20, 2024 at 9:18 AM

Hopefully this comment by Martin Davies will lead to the Latin text:

For the Latin text of Raimondi's letter see my critical edition in 'Cosma Raimondi's defence of Epicurus', *Rinascimento*, 27 (1987), 123-39

Post by “Bryan” of April 20, 2024 at 10:16 AM

Very interesting letter, thank you for the reading Cassius!

According to the Cambridge edition of Diogenes Laertius, the "nor" or "not" in translations such as "[Nor will] he groan and howl when he is put to the torture" comes from a corruptela (corruption) in the text, which they give in daggers:

μόνον τε χάριν ἔξειν τὸν σοφόν, καὶ ἐπὶ φίλοις καὶ παροῦσι καὶ ἀποῦσιν ὁμοίως διὰ τε **τοδουχτ**
ὄτε μέντοι στρεβλοῦται, ἔνθα καὶ μύζει καὶ οἰώζει.

The manuscripts all do different weird things at that point, so most of the writers of the surviving manuscripts also scratched their heads here and made their best guess. I think it can be ignored.

Post by “Cassius” of April 20, 2024 at 11:03 AM

Bryan, but as to the first issue, that Diogenes Laertius says that Epicurus thinks that the wise man will be happy even on the rack, while Cosma Raimondi thinks he will not be, what do you make of that?

So far I have not been able to track down the Latin text of the Raimondi letter to see if this is a translation issue or what.

#Cosma_Raimondi (testing the tagging feature)

Post by “Bryan” of April 20, 2024 at 11:55 AM

"happy on the rack" *is* hard to accept as a simple premise. Perhaps Raimondi had this basic idea in mind.

But "having an enduring sense of mental well-being while in great pain" is possible and realistic -- of course Epicurus himself provided an example of this at the end of his life. I also saw it in my grandfather.

Post by “Cassius” of April 20, 2024 at 11:57 AM

So is this an area where we think Diogenes Laertius is misleading? I seem to recall that this very conversation takes place with Torquatus in "On Ends" as well, so I need to compare that.

Post by “Bryan” of April 20, 2024 at 12:07 PM

My view is not that Diogenes Laertius is misleading but, as Don and Kalosyni have stated recently, that eudaimonia is not "happiness" but instead "(an enduring sense of) mental well-being."

Post by “Cassius” of April 20, 2024 at 12:12 PM

Here is one place this is referenced in On Ends Book 2. Cicero is not letting Torquatus get in a word here, but the tone of the attack seems to indicate that in some way something is being maintained that would justify Laertius' statement -- though possibly not with "happy"

inconsistent; for while he places his supreme good in pleasure, he refuses to allow that pleasure can reach a greater height in a life of boundless extent, than in one limited and moderate in length. He who places good entirely in virtue can say that happiness is consummated by the consummation of virtue, since he denies that time brings additions to his supreme good; but when a man supposes that happiness is caused by pleasure, how are his doctrines to be reconciled, if he means to affirm that pleasure is not heightened by duration? In that case, neither is pain. Or, though all the most enduring pains are also the most wretched, does length of time not render pleasure more enviable? What reason then has Epicurus for calling a god, as he does, both happy and eternal? If you take away his eternity, Jupiter will be not a whit happier than Epicurus, since both of them are in the enjoyment of the supreme good, which is pleasure. *Oh, but our philosopher is subject to pain as well.* Yes, but he sets it at nought; for he says that, if he were being roasted, he would call out *how sweet this is!* In 89 what respect then is he inferior to the god, if not in respect of eternity? And what good does eternity bring but the highest form of pleasure, and that prolonged for ever? What boots it then to use high sounding language unless your language be consistent? On bodily pleasure (I will add mental, if you like, on the understanding that it also springs, as you believe, from the body) depends the life of happiness. Well, who can guarantee the wise man that this pleasure will be permanent? For the circumstances that give rise to pleasures are not within the control of the wise man, since your happiness is not dependent on wisdom herself, but on the objects which wisdom procures with a view to pleasure. Now all such objects are external to us, and what is external is in the power of chance. Thus fortune becomes lady paramount over happiness, though Epicurus says she to a small extent only crosses the path of the wise man.

XXVIII. Come, you will say to me, these are small matters. 00

Post by "Cassius" of April 20, 2024 at 12:24 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

My view is not that Diogenes Laertius is misleading but, as Don and Kalosyni have stated recently, that eudaimonia is not "happiness" but instead "(an enduring sense of) mental well-being."

So then the problem is in fact in the tendency of most all translators to use "happiness."

But Cosma Raimondi, depending on the Latin he is using, is not seeing the need to explain this terminology either, and everyone who reads these descriptions of happiness is totally afloat in a sea of ambiguity as to what is really being discussed, because I would agree with Cosma Raimondi that while in the process of being roasted I would not be feeling an "enduring sense of mental well-being" at that moment either.

I think we have a lot more to do to communicate the relationship between the feelings at any particular moment vs a term that appears to subjectively evaluate a conceptual sum of total experiences past, present, and future.

"Blessed" would probably still need much more explanation, but would seem less off-base to me at this point, because again, the issue that is being described is going to be something that may indeed apply in some way, but which is not going to prevent us from crying out in pain while we're undergoing the experience of the moment.

The whole ball game here is communicating the relationship between this evaluative term, whatever it is, and the pleasures and pains of the particular moment.

And I, for one, would not want to volunteer to undergo the wrack as an experiment to figure it out in real time! 😊 At this point I am much more comfortable taking an inventory of all my mental and bodily pleasures and pains at any particular moment and doing the best I can to maximize the pleasure and minimize the pain.

Then if some philosopher wants to tell me that they have a different point to make when they are discussing the term "happiness," I will smile and nod and find it enjoyable to hear the discussion, but not for a moment accept that their evaluation overrides my own feelings.

Post by "Cassius" of April 20, 2024 at 12:43 PM

I don't mean to go round and round and round on the same topic! 😊

Consistent with our goal here of not just "discussing" Epicurean philosophy but also promoting and trying to assist in reigniting interest in it, this seems to be one of those issues, right up there with explaining Epicurus' view of the meaning of "pleasure," for which we need something on the front page of the forum to illuminate the issue and prevent people from getting confused by the seeming implausibility that Cosma Raimondi is describing.

I think we're making headway on that with "pleasure," and "happiness" needs to be treated similarly.

Just like with "[death is nothing to us](#)" and "For gods there are, since the knowledge of them is by clear vision."

We can help things a lot by working on a couple of sentences on happiness, so let's try to see what we can do on that. I am thinking this deserves an extended back and forth with many iterations before we can come up with something brief, then we can link to a longer discussion beyond that.

Post by “Cassius” of April 20, 2024 at 12:47 PM

I can name several prominent names that I would probably see as "negative indicators" on this topic (probably including Bailey), but I would definitely like to see if we can find some material on what DeWitt, David Sedley, and perhaps AA Long or other similar "luminaries" have to say about this topic.

There ought to be significant commentary out there on what we're talking about, which I think is pretty different from the general focus on "absence of pain," but more a comparison of this question of how can a man be "happy" while under torture / in great physical pain.

Post by “Cassius” of April 20, 2024 at 1:51 PM

Here are several points that demand to be addressed in any summary of "E-happiness." (I think I will use E-happiness for a while to stand in for whatever the concept is that as Epicurus spoke of it. Is Cicero correct, here in section 27 of book two, that Epicurus would agree that :

1. That E-happiness is entirely within the wise man's own control? "E-happiness, if only it exists at all, ought to lie entirely within the wise man's own control"?

2. That E-happiness is something that we have no cause for worry about losing? "For if the life of happiness may cease to be so, then it cannot be really happy. Who indeed has any faith that a thing which is perishable and fleeting will in his own case always continue solid and strong? But he who feels no confidence in the permanence of the blessings he possesses, must needs apprehend that he will some time or other be wretched, if he loses them. Now no one can be happy while in alarm about his most important possessions; no one then can possibly be happy"

3. That E-happiness is something permanent? "For happiness is usually spoken of not with reference to some period of time, but to permanence, nor do we talk of the life of happiness at all, unless that life be rounded off and complete, nor can a man be happy at one time, and wretched at another; since any man who judges that he can become wretched will never be happy. For when happiness has been once entered on, it is as durable as wisdom herself, who is the creator of the life of happiness,

4. That it is not something which we need wait to assess after the person has died? "nor does it await the last days of life, as Herodotus writes that Solon enjoined upon Croesus.:

Quote

XXVII. But we dwell too long upon very simple matters. When we have once concluded and demonstrated that if every- thing is judged by the standard of pleasure, no room is left for either virtues or friendships, there is nothing besides on which- we need greatly insist. And yet, lest it should be thought that any passage is left without reply, I will now also say a few words in answer to the remainder of your speech. Well then, whereas the whole importance of philosophy lies in its bearing on happiness, and it is from a desire for happiness alone that men have devoted themselves to this pursuit, and whereas some place happiness in one thing, some in another, while you place it in pleasure, and similarly on the other side all wretchedness you place in pain, let us first examine the nature of happiness as you conceive it. Now you will grant me this, I suppose, that happiness, if only it exists at all, ought to lie entirely within the wise man's own control. For if the life of happiness may cease to be so, then it cannot be really happy. Who indeed has any faith that a thing which is perishable and fleeting will in his own case always continue solid and strong? But he who feels no confidence in the permanence of the blessings he possesses, must needs apprehend that he will some time or other be wretched, if he loses them. Now no one can be happy while in alarm about his most important possessions; no one then can possibly be happy. For happiness is usually spoken of not with reference to some period of time, but to permanence, nor do we talk of the life of happiness at all, unless that life be rounded off and complete, nor can a man be happy at one time, and wretched at another; since any man who judges that he can become wretched will never be happy. For when happiness has been once entered on, it is as durable as wisdom herself, who is the

creator of the life of happiness, nor does it await the last days of life, as Herodotus writes that Solon enjoined upon Croesus.

Relating this to what Diogenes of Oinanda and Torquatus said, in equating a life of happiness to a life of pleasure, we have all sorts of reference to a life of happiness being a life of PLEASURE, including:

Cicero, quoted from above: "Well then, whereas the whole importance of philosophy lies in its bearing on happiness, and it is from a desire for happiness alone that men have devoted themselves to this pursuit, and whereas some place happiness in one thing, some in another, while you place it in pleasure, and similarly on the other side all wretchedness you place in pain, let us first examine the nature of happiness as you conceive it."

Torquatus at Book 1:54 (XVI)

RACKHAM - If then even the glory of the Virtues, on which all the other philosophers love to expatiate so eloquently, has in the last resort no meaning unless it be based on pleasure, whereas pleasure is the only thing that is intrinsically attractive and alluring, it cannot be doubted that pleasure is the one supreme and final Good and that **a life of happiness is nothing else than a life of pleasure.**

REID: But if the encomium passed even on the virtues themselves, over which the eloquence of all other philosophers especially runs riot, can find no vent unless it be referred to pleasure, and pleasure is the only thing which invites us to the pursuit of itself, and attracts us by reason of its own nature, then there can be no doubt that of all things good it is the supreme and ultimate good, and that **a life of happiness means nothing else but a life attended by pleasure** .

Diogenes of Oinoanda Fr. 32 ... [the latter] being as malicious as the former. I shall discuss folly shortly, the virtues and pleasure now. If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into «what is the means of happiness?» and they wanted to say «the virtues» (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. **But since, as I say, the issue is not «what is the means of happiness?» but «what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?»**, I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, **that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues**, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end. Let us therefore now state that this is true, making it our starting-point.

Post by "Cassius" of April 20, 2024 at 9:51 PM

Relevant to this thread is something we discussed in the 20th Zoom tonight -- use of the Latin "Felix," as shown in this highly relevant comment from Virgil:

[Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas - Wikipedia](#)

Reprehenditur itaque Epicurus, quod is de summo bono nimis molliter posuisse existimetur, idque in voluptate constituerit, ad eamque referenda omnia censuerit. Mihi vero studiosius illum consideranti in dies magis ac magis haec eius sententia probari solet, tanquam, non hominis, sed aut Apollinis, aut superioris naturae cuiusdam edictum ac constitutum. Qui cum maxime omnium naturae vim perspiceret, intelligeretque ita natos nos esse, ab ipsaque natura formatos, ut nihil tam esset nobis consentaneum, quam ut omnia corporis nostri membra sana atque integra haberemus, eaque in statu servarentur, nec ullis afficeremur aut animi aut corporis incommodis, summum in voluptate bonum constituit. O sapientissimum hominem Epicurum. Quid enim ad hanc sententiam addi potest? aut quae est alia ulla felicitas? Nec enim cuius animus angitur, is beatus esse, nec cuius corpus dolore afficitur, hic esse non miser potest. Ne quis vero quibus temporibus de his disputem ignorare me existimet, hac tota disputatione intelligi illud volo, me hic de illa simplici, veraque philosophia, quam theologiam appellamus, non agere, sed de hominis humano bono quaerere et de opinionibus ipsorum inter se hac de re dissentientium philosophorum.

Post by "Cassius" of April 21, 2024 at 8:21 AM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3818-explaining-in-summary-form-how-a-man-in-extreme-pain-can-be-said-to-be-happy/>

Also the following paragraph - at first glance he tends to prefer "felicitate."

Cum igitur Epicurus ita constituerit, contra tamen Stoici disputant, felicitatemque in virtute ponentes sola, eum, qui

— 161 —

enim absurdus, quam eum qui miserimus sit, beatum dicere? Quid insipidius, quam positum in tauro Phalaridis, qui summis urgeatur cruciatibus, non miserum fateri? Quid porro tam ab omni felicitate abhorrens, quam his omnibus aut plurimis carere quae felicitatem ipsam constituent? Nam isti eum quoque qui fame conficiatur ac manco sit corpore reliquisque omnibus et corporis et rerum externarum afficiatur incommoditatibus, dum virtutem ipse prae se tulerit, nihilo minus beatissimum existimant. Ego autem, nec M. quidem Regulum, quem suis omnibus libris tantopere extollunt et celebrant, cum cruciaretur, nec si quis praestantissima virtute, fide, innocentia, integritate in tauro uratur Phalaridis, aut patria exulet, vel acerbiore fortuna aliqua indignissime vexetur, non modo beatos homines sed miseros etiam habendos puto; eoque miseres quod, cum tanta tanquam excellens eorum virtus, exitum feliciorum fortunatioresque eventus commerita esset, in has tantas calamitates inciderunt.

Post by "Don" of April 21, 2024 at 8:23 AM

Beatus, if I remember, is the word most often used by Cicero that gets translated "happy."

To my understanding, beatus is best understood as the Latin for μακάριος (makarios) "blessed"... Although, I suppose, a case can be made that it translates ευδαιμονία (eudaimonia). I suppose the same case can be made for felicitas.

It would be helpful if we could find a direct ancient Latin translation of a Greek text.

Post by “Don” of April 21, 2024 at 8:26 AM

Felicitas

"From fēlix ("happy; blessed, fortunate, lucky; fertile, fruitful; prosperous; auspicious, favourable") + -tās (ultimately from Proto-Indo-European *dʰeh₁(y)- ("to nurse, suckle"))." - Wiktionary

[Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary, fēlīcitas](#)

Post by “Don” of April 21, 2024 at 8:29 AM

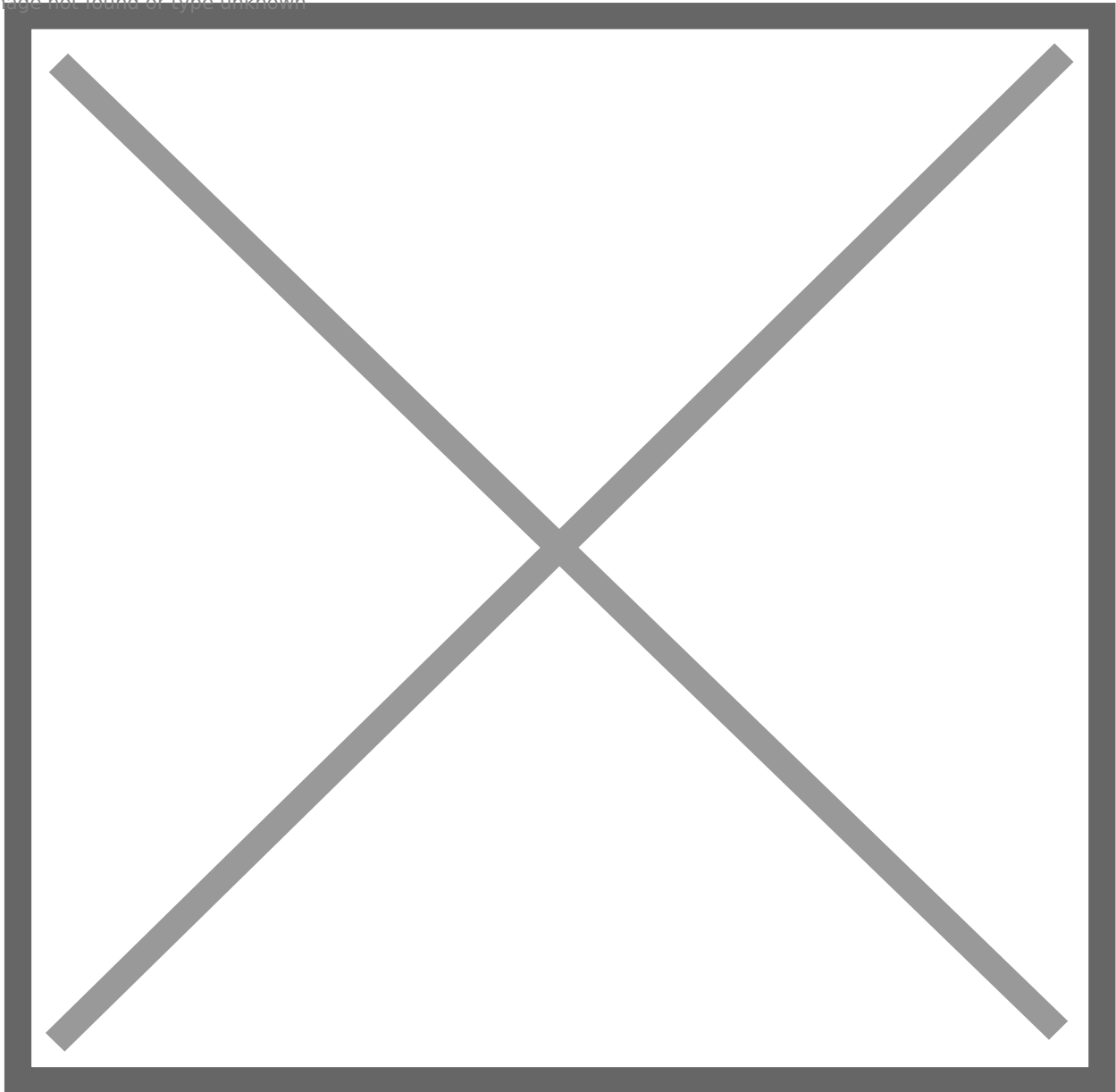
Beatus

Perfect passive participle of beō ("make happy").

[Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary, beō](#)

Post by “Don” of April 21, 2024 at 8:48 AM

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[The Biblical Definitions Of The Pursuit Of Happiness](#)

How should we construe the right to pursue happiness? The problem is that the words "happy" and "happiness" are used today in variety of interrelated but...

www.huffpost.com

Not exactly scholarly but...

Quote

In the modern period, "happiness" is the customary translation for eudaimonia in classical Greek ethics (beatitudo in Latin): the perfection or realization of a person's

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function as a human being, which is presumed to be the ultimate human good, the goal of goals.

...

Boethius uses two terms usually translated today as "happiness": *beatitudo* and *felicitas*. When Geoffrey Chaucer translated this work into English in the 14th century, he did not translate either term as "happiness." I doubt whether the idea would have crossed his mind. Instead, he rendered *felicitas* as "felicitee" (which was already available), and he coined a felicitous new word for *beatitudo*: "wellfulness."

Post by "Bryan" of June 30, 2024 at 12:26 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Hicks definitely has the upper hand that on the rack the wise man will still cry out.

I had not fully appreciated the fact that, when his excellent edition of Diogenes Laertius was published, Hicks had already been blind for over 25 years.

Wikipedia says "Between 1898 and 1900 Robert Hicks became blind, but he nevertheless produced most of his major works after this time, aided by his wife." They even produced Latin dictionary in braille. I think his translation of the letter to Herodotus is in some ways better than Bailey's.

Post by "Kalosyni" of July 1, 2024 at 1:24 PM

I am wondering what the "score card" is on this? How many translations say "will" cry out and how many "will not" cry out?