

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

Post by "Don" of February 4, 2023 at 11:27 PM

I've also read back over the thread, and there are some interesting takes on the "happiness or pleasure" topic. For what it's worth, here are my two drachmas worth. Everything from here on should be read as if prefaced by "From my perspective..." Your results may vary:

- Pleasure (and pain) are biological sensations present in all life ([including plants it seems after a fashion](#)).
- As such, all life appears to pursue "pleasure" (broadly defined as those stimuli conducive to existence) and retreat from "pain" (again, broadly defined as those stimuli unfavorable to existence).
- As forms of life become more complex, pleasure begins to be experienced as a positive "emotional" response to both external and internal stimuli.
- Homeostasis within the body can be experienced as a pleasurable state in which to be.
- As forms of life become even more complex (i.e., brains get bigger and more complex) as in humans, memories can also elicit pleasure in addition to coming from external stimuli ... as in having fun.
- Eudaimonia - the slippery ancient Greek word translated haphazardly IMO often as "happiness" - results from a body in homeostasis - all the bodily functions working in a balanced way - and a mind free from anxiety. If Happiness is standing in for eudaimonia, to me it is a *description* of a pleasurable life overall.
- "Happiness" is different than saying "I'm happy about X" or "I'm feeling happy (now)" or "What a happy day." Being happy in the moment is different than happiness, the state of living a happy life overall. And I'm primarily getting this from using eudaimonia (which I prefer to translate as "well-being") as the stand-in for "happiness" in my mind.
- I must say I also like Dr. Rucker's statement that "Fixating on my lack of happiness made me label myself as unhappy."
- Personally, I think I like to think of living my life in eudaimonia/well-being by pursuing individual pleasures, both from internal and external stimuli (e.g., pleasant memories and engaging in fun activities, respectively) which I interpret myself as katastemic and kinetic pleasures. Yeah, I went there!
- So, it's not happiness/eudaimonia vs pleasure; or pleasure; and pleasure. Happiness/eudaimonia are two different things describing two different spheres. Pleasure describes a feeling experienced in the moment. I can *anticipate* future pleasure and even plan for it, and take pleasure in the anticipation now, but I can't *experience* future pleasure. I can only experience pleasure now.

- Happiness/eudaimonia is a description of how I perceive my life as a whole. "Are you happy?" almost needs more than those three words to make sense.
 - "Are you happy (now)?" basically means "Are you experiencing a pleasurable feeling right now."
 - "Are you happy (with your life)?" basically means "How would you assess the level of pleasure overall in your life?"
 - "Are you happy (with that sandwich)?" basically means "Are you experiencing pleasure in eating that sandwich?"
 - "Are you happy?" asked by your partner is completely different from the waiter in a restaurant pointing at your meal and asking "Are you happy (with that)?"
- Looked at it this way, "happy" is a mushy, ill-defined word that can take on any number of meanings in context. It's like the English word "love"... "I love you" to "I love ice cream." At least Greek had different words for different forms of "love."

That's probably enough rambling now. To answer the original question: Happiness or Pleasure? I'm not sure the question is answerable in any specific way since both words - to me - describe two different things. One or the other? It seems it's both to me because I want pleasures so my life tends toward happiness/eudaimonia.