

# "Pleasure" vs "Pleasant Experiences"

Post by "Don" of February 4, 2025 at 11:30 PM

## [Quote from Don](#)

I have thoughts on the word "goal" for τέλος ... But that'll have to wait until this evening.

Okay, so what was I alluding to?

ΤΕΛΟΣ (telos) is often - predominantly - translated into the English as "goal," sometimes "end." This implies what comes at the *finish* of a race or *end* of a game or "winning if you reach the goal." That's an unfortunate side effect of working with the English word "goal." Think of a football/soccer match and the announcer yelling "GOOOOOAAAAL!"

My thought is that ΤΕΛΟΣ (*and I'm purposefully using the Greek spelling to remove it from contamination of English semantics*) should NOT be taken as a "goal" to be achieved but rather as a fact to be acknowledged. Let me provide a link to the dictionary here to start:

<https://logeion.uchicago.edu/%CF%84%CE%AD%CE%BB%CE%BF%CF%82>

While ΤΕΛΟΣ does have, within its dictionary definitions, English words like "achievement, attainment; winning-post, goal"; the connotation I want to focus on is "Philos., full realization, highest point. ideal; ... the end or purpose of action: hence, the final cause: hence simply = τὸ ἀγαθόν, the chief good."

When Epikouros writes to Menoikeus to say "καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος λέγομεν εἶναι τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν" I maintain it is NOT something like "pleasure is the start ἀρχὴν and finish τέλος of the blessed life." The blessed life is enveloped by pleasure, it is the foundation and the fulfillment of the blessed life but we need to acknowledge that and live our life that way. The blessed life - a life akin to the gods - is a life where all one's actions are pointing toward pleasure. When we ask the question "Why do I do that?" the answer is always "for pleasure". If I undergo a painful trial to have a better life on the other side, the reason I went through that pain is pleasure. Pleasure imbues EVERYTHING we do. If we try to substitute another answer to "Why do I do that?" we are fooling ourselves. Pleasure is not a "winning-post" to be reached, something we have to strive for or agonize about not having or something to swim against the tide to achieve. Pleasure is present - sometimes slightly, sometimes intensely - in every moment of the day in everything we do. If we see Pleasure as something "out there" that we have to achieve, we're missing out.

"Goal" is an insufficient way to express the omnipresence of Pleasure. "Pleasure is the goal" is a pale way of saying - as I consider it more - "Pleasure is the reason I do everything." Pleasure is

the final cause for all my actions. That kind of "final goal" is what is meant by "Pleasure is the goal." It's NOT "Pleasure is the GOAL" it is rather "Pleasure **IS** the goal."

We ONLY experience two feelings: Pleasure or Pain. If Cicero wants to go all apoplectic on what he considers an idiosyncratic use of "voluptas" or ἡδονή, boohoo Cicero. It seems to me to be Epicurus calling reality as he sees it.

Pleasure exists as the omnipresent end-point of all our actions. We don't have to run the race to achieve pleasure. It is here, now, in every decision, every action, IF we're willing to admit that that is - in every moment - the final cause of all our actions.

That's what I'm beginning to understand "Pleasure is the goal" to mean.