

Episode 270 - Life Is Desirable, But Unlimited Time Contains No Greater Pleasure Than Limited Time

Post by "Pacatus" of March 9, 2025 at 6:30 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

To what extent would it be appropriate to conclude that Epicurus is considering "happiness" to be an "emergent quality"

At one time, I might have considered that – and perhaps need to again. But now (and partly following [Don](#) regarding *hedone* as the natural *telos*) I would regard happiness as just an alternative word to describe the experience (feeling) of pleasure: both in the kinetic and katastematic senses. And I think it is a useful word (especially for a state of *ataraxia*, or any state in which the feelings of pleasure sufficiently outweigh any pain – e.g., as you note, Epicurus on his death bed). That is, I think – in the everyday discourse of “ordinary language” – we understand what someone means when they say they are happy.

In the longer-term sense, *eudaimonia* represents a life of sufficient pleasure (again, both physical and psychological) to outweigh whatever pain (either *ponē* or *tarachē*) a life characterized by more well-being than ill-being – as perceived by the individual. I have no problem calling that a happy life – for me (and, for all the pain and mental suffering, I do).

Again, as long as it is associated with the experience of pleasure, I find it to be an unproblematic description: “happy.” But I don’t see it as anything distinct from pleasure – even as an emergent quality.

With that said, I do recognize that – in philosophical as opposed to “ordinary language” discourse* – more rigor may be required. In which case: pleasure.

* Wittgenstein (in his *Philosophical Investigations*) tended to focus on how academic philosophical discourse could go astray from perfectly good “ordinary” understanding; but everyday discourse might also fail to convey a true understanding in specific cases.