

What Is Happiness? How Does Our Conception of It Derive From Eudaemonia and Felicitas? Should Happiness Be The Goal of Life?

Post by "Cassius" of December 22, 2025 at 7:22 PM

For those who might be interested in a starting point to research the evolution of the concepts from eudaemonia to felicitas to "happiness," I have asked Claude to summarize the major points and produce a bibliography of references to check. Take this for what it is worth - as a starting point only. Writing up a study of this would make a great project for anyone who had the time and inclination to do so.

I'll add to this that while it is certainly a first step to determine what is meant by the word eudaemonia/felicitas/happiness, I personally think it is almost and even more urgently a question as to whether we SHOULD PURSUE eudaemonia/felicitas/happiness as our central goal, or whether we should be pursuing PIETY (religion) or RATIONALITY (logic or something like it). Neither of those are particularly easy to define either, but we have to live NOW, and we therefore we're making a choice every minute of our lives whether we admit it or not. We can't and don't postpone making a commitment until we've read 50 books and obtained our doctorates in philosophy or religion.

In other words we can't wait forever debating "what does happiness mean." We have to decide NOW whether our goal is happiness, or obeying the gods, or being "rational," or being a "good person," or whatever. So I think it's a mistake to think that we have to know all there is to know about the etymology of happiness before we decide how to organize our lives.

Display Spoiler

The Evolution of "Happiness" as the Goal of Life: From Eudaimonia and Felicitas to Modern Conceptions

Introduction

The concept of happiness as the ultimate goal of human life has undergone a profound transformation over more than two millennia. What ancient Greeks understood as *eudaimonia* and Romans as *felicitas* differs markedly from our contemporary notion of "happiness." This essay traces the etymological, philosophical, and cultural evolution of this central concept, demonstrating how a term once rooted in divine favor and good fortune has transformed into a psychological state and, in modern times, an expected entitlement.

I. Ancient Greek *Eudaimonia*: Flourishing Through Virtue

Etymological Foundations

The Greek term *eudaimonia* (εὐδαιμονία) derives from two components: *eu* (εὖ), meaning "good" or "well," and *daimōn* (δαίμων), meaning "spirit" or "deity." The composite literally suggests "having a good spirit" or being favored by benevolent divine forces. This etymology reveals the ancient understanding that happiness was not merely a subjective emotional state but rather an objective condition of living well—a state of being watched over by favorable spiritual forces.

The *daimōn* in ancient Greek thought represented a guiding spirit or one's personal divine guardian. Thus, *eudaimonia* etymologically implies living in accordance with one's true nature or divine purpose, a conception far removed from modern notions of subjective pleasure or contentment.

Aristotelian Philosophy: Happiness as Virtuous Activity

Aristotle's treatment of *eudaimonia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* represents the most influential ancient philosophical account. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is not a feeling or temporary state of mind but rather "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue." It is both the highest human good and the ultimate end (*telos*) of human action—the only thing desired for its own sake rather than as a means to something else.

Critically, Aristotle distinguished *eudaimonia* from *hedone* (ἡδονή, pleasure). While pleasure might accompany virtuous activity, *eudaimonia* consists fundamentally in the excellent performance of characteristically human functions—particularly the exercise of reason in accordance with moral and intellectual virtues. This requires:

1. **Virtue of character** (*ēthikē aretē* 😞) moral excellences such as courage, temperance, and justice
2. **Intellectual virtues** (*dianoetic virtues* 😞) wisdom, understanding, and practical judgment
3. **External goods**: sufficient material resources and favorable circumstances
4. **Time**: a complete life, not momentary experiences

Aristotle emphasized that *eudaimonia* is an achievement requiring sustained effort throughout a complete lifetime. As he memorably stated, "one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy."

The Objectivity of Eudaimonia

A crucial feature distinguishing *eudaimonia* from modern "happiness" is its objective character. Aristotle held that one could possess *eudaimonia* without knowing it, and conversely, one could

feel subjectively happy while lacking *eudaimonia*. For example, a person might feel content while their children secretly harbor malicious intentions toward them—such a person would experience subjective pleasure but lack genuine *eudaimonia*, which requires objectively good relationships.

This objectivity extended to Aristotle's conviction that only those capable of philosophical contemplation (*theoria*)—the highest expression of human rationality—could achieve the fullest *eudaimonia*. The contemplative life represented the most godlike human activity and thus the supreme form of flourishing.

Other Greek Perspectives

While Aristotle's eudaimonism became canonical, other Greek schools offered distinct interpretations:

- **Stoics** (Zeno, Epictetus, Seneca): Virtue alone is sufficient for *eudaimonia*; external circumstances are irrelevant to true happiness. The sage could be "sick and yet happy, in peril and yet happy, dying and yet happy."
- **Epicureans** (Epicurus): *Eudaimonia* consists in pleasure (*hedone*), but understood as tranquility (*ataraxia*) and freedom from bodily pain (*aponia*) rather than sensory indulgence. This represented a more hedonic conception while maintaining that virtue remains essential to achieving lasting pleasure.
- **Cynics** (Diogenes): Emphasized radical self-sufficiency, arguing that virtue and freedom from conventional desires constitute happiness, rejecting external goods entirely.

II. Roman *Felicitas*: Fortune, Fertility, and Public Prosperity

Etymological Roots

The Latin *felicitas* derives from *felix*, meaning "fruitful," "fertile," "fortunate," or "happy." The root connects to concepts of productivity and divine favor, originally associated with agricultural abundance and successful outcomes. The Romans personified *Felicitas* as a goddess representing good fortune, prosperity, and fertility.

Distinctive Features of Roman *Felicitas*

While *felicitas* served as the Latin translation of Greek *eudaimonia*, it carried distinctive Roman connotations:

1. **Civic dimension**: *Felicitas* often referred to public happiness and collective prosperity (*felicitas publica*) rather than purely individual flourishing. Roman happiness was inseparable from the welfare of the *res publica*.

2. **Material prosperity:** More than Greek *eudaimonia*, *felicitas* emphasized tangible success, wealth, and worldly achievement as signs of divine favor.
3. **Fortune and chance:** While *eudaimonia* stressed rational virtue, *felicitas* maintained stronger associations with luck (*fortuna*) and circumstances beyond human control.
4. **Divine favor:** Success in military campaigns, political office, and civic life demonstrated that the gods smiled upon Rome and its leaders.

The goddess *Fortuna* complemented *Felicitas*, governing chance and fate. The Romans recognized that while virtue mattered, external fortune significantly influenced human happiness—a more pragmatic perspective than Stoic or Platonic idealism.

Christian Transformation: Beatitudo

With Christianity's rise, Latin transformed Greek *makarios* (μακάριος, "blessed") into *beatitudo*. This concept, particularly in Augustine's and Aquinas's theology, relocated perfect happiness from earthly life to the afterlife vision of God (*visio Dei*).

Thomas Aquinas distinguished:

- *Felicitas*: imperfect, earthly happiness dependent on bodily existence
- *Beatitudo*: perfect, eternal happiness consisting in the beatific vision of God's essence

This theological development profoundly altered Western conceptions of happiness, subordinating worldly flourishing to otherworldly salvation.

III. The English "Happiness": From Fortune to Feeling

Etymology of "Happiness"

The English word "happiness" reveals a strikingly different origin from its Greek and Latin predecessors. It derives from the Middle English *hap*, meaning "chance," "luck," or "fortune," borrowed from Old Norse *happ* with identical meanings. The Proto-Germanic root **hampą* and ultimately Proto-Indo-European **kob-* meant "to suit, fit, succeed"—emphasizing fortunate circumstances rather than inner virtue.

This etymology is shared across Indo-European languages:

- Old French *heur* (giving modern *bonheur*, "good fortune")
- German *Glück* (still meaning both "happiness" and "luck")
- Icelandic *heppinn* ("lucky, fortunate, happy")

The suffix *-y* simply means "characterized by," so "happy" originally meant "characterized by good hap/luck"—essentially "lucky" or "fortunate." The noun "happiness" thus meant "good fortune" or "favorable circumstances."

Semantic Shift: From Luck to Subjective State

The evolution of "happiness" in English demonstrates a remarkable semantic transformation:

1. **Late 14th century:** "Lucky, favored by fortune, being in advantageous circumstances, prosperous"
2. **Late 14th century:** "Very glad" (subjective feeling emerging)
3. **1520s:** "Greatly pleased and content" (psychological state dominant)

This shift from objective external circumstances (being lucky) to subjective internal experiences (feeling pleased) represents a fundamental reconceptualization. By the early modern period, "happiness" increasingly denoted a mental state of pleasure, contentment, and satisfaction—a meaning quite distinct from Aristotelian virtue-based flourishing or Roman prosperity and divine favor.

The Enlightenment Revolution

The 17th and 18th centuries witnessed a dramatic transformation in happiness discourse. Several developments proved crucial:

1. **Secularization:** Happiness migrated from theological frameworks to philosophical and political discourse, becoming an earthly rather than heavenly goal.
2. **Individualization:** The locus shifted from communal or civic happiness to individual psychological well-being and personal fulfillment.
3. **Rights discourse:** Perhaps most revolutionary, the American Declaration of Independence (1776) proclaimed "the pursuit of Happiness" as an inalienable right. This marked a watershed: happiness transformed from divine gift or virtuous achievement into a human entitlement.
4. **Utilitarian calculus:** Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism mathematized happiness as pleasure maximization, proposing "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" as the foundation of morality and legislation. This "felicific calculus" reduced happiness to quantifiable pleasure units—a far cry from Aristotelian contemplative virtue.
5. **Psychological turn:** Enlightenment thinkers increasingly understood happiness as subjective experience rather than objective flourishing. David Hume, John Locke, and their contemporaries located happiness in feelings, sensations, and mental states.

IV. The Conceptual Divergence

Five Key Differences Between Ancient and Modern Concepts

1. Objectivity vs. Subjectivity

- *Eudaimonia*: Objective condition of living well, assessable by external observers
- *Happiness*: Subjective feeling known only to the experiencer

2. Duration and Scope

- *Eudaimonia*: Requires a complete lifetime; cannot be judged from momentary states
- *Happiness*: Can fluctuate moment-to-moment; often measured as current mood

3. Activity vs. State

- *Eudaimonia*: Active engagement in virtuous living; a way of being
- *Happiness*: Often conceived as a passive state or feeling to be obtained

4. Virtue Requirement

- *Eudaimonia*: Necessarily involves moral and intellectual excellence
- *Happiness*: Can be achieved through any means producing pleasant feelings

5. Divine vs. Human Agency

- Ancient concepts: Retained connection to divine favor, fate, or cosmic order
- Modern happiness: Primarily human achievement through choice and circumstance

The Loss and Gain

The transformation from *eudaimonia* to "happiness" involves both losses and gains:

Losses:

- Connection to virtue and moral excellence
- Objective standards for assessing good lives
- Integration of reason, character, and community
- Recognition of life's tragic dimensions and necessary sufferings

Gains:

- Democratic accessibility (everyone can pursue happiness, not just philosophers)
- Subjective authenticity (individuals define their own happiness)
- Psychological realism (acknowledgment of feelings and mental states)
- Liberation from rigid virtue hierarchies

V. Contemporary Developments: The Return to Eudaimonia

Positive Psychology and Well-being Research

Ironically, late 20th and early 21st-century psychology has witnessed a partial return to eudaimonic concepts:

1. Hedonic vs. Eudaimonic Well-being: Researchers distinguish:

- *Hedonic well-being*: Pleasure, satisfaction, positive affect (closer to modern "happiness")
- *Eudaimonic well-being*: Meaning, purpose, self-realization, virtue (closer to ancient *eudaimonia*)

2. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan): Proposes that genuine well-being comes from fulfilling psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness—echoing Aristotelian emphasis on self-actualization.

3. Meaning and Purpose: Viktor Frankl, Martin Seligman, and contemporary positive psychologists argue that meaningful engagement, not mere pleasure, produces lasting well-being.

4. Virtue Ethics Revival: Philosophers like Philippa Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, and Alasdair MacIntyre have revived Aristotelian virtue ethics, challenging modern utilitarian and deontological frameworks.

Critiques of Happiness Pursuit

Darrin McMahon and other scholars have noted concerning trends:

- **Happiness imperative:** The obligation to be happy can itself produce anxiety and dissatisfaction
- **Hedonic treadmill:** Adaptation to circumstances means pleasure-seeking rarely produces lasting contentment
- **Authenticity concerns:** Pharmacological or technological happiness-enhancement raises questions about genuine flourishing
- **Dystopian possibilities:** Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* warns of societies achieving universal happiness while losing humanity's higher capacities

VI. Conclusion: Multiple Meanings, Persistent Questions

The evolution from *eudaimonia* and *felicitas* to modern "happiness" reveals not merely etymological change but profound shifts in Western civilization's understanding of human nature, society, and the good life. Where ancient Greeks and Romans saw happiness as objective flourishing through virtue, divine favor, and public prosperity, modernity has emphasized subjective psychological states, individual choice, and personal fulfillment.

The word "happiness" itself, rooted in "hap" (chance/luck), betrays this transformation. Once denoting fortunate circumstances and external conditions, it now primarily signifies internal feelings and mental states. This shift reflects broader movements: secularization, individualism,

democratization, and psychological introspection.

Yet the contemporary revival of eudaimonic concepts in psychology and philosophy suggests dissatisfaction with purely hedonic or subjective accounts. We seem to recognize, as the ancients did, that genuine human flourishing requires more than pleasant feelings—it demands meaning, virtue, relationships, and engagement with purposes beyond ourselves.

Perhaps the deepest lesson from this history is that "happiness" contains irreducible complexity. It encompasses both feeling and flourishing, pleasure and purpose, subjective experience and objective achievement. The challenge for contemporary individuals and societies is integrating these dimensions: honoring subjective well-being while recognizing that lasting fulfillment comes from virtuous action, meaningful relationships, and contributions to communal good—insights the ancients understood profoundly and that modern happiness research gradually rediscovers.

The pursuit of happiness, far from being a simple or settled matter, remains what it has always been: the central question of how to live a human life well.

Academic Bibliography: The Evolution of Happiness from Eudaimonia to Modern Conceptions

Key Scholarly Books

1. McMahon, Darrin M. (2006). *Happiness: A History*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

Description: The definitive historical account tracing happiness from ancient Greece through the Enlightenment to contemporary times. McMahon demonstrates how happiness evolved from divine gift to natural human entitlement, examining philosophical, theological, and political dimensions across two millennia. **Key contributions:**

- Comprehensive historical narrative of happiness concepts
- Analysis of the Enlightenment transformation
- Examination of modern happiness obsession **Available:** Major university libraries, Amazon, Google Books

2. Russell, Daniel C. (2012). *Happiness for Humans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Description: Contemporary philosophical examination of how classical Stoic and Aristotelian eudaimonism applies to modern life. Russell argues that happiness is fundamentally about having a life of meaningful activity. **Key contributions:**

- Bridges ancient and modern conceptions
- Practical applications of eudaimonic theory **Available:** Oxford University Press, academic libraries

3. Hall, Edith (2018). *Aristotle's Way: How Ancient Wisdom Can Change Your Life*. London: Penguin.

Description: Accessible treatment of Aristotelian ethics and eudaimonia for contemporary readers, arguing that ancient philosophical insights remain relevant to modern happiness. **Key contributions:**

- Public philosophy approach to eudaimonia
- Practical applications of Aristotelian virtue ethics **Available:** Major booksellers, public libraries

4. Vittersø, Joar (Ed.) (2016). *Handbook of Eudaimonic Well-Being*. New York: Springer.

Description: Comprehensive academic compilation of theory and empirical research on eudaimonic well-being from psychological, philosophical, and historical perspectives. **Key contributions:**

- State-of-the-art psychological research
- Integration of philosophical and empirical approaches
- Critical examination of well-being concepts **Available:** Springer, academic libraries, institutional access

Journal Articles and Academic Papers

Ancient Philosophy and Eudaimonia

5. Gåvertsson, Frits. "Eudaimonism: A Brief Conceptual History"

- **Source:** Lund University Department of Philosophy
- **URL:** https://www.fil.lu.se/media/utbildni...ual_history.pdf
- **Description:** Detailed conceptual analysis of eudaimonia's evolution from pre-philosophical Greek thought through Hellenistic philosophy, examining semantic shifts and philosophical developments.
- **Key points:** Etymology of eudaimonia, relationship to divine favor, development through different philosophical schools

6. de Heer, Cornelius (1969). *Makar, Eudaimon, Olbios, Eutychia: A Study of the Semantic Field Denoting Happiness in Ancient Greek to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert.

- **Description:** Comprehensive linguistic analysis of Greek happiness terminology, examining how different terms related to well-being evolved in classical Greek literature.
- **Key points:** Semantic field analysis, historical linguistics, classical Greek conceptions

7. Kraut, Richard (2018). "Aristotle's Ethics." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

- **URL:** <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>
- **Description:** Authoritative philosophical analysis of Aristotle's ethical theory, including detailed treatment of eudaimonia, virtue, and practical wisdom.
- **Key points:** Scholarly standard reference on Aristotelian ethics

Roman Felicitas and Classical Transitions

8. Champeaux, Jacqueline (1982-1987). *Fortuna: Recherches sur le culte de la Fortune à Rome et dans le monde romain*. 2 vols. Rome: École Française de Rome.

- **Description:** Comprehensive study of the Roman goddess Fortuna and concepts of fortune, fate, and happiness in Roman culture.
- **Key points:** Religious and cultural dimensions of Roman happiness concepts
- **Note:** French language, specialized academic work

9. Personifications of Eudaimonia, Felicitas and Fortuna in Greek and Roman Art

- **Authors:** Various (conference volume)
- **Source:** *Symbolae Osloenses*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (2011)
- **URL:** <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.10...679.2011.631365>
- **Description:** Art historical analysis of how happiness concepts were visualized and personified in classical art, comparing Greek and Roman approaches.
- **Key points:** Visual culture, personification of abstract concepts, iconography of happiness

Medieval and Christian Transformations

10. Lee, Jong Hyun (2017). "Christianity and Happiness"

- **Source:** ERIC Educational Resources
- **URL:** <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED607132.pdf>
- **Description:** Examines how Christian theology transformed classical happiness concepts into beatitudo and eternal blessedness, analyzing theological developments from Augustine through Aquinas.
- **Key points:** Theological happiness, beatitudo vs. felicitas, Christian virtue ethics

Modern Transformations and Etymology

11. McMahon, Darrin M. (2004). "From the Happiness of Virtue to the Virtue of Happiness: 400 B.C.-A.D. 1780." *Daedalus*, 133(2), 5-17.

- **Description:** Concise article version of McMahon's historical argument, tracing the transformation from classical virtue-based happiness to Enlightenment rights-based happiness.
- **Key points:** Historical turning points, Enlightenment revolution, secularization of happiness

12. D'Onofrio, Francesco (2015). "On the Concept of 'Felicitas Publica' in Eighteenth-Century Political Economy." *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 27, 449-471.

- **Description:** Analysis of public happiness concepts in Enlightenment economic thought, showing connections between classical felicitas and modern political economy.
- **Key points:** Public happiness, political economy, eighteenth-century thought

Contemporary Psychology and Well-Being Research

13. Deci, Edward L. & Ryan, Richard M. (2001). "On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141-166.

- **Description:** Foundational paper distinguishing hedonic (pleasure-based) from eudaimonic (meaning-based) well-being in contemporary psychology.
- **Key points:** Self-determination theory, psychological needs, well-being types
- **Impact:** Highly influential in positive psychology

14. Huta, Veronika & Waterman, Alan S. (2014). "Eudaimonia and Its Distinction from Hedonia: Developing a Classification and Terminology for Understanding Conceptual and Operational Definitions." *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15, 1425-1456.

- **Description:** Systematic analysis of how researchers define and measure eudaimonic vs. hedonic well-being, proposing clearer terminology.
- **Key points:** Conceptual clarity, measurement issues, research methodology

15. Kashdan, Todd B., Biswas-Diener, Robert, & King, Laura A. (2008). "Reconsidering Happiness: The Costs of Distinguishing Between Hedonics and Eudaimonia." *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3(4), 219-233.

- **Description:** Critical examination of the hedonic/eudaimonic distinction, arguing for integration rather than sharp separation.
- **Key points:** Conceptual integration, measurement validity

Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives

16. Annas, Julia (1993). *The Morality of Happiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- **Description:** Major philosophical work arguing for the contemporary relevance of ancient eudaimonist ethics, defending happiness as the proper framework for moral philosophy.
- **Key points:** Virtue ethics, eudaimonist moral theory, ancient philosophy relevance

17. Heintzelman, Samantha J. (2018). "Eudaimonia in the Contemporary Science of Subjective Well-Being: Psychological Well-Being, Self-Determination, and Meaning in Life." In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), *Handbook of Well-Being*. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers.

- **Description:** Contemporary synthesis of eudaimonic concepts in well-being science, integrating psychological research with philosophical foundations.
- **Key points:** Contemporary research, conceptual synthesis

Comparative and Cross-Cultural Perspectives

18. Lomas, Tim (2021). "A Global History of Happiness." *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 11(3), 68-87.

- **URL:** <https://internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow.../1457/1047/7409>
- **Description:** Cross-cultural and historical survey of happiness concepts from Greek eudaimonia through Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, and Taoist traditions to contemporary secular approaches.
- **Key points:** Comparative philosophy, global perspectives, cultural diversity

19. Lauriola, Rosanna (2006). "From Eudaimonia to Happiness: Overview of the Concept of Happiness in the Ancient Greek Culture with a Few Glimpses on Modern Time." *Revista Espaço Acadêmico*, No. 59.

- **Description:** Accessible overview connecting ancient Greek happiness concepts to contemporary issues, examining cultural and philosophical continuities.
- **Key points:** Cultural analysis, contemporary relevance

Specialized Studies

20. Bruni, Luigino & Porta, Pier Luigi (Eds.) (2005). *Economics and Happiness: Framing the Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- **Description:** Interdisciplinary examination of happiness in economic thought, including historical analysis of felicitas publica and modern happiness economics.
- **Key points:** Economic history, public happiness, wellbeing economics

21. Bruni, Luigino & Sugden, Robert (2007). "The Road Not Taken: How Psychology Was Removed from Economics, and How It Might Be Brought Back." *The Economic Journal*, 117, 146-173.

- **Description:** Historical analysis of how happiness and well-being were marginalized in modern economics, with implications for contemporary policy.
- **Key points:** History of economics, well-being economics

Philosophy Encyclopedias and Reference Works

22. "Eudaimonia." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

- **URL:** <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/> (under Aristotle's Ethics)
- **Description:** Authoritative philosophical encyclopedia entry on eudaimonia with comprehensive bibliography.

23. "Happiness." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

- **URL:** <https://iep.utm.edu/>
- **Description:** Accessible philosophical overview of happiness across traditions.

24. "Philosophy of Happiness." *Wikipedia* (for general orientation, not academic citation)

- **URL:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_happiness
- **Description:** Useful starting point with overview and references to primary sources.

Collections and Edited Volumes

25. Rabbås, Øyvind, Emilsson, Eyjólfur K., Fossheim, Hallvard, & Tuominen, Miira (Eds.) (2015). *The Quest for the Good Life: Ancient Philosophers on Happiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- **Description:** Collection of scholarly essays on happiness in ancient philosophy, covering Plato, Aristotle, Hellenistic schools, and late antiquity.
- **Key points:** Comprehensive coverage of ancient perspectives, specialized scholarly analysis
- **Review:** <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/the-quest-for-the-good-life-on-happiness/>

26. Glatzer, Wolfgang, Camfield, Laura, Møller, Valerie, & Rojas, Mariano (Eds.) (2015). *Global Handbook of Quality of Life: Exploration of Well-Being of Nations and Continents*. New York: Springer.

- **Description:** International perspectives on well-being and happiness across cultures and nations.
- **Key points:** Cross-cultural research, contemporary global perspectives

Historical Linguistics and Etymology

27. Online Etymology Dictionary entries:

- **"Happiness"**: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/happiness>
- **"Happy"**: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/happy>
- **"Hap"**: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/hap>
- **"Felicity"**: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/felicity>
- **Description**: Reliable etymological information on English happiness terminology with historical attestations.

28. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) entries (subscription required):

- **"Happiness"**: Historical usage and semantic development
- **Description**: Most authoritative source for English word history

Online Resources and Open Access Materials

29. Positive Psychology Resources

- **URL**: <https://positivepsychology.com/eudaimonia/>
- **Description**: Accessible introduction to eudaimonia in contemporary positive psychology with research summaries and practical applications.

30. ERIC Education Resources Database

- **URL**: <https://eric.ed.gov/>
- **Description**: Searchable database of educational and psychological research papers, many open access.

Research Suggestions for Further Investigation

Primary Sources (Ancient Texts)

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (multiple translations available)
- Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*
- Plato, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Gorgias*
- Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus*, [*Principal Doctrines*](#)
- Seneca, *De Vita Beata* (On the Happy Life)
- Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (On the Ends of Good and Evil)
- Augustine, *Confessions*, *City of God*
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (especially on beatitudo)

Historical Turning Points

- Enlightenment happiness discourse (Locke, Hume, Bentham, Mill)
- American Declaration of Independence (1776) and "pursuit of Happiness"
- Romantic critiques of Enlightenment happiness
- 20th century critiques (Huxley's *Brave New World*, Frankfurt School)

Contemporary Debates

- Happiness economics (Easterlin paradox)
 - Positive psychology movement
 - Virtue ethics revival
 - Mindfulness and Buddhist influences on Western happiness concepts
 - Neuroscience of happiness
 - Public policy and well-being metrics (beyond GDP)
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How to Access These Resources

1. **University Libraries:** Most academic papers available through institutional access to databases like JSTOR, Project MUSE, SpringerLink, EBSCO
2. **Google Scholar:** Free search engine for academic literature; many papers available as PDFs
3. **Academia.edu and ResearchGate:** Academic social networks where researchers share papers
4. **Open Access Journals:** Many contemporary papers freely available
5. **Interlibrary Loan:** Can request papers not available at your institution

Note on Citations

This bibliography includes:

- Foundational historical works
- Contemporary empirical research
- Philosophical analyses
- Linguistic and etymological sources
- Cross-cultural perspectives
- Both accessible introductions and specialized scholarship

For a comprehensive research project, prioritize:

1. McMahon's *Happiness: A History* (essential overview)
2. Gåvertsson's conceptual history (detailed ancient analysis)
3. Deci & Ryan on hedonic vs. eudaimonic well-being (contemporary psychology)

4. Primary sources (Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* especially)
5. Recent edited volumes for current scholarly debates