

Pleasure vs Happiness (?) Discussion of Hiram's "In Defense of Eudaimonia"

Post by "Cassius" of October 20, 2019 at 12:08 PM

I see that Hiram has written an article ("In Defense of Eudaimonia") with which I strongly disagree, but which will provide a great platform for discussing the details of Epicurean philosophy.

First, I would point to a couple of sources that picked up on this precise point in meeting the arguments of Stoics and others in the years after Epicurus:

What is Happiness? Let's let Diogenes of Oinoanda explain:

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.

What is the true end? Let's let Torquatus make the point very clear in "On Ends":

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.

Given those statements, we need to be very careful in loose use of words that have become associated with anti-Epicurean philosophies, especially when we are talking with people who do not understand the ramifications of the issue:

Eudaimonia

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

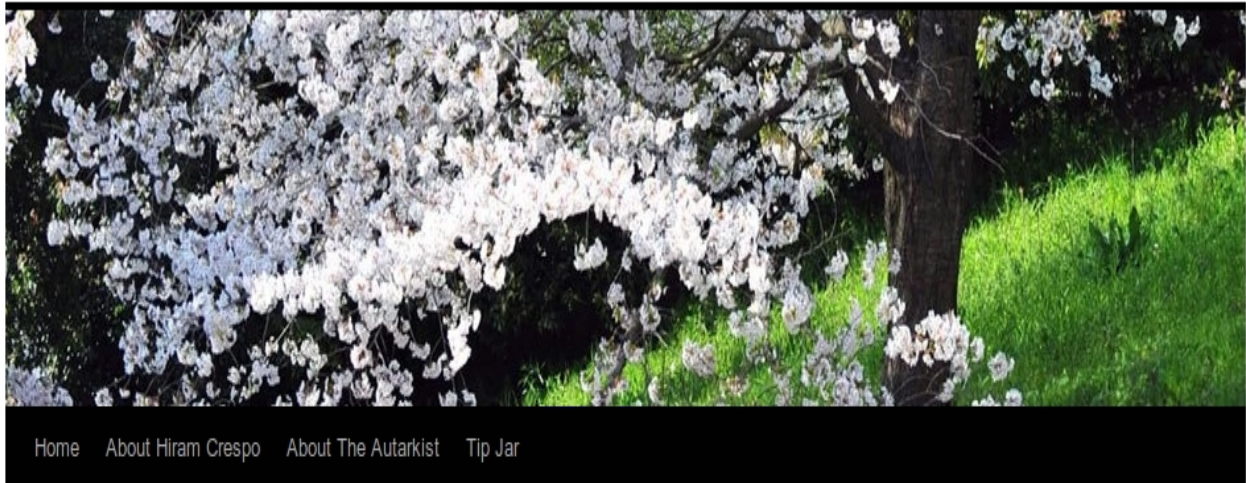
For the moth, see Eudaemonia (moth). For other uses, see Eudaemon (disambiguation).

Eudaimonia (Greek: εὐδαιμονία [eudajmonía:]), sometimes anglicized as **eudaemonia** or **eudemonia** /juːdɪˈmoʊniə/, is a Greek word commonly translated as happiness or welfare; however, "human flourishing or prosperity"^{[1][*better source needed*]} and "blessedness"^[2] have been proposed as more accurate translations.

Etymologically, it consists of the words "eu" ("good") and "daimōn" ("spirit"). It is a central concept in Aristotelian ethics and political philosophy, along with the terms "aretē", most often translated as "virtue" or "excellence", and "phronesis", often translated as "practical or ethical wisdom".^[3] In Aristotle's works, eudaimonia (based on older Greek tradition) was used as the term for the highest human good, and so it is the aim of practical philosophy, including ethics and political philosophy, to consider (and also experience) what it really is, and how it can be achieved.

Discussion of the links between virtue of character (*ēthikē aretē*) and happiness (*eudaimonia*) is one of the central concerns of ancient ethics, and a subject of much disagreement. As a result there are many varieties of eudaimonism. Two of the most influential forms are those of Aristotle^[4] and the Stoics. Aristotle takes virtue and its exercise to be the most important constituent in eudaimonia but acknowledges also the importance of external goods such as health, wealth, and beauty. By contrast, the Stoics make virtue necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia and thus deny the necessity of external goods.^[5]

Ok - here is [a link to Hiram's post](#):



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Happy Twentieth! In Defense of Eudaimonia

Posted on [October 20, 2019](#)

Peace and Safety to all Epicureans, Neo-Epicureans and kindred spirits! Please don't forget to join our [Garden of Epicurus group on Facebook](#) if you'd like to study Epicurean philosophy with others.

On this day, I'd like to defend the concept of *eudaimonia*. In some Epicurean circles there appears to be a war against this word, and the corresponding word *happiness* in the insistence that the end is *pleasure*, as if they were somehow mutually exclusive. The truth is that:

1. Epicurus himself used the word *εὐδαιμονίαν* (*eudaimonian*),
2. The choice of words by the founders of EP was always very intentional and careful, and
3. *Eudaimonia* is a particularly important concept for therapeutic Hellenistic philosophy which relates to the health of the soul.

I am attaching a full pdf of the article, but there is one clip I want to be sure to emphasize, because I think the writer cited is absolutely correct:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1233-pleasure-vs-happiness-discussion-of-hiram-s-in-defense-of-eudaimonia/?postID=4945#post4945>

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Lampe thinks that Cyrenaics are eudaimonics (believed in happiness as the end, not just pleasure), but most scholars disagree. It's likely that a variety of views existed within the school regarding the end. One of the key arguments for hedonism (i.e. pleasure as the end) in its inception had to do with how pleasure is not the same thing as happiness. Pleasure is an instance, happiness is a collection of pleasures, and as such happiness is therefore an abstraction, a platonized alternative to the real experience of pleasure. This argument is interesting, and still generates debate and various opinions today.

We can of course cite the many instances in Epicurus' own texts, and in Lucretius, which precisely point to "pleasure" as the goal and guide of life, but I will add those here later.

You will also want to reread the arguments on this topic in Elayne's - [On Pain, Pleasure, and Happiness Second Draft](#)

This Epicureanfriends forum is no doubt the "some Epicurean circles" being referenced, so here is a thread to discuss it.