

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

Post by "Joshua" of October 20, 2019 at 3:30 PM

Quote

[...] we need to be very careful in loose use of words that have become associated with anti-Epicurean philosophies [...]

Do I take your meaning, Cassius, to be that *Eudaimonia* becomes a problem only when removed from the Greek and set into English? I can certainly understand how the following sentences might be construed to have different meanings;

1. *Someone who says that the time to love and practice wisdom has not yet come or has passed is like someone who says that the time for happiness has not yet come or has passed.*
2. *Someone who says that the time to love and practice wisdom has not yet come or has passed is like someone who says that the time for Eudaimonia has not yet come or has passed.*

In other words, *Eudaimonia* takes on a separate connotative life and power when the word is carried through untranslated. So that *happiness* in an English sentence is ok, *εὐδαιμονία* in a Greek sentence is ok, but *Eudamonia* in an English sentence only invites trouble.

A question that comes to my mind is this; what if *eudaimonia* was the word of choice simply because the Greek language didn't offer a better one? I certainly won't be answerable to the accidents of etymology in every word I use.

When my mother says that "blood runs thicker than water", for example, she means that family is of utmost importance. What she likely doesn't know is that this phrase originally meant something quite different; "the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb". Under this formulation, family relations are actually *less* important than relations forged by oath, shared faith, or the battlefield. An Arab saying expresses the same concept with slightly different maternal anatomy; "blood is thicker than milk".

Elli will be of better use than me, but I'll attach a dictionary reference with alternative words for happiness.