

# A Pleasant Life instead of Pleasure

**Post by “EricR” of August 4, 2023 at 8:14 AM**

Words evoke specific reactions in people. The word "pleasure", while having a wide interpretation in Epicurean Philosophy, it seems to have a much narrower one in general. Specifically, immediate transitory pleasures.

So I was wondering if the focus was a "pleasant life" as the goal might be more immediately evocative of that wider interpretation.

I'm just thinking out loud here. So perhaps I'm way off base on this. 😊

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**Post by “Cassius” of August 4, 2023 at 8:56 AM**

What you're talking about as the immediate flash connotation of the word is definitely a problem. How to solve the problem is a very difficult question, and yes 'life' helps, in my view, but it also then needs to be tempered by the observation that the 'longest' is not necessarily the 'best'

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**Post by “Kalosyni” of August 4, 2023 at 9:35 PM**

## [Quote from EricR](#)

Words evoke specific reactions in people. The word "pleasure", while having a wide interpretation in Epicurean Philosophy, it seems to have a much narrower one in general. Specifically, immediate transitory pleasures.

This could be a problem or a blessing in disguise, because it requires some contemplation. We can see in the Letter to Menoceus that Epicurus had to explain the nature of pleasure, and we also have to make sense of this for ourselves. So then we can contemplate for ourselves what "pleasure" means. And we need to reclaim the word "pleasure".

PD8 says:

"No pleasure is bad in itself; but the means of paying for some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves."

And why is there distrust of "pleasure"? In modern civilization perhaps there are people who are living "like mice in a cage addicted to sugar water". Perhaps because they are unable to find the necessities for the happiness of the soul.

[Quote from EricR](#)

So I was wondering if the focus was a "pleasant life" as the goal might be more immediately evocative of that wider interpretation.

A pleasant life will contain pleasures of both the body and the mind. But the phrase "pleasant life" seems a bit bland. It is the difference between "happiness" and "well-being". Of course we want a pleasant life, but I think we also want happiness too.

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**Post by "Don" of August 4, 2023 at 9:55 PM**

"Pleasure is not a four-letter word!"

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**Post by "Godfrey" of August 4, 2023 at 11:00 PM**

Not sure if this helps, but...

[PD22](#) *"But as to the ultimate aim, we ought to consider it with all the clearness and evidence which we refer to whatever we think and believe; otherwise, all things will be full of confusion and uncertainty of judgment."* Yonge (1853)

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**Post by "Cassius" of August 5, 2023 at 6:27 AM**

This reminds me also of the discussion we had due to the Gellar-Goad article on the "Size of the Sun" perhaps being an Epicurean "shibboleth" or "litmus test" for the school (a test of whether you really understand how the senses work and how to use them):

Post

**[RE: "Lucretius on the Size of the Sun", by T.H.M. Gellar-Goad](#)**

I'll try to summarize what I recall to be the main points of the essay;

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-Epicurus' primary interest in the size of the sun is to rule out the supernatural.

-A superficial reading of the passage will always be plagued with error.

-The author stresses the importance of considering the question in light of the whole philosophy.

-And that includes offering a few explanations, not just asserting one.

-Epicurus draws a distinction between how we interpret things that appear to our senses,...



Joshua

June 11, 2022 at 1:56 PM

And it relates to the use of terms like "gods" and even "virtue" where Epicurus was discussing common words in a non-common way. Doing so presents complex issues.

And most recently I would relate this to the commentary about the Tetracharmakon in the Julie Giovacchini article to the effect that outlining always risks oversimplification, but remains very useful for certain purposes and circumstances:

Thread

**[Julie Giovacchini - "The Tetracharmakos, Authentic Formula Or Simplistic Summary Of Epicurean Ethics?"](#)**

*[CASSIUS ADMIN NOTE: Thanks to Don for finding these two articles by Julie Giovacchini. At present I only have the second in google translate form (see post below) but they look to contain a lot of interesting information and deserve a thread of their own - especially the one linked in post 2 below.]*

Gal. (Galen) and the tetrapharmakos

<https://journals.openedition.org/aitia/1899>

(Suggest using Google Translate for French website)



Don

August 3, 2023 at 1:35 PM

If you're standing on a streetcorner or for some reason speaking to people who are essentially strangers, terms like "happiness" and "pleasant life" can make sense to use, or you can cite basic principles in tetrapharmakon-like simplification. But if you are talking to people who can or should have a deeper understanding of Epicurus, then you can and should be much more plain-speaking. You should speak frankly and the full truth - truths that are much more clear in the full first four [principal doctrines](#): "pleasure" is the key, and gods of the Yahweh type are anything but truly godlike, and personal consciousness terminates forever at death, etc -- all in uncompromising and clear terms.

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### **Post by “Don” of August 5, 2023 at 11:27 AM**

Offering the following for food for thought...

What's the difference, if any, among the following:

- Pleasurable life
  - Pleasure-filled life
  - Life of pleasure
  - Life of well-being
  - Well-being
  - Happy life
  - Joyous life
  - Blessed life
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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of August 5, 2023 at 8:27 PM**

Okay, [Don](#), taking up the challenge...

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3237-a-pleasant-life-instead-of-pleasure/>

A "pleasure-filled life" sounds better than a "pleasurable life".

"Life of well-being" = this is like a bird's eye view, and it is a long time extending all the way to the end of one's life.

"Well-being" - this could be pointing at specific goods.

"Life of pleasure" - more active, and enjoyment of experiences.

"Life of well-being" - more restful, with a focus on a healthy body but with more emphasis on the health of the mind.

"A blessed life" - fate or God was, or is, smiling upon you.

A "joyous life" sounds better than a "happy life", in that there are probably more fun gatherings of friends and family happening in the joyous life.

(just my own subjective ideas 😊)