

# External "Goods" Impact Eudaimonia

**Post by "Kalosyni" of March 9, 2024 at 9:00 AM**

Here in this article we can see how Aristotle writes about goods.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44984429>

Recently on the podcast Cassius and Joshua have been working on refuting Cicero's "On Ends", and I've been wondering if Cicero does take some of his views from Aristotle.

Also, perhaps Epicurus also took some of what Aristotle said, but yet he reframed and reworked it into a very different aim: we need external goods to have the most pleasant life (with pleasure as the goal and not virtue).

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**Post by "Kalosyni" of March 9, 2024 at 9:23 AM**

Here is an excerpt from the above article (found in the Notes number 1):

Quote

Aristotle, in fact, identifies a tripartite division of goods: external goods (ektos agatha ), somatic goods (ta soma agatha ), and psychological goods (ta peri psychen agatha). In this tripartition, the external goods include only goods external to the body, like money, while bodily goods like health are called somatic goods. However, Aristotle typically collapses the categories of somatic and external into one, indicating the real distinction he wants to draw: that between psychological goods and everything else. Aristotle takes this division to be commonplace (P1323a24-26), as does Plato (cf. Euthydemus 279b, [Philebus](#) 48e).

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**Post by "Cassius" of March 9, 2024 at 10:39 AM**

Just so this thread has a target, here's the situation as I understand it:

We translate the Greek "eudaemonia" as "happiness" even though the Greek is really an idiom of an expression that developed along the lines of "having a good demon or spirit."

In our discussions we aren't targeting writing a Greek dictionary, we're targeting the practical concept of "happiness," which "everyone agrees" is the goal of life. The precise question discussed now is something like "To what extent does happiness depend on matters that are outside of ourselves (to what extent are they "external" to us)?"

The issue appears to involve the well acknowledged fact that life requires things that are external to us (food, water, air), and so it is necessary to determine the impact of the observation that no person is entirely self-sufficient.

Some Platonists turned into radicals like the Stoics and wanted to conclude that happiness requires \*nothing\* external to us. To achieve that, they wanted to work through our minds to obtain happiness by obtaining complete virtue, which they defined happiness to mean. Since their happiness is virtue, they say we obtain complete happiness when we obtain complete virtue. (Virtue is an end in itself: there is nothing truer than true or straighter than straight.) Further, they say that once obtained, happiness like wisdom or any other virtue is never lost. (Anything less than true is no longer true and anything less than straight is no longer straight. If something we thought was true or straight becomes untrue or bent, then we obviously misunderstood its perfection in the first place since it had within it the potential for imperfection.)

Aristotle thought that direction was a bridge too far and so he held that some things that must be obtained are indeed outside ourselves and are indeed out of our control. Aristotle focused on virtue too, but in the end Aristotle held that the universe was created by a divine prime mover so whatever happens you can be happy because you are part of the divine plan.

Epicurus held there is no divine mover and no plan and that definitely some things are out of our control, but much is within our control. Epicurus said Nature gives us only pleasure and pain as guides, and that our Natural goal is pleasure. But since we are not "gods" who have the ability to achieve pleasure 100% of the time, sometimes we have to choose pain to obtain pleasure, or avoid worse pain, so Epicurus also talked about happiness as what we are aiming for. Epicurus defined happiness to mean total pleasures predominating over total pains, as he (for example) experienced in his last days while happy but in extreme pain. Therefore the smart person is going to order his affairs through studying nature and applying the lessons he learns from nature. The smart person is going to use all available means, internal and external, to obtain the goal of happiness (pleasures dominating over pains). Just like you take advantage of all resources to generate pleasure, whether they are internal or external, you work to minimize pains from all sources internal and external. And in the end from the Epicurean point of view you don't obsess over categories like "external goods."

Endlessly looking for definitions of "eudaemonia" or worrying about whether things that lead to happiness are "internal" or "external" is a good way to let the fans of Aristotle draw you into a major waste a lot of time. It seems to me the perspective Epicurus was teaching is that the goal of life is living happily, you live happily when you experience pleasures predominating over pains, and pleasures predominate over pains when you wisely keep your focus on all pleasures and pains, both mental and physical and whether past, present or future, and you use all the mental and physical resources at your disposal to pursue that goal.

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## Post by “Cassius” of March 9, 2024 at 10:54 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Further, they say that once obtained, happiness like wisdom or any other virtue is never lost. (Anything less than true is no longer true and anything less than straight is no longer straight. If something we thought was true or straight becomes untrue or bent, then we obviously misunderstood its perfection in the first place since it had within it the potential for imperfection.)

In support of the different way that Epicurus looked at virtue, and held that sometimes actions we think to be virtuous can lose that character in different circumstances, I think we can cite below as to the particular virtue of "justice."

Justice is a virtue in everyone's dictionary so far as I know, so here is Epicurus clearly saying that something can be virtuous (in this case just) at one moment, and then in another moment under different circumstances can change into something we see to be no longer just. *But that change doesn't mean that it wasn't just when it appeared to be just: And even if the advantage in the matter of justice shifts from one side to the other, but for a while accords with the general concept, it is nonetheless just for that period, in the eyes of those who do not confound themselves with empty sounds, but look to the actual facts.*

[PD37](#). Among actions which are sanctioned as just by law, that which is proved, on examination, to be of advantage, in the requirements of men's dealings with one another, has the guarantee of justice, whether it is the same for all or not. But if a man makes a law, and it does not turn out to lead to advantage in men's dealings with each other, then it no longer has the essential nature of justice. And even if the advantage in the matter of justice shifts from one side to the other, but for a while accords with the general concept, it is nonetheless just for that period, in the eyes of those who do not confound themselves with empty sounds, but look

to the actual facts.

[PD38](#). Where, provided the circumstances have not been altered, actions which were considered just have been shown not to accord with the general concept, in actual practice, then they are not just. But where, when circumstances have changed, the same actions which were sanctioned as just no longer lead to advantage, they were just at the time, when they were of advantage for the dealings of fellow-citizens with one another, but subsequently they are no longer just, when no longer of advantage.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of March 9, 2024 at 11:04 AM**

I found another article with a list (from Aristotle)...and it puts friends into external, and friendship into goods of the soul:

#### Quote

A second approach is to survey the goods which we find ourself desiring, since happiness presumably consists in the attainment of some good or set of goods such that to have them in the right way is to be living well. One division of goods is into (i) external goods (wealth, fame, honor, power, friends), (ii) goods of the body (life, health, good looks, physical strength, athletic ability, dexterity, etc.), and goods of the soul (virtue, life-projects, knowledge and education, artistic creativity and appreciation, recreation, friendship, etc.). The problem then is to delineate the ways in which such goods are related to happiness. Aristotle's view is that (a) certain goods (e.g., life and health) are necessary preconditions for happiness and that (b) others (wealth, friends, fame, honor) are embellishments that promote or fill out a good life for a virtuous person, but that (c) it is the possession and exercise of virtue which is the core constitutive element of happiness. The virtuous person alone can attain happiness and the virtuous person can never be miserable in the deepest sense, even in the face of misfortune which keeps him from being happy or blessed. So happiness combines an element over which we have greater control (virtue) with elements over which we have lesser control (health, wealth, friends, etc.).

(Article [Source](#))

As we know that in Epicurean philosophy a great amount of wealth or fame is unnecessary and possibly detrimental -- to acquire great wealth usually causes one to lose one's freedom (requires duty toward the act of acquisition).

I don't think that a pleasant life is possible without all the Epicurean "goods" and the most complete life (life with the highest pleasure) is also not possible without all the Epicurean "goods". (Epicurean "goods" being: friendship, prudence, self-sufficiency, and good health).

It is a much shorter list of goods in Epicurean philosophy (I need to find more references to all of them).

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### **Post by "Bryan" of March 9, 2024 at 2:52 PM**

Great comments, thank you! This is some advice from Epicurus on happiness. This website itself is an example of his advice in practice.

"One must always make these arguments for the sake of beneficial outcomes and for those cultivating well-being."

(Epicurus, On Nature 28.13.6) "αἰεὶ δὲ τῶν εὐπαγῶν ἕνεκα **πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν** καὶ τῶν κατασκευαζομένων τοὺς λόγους ποιητέον"

"We ought always to aim our discussions at the benefit of those who are sturdy disciples in the pursuit of happiness" (Sedley)

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### **Post by "Don" of March 9, 2024 at 3:24 PM**

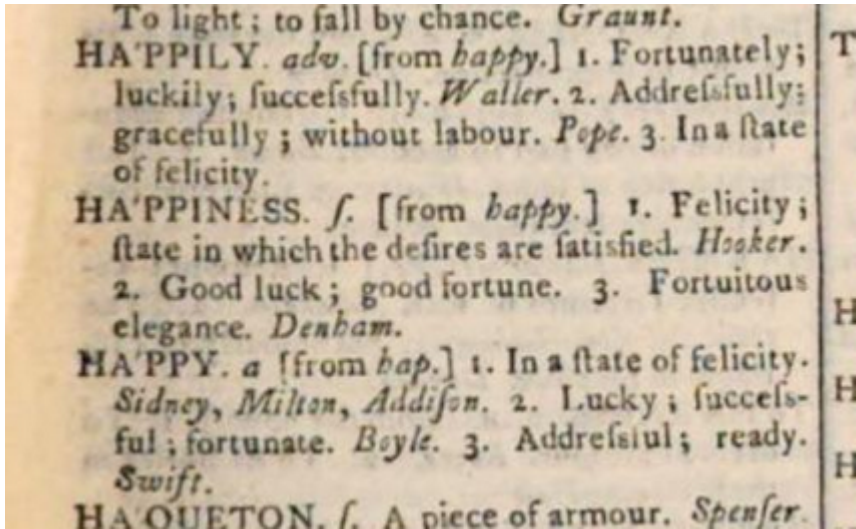
#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

In our discussions we aren't targeting writing a Greek dictionary, we're targeting the practical concept of "happiness," which "everyone agrees" is the goal of life.

I haven't thoroughly read all the thread (looks like a good discussion), but here's my first reaction to that statement. Fully agree we aren't writing a Greek dictionary, but...

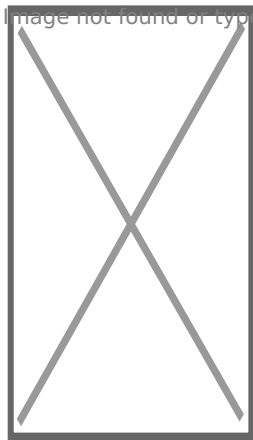
We are obligated to know what we're talking about. I would hazard that the average person thinks of "happiness" or "being happy" as a - as we've been saying - a titillation of the mind, a pleasant stimulation of the senses. If you ask someone if they're happy, I would guess that they're going to be befuddled if they're just walking down the street and get asked. "I guess so. I'm doing okay."

The fact that εὐδαιμονία is the word being referred to, it behooves us to know what is meant by that word. That's my big beef in just accepting that "it means 'happiness' and going on with the discussion (not just here but all over the internet, books, etc.). It's just taken for granted that eudaimonia = happiness, now let's use happiness. Which brings me to the Declaration of Independence's "pursuit of happiness."



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[A dictionary of the English language. Abstracted from the folio ed., by the author. To which is prefixed, an English grammar. To this ed. are added, a history of the English language \[&c.\].](#)  
books.google.com

Would people nowadays equate "happiness" with "state in which the desires are satisfied"? I think most people think of happiness as being more smiling people at a dinner party, having lively conversation. "I'm so happy!"

Which brings me back to my unending soapbox blathering that I think "well-being" is a much better translation of eudaimonia than "happiness." "Well-being" gets at that satisfaction aspect that I think happiness misses (maybe it's a part of it but it doesn't square up well) and that I think eudaimonia actually encompasses. One feels lucky, satisfied, living a fortuitous existence... I know we don't think much of "fortune" or "luck" but from an everperson-off-the-street stance, I continue to picket for "well-being" being the better translation of that word to which Epicurus and the Greek philosophers were pointing.

(Steps down off soap box and goes back to reading thread...)

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### Post by "Bryan" of March 9, 2024 at 3:33 PM

Don, I fully agree with your points. "Happiness" is not incorrect, but well-being is better.

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### Post by "Don" of March 9, 2024 at 3:40 PM

#### [Quote from Bryan](#)

"Happiness" is not incorrect

Well put! It brings to mind people saying "You're not wrong, but..." Thanks.

Here's the Liddell & Scott definition of eudaimonia:

[https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...4.0057:entry=eu\)daimoni/a](https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...4.0057:entry=eu)daimoni/a)

A translation of Herodotus uses "prosperity" for eudaimonia in one place, but "happiness" is used in the translation of the story of Croesus (same word, two different translations):

*Thus Solon granted second place in happiness (εὐδαιμονίης) to these men. Croesus was vexed and said, "My Athenian guest, do you so much despise our happiness (εὐδαιμονίη) that you do not even make us worth as much as common men?"*

A translation of Thucydides uses "wealth" for eudaimonia:

*[5] For of all the nations of Europe that lie between the Ionian Gulf and the Euxine Sea, it was, for revenue of money and other wealth (καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ εὐδαιμονίᾳ), the mightiest; though indeed*

*for strength of an army and multitudes of soldiers, the same be far short of the Scythians.*

So, there is a dimension of satisfaction, prosperity, being well off, having a sense of satisfaction, that isn't encompassed in "happiness." As Bryan says, "happiness isn't wrong..."

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 9, 2024 at 4:42 PM**

Yes the translation of well being suits me fine and that serves just as well to kick the can down the road to the question "What is well-being"? Satisfaction of desires isn't sufficient there either because you still have to ask "what desires?"

You then arrive again at the same resolution that Epicurus is basing his goal on pleasure, and then you go back to discussing the unique way he looks at pleasure, as both stimulative and nonstimulative. Then you are also back to whether pleasure requires the external goods that Kalosyni started talking about in the first post.

Every step requires clarity if you're going to say something worthwhile, and sometimes it's a lot easier to say what you are *\*not\** saying than what you are.

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### **Post by “Don” of March 9, 2024 at 5:02 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Satisfaction of desires isn't sufficient there either because you still have to ask "what desires?"

To my mind, from an Epicurean perspective, it's not satisfaction of "specific" desires but more being satisfied - taking pleasure - in what is currently available... while at the same time being open to luxuries when they become available. It's the "maza and spring water" (barley bread/meal and water) in the Letter to Menoikeus. It's taking pleasure and satisfaction in the day to day things, not scraping, striving, fighting, etc after "empty" desires like unlimited fame, unlimited wealth.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of March 9, 2024 at 5:26 PM**

### [Quote from Don](#)

it's not satisfaction of "specific" desires but more being satisfied - taking pleasure - in what is currently available... while at the same time being open to luxuries when they become available

If "being open to luxuries when they become available" means waiting for them to drop in your lap without making effort to obtain them, I would argue that is wrong. We would never choose pain to achieve a greater pleasure if that were the case.

Since I know you don't do that personally I know you don't mean that extreme conclusion, but that's why I would always warn against any kind of formulation that sounds like a very flat "whatever you have now is good enough" approach. In many cases, what you have "now" is not good enough to just stand by and stay in the same condition. A wise person can be happy even when on the rack, but that doesn't mean he should be content to stay there.

I doubt anyone here would fall into that trap, but I would say that a lot of people who study Epicurus get exactly that impression, and reach some very damaging conclusions about Epicurus because of it.

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### **Post by "TauPhi" of March 9, 2024 at 9:43 PM**

I would argue that equating "being open to luxuries when they become available" to "waiting for them to drop in your lap without making effort to obtain them" is wrong. The latter should not be the action one takes based on the former observation. That's a direct route to stagnation and I don't think anyone who spent more than five minutes contemplating human nature would accept stagnation as a desirable goal. Epicurus clearly was a proponent of the opposite of stagnation. He tried to remove all the unreasonable human fears which cause stagnation so people at least have a reasonable chance at living their lives instead of simply existing.

To me, "whatever you have is good enough" is not a bad approach in itself. I would argue it's one of the hardest things for us humans to truly realise and appreciate. That approach has nothing to do with being on the rack smiling like an idiot. A wise person would steer his life towards a green field where he could lay in the grass and enjoy a good weather instead of dealing with 'on the rack situations'. And in those rare cases where being on the rack is unavoidable even to the wisest, a wise person would be there smiling knowing that the rack has to be good enough.

So I guess, the trick is to learn how to truly appreciate a glass of water, to learn how to prepare a delicious cup of tea if that's possible and when teleported on Tuesday morning to the middle of Sahara desert by whimsical aliens (who happen to fly by the Earth playing tricks on people) and inevitably dying out of thirst on Thursday evening - to smile, say 'oh, well' and show a middle finger to the sky laughing out loud knowing perfectly well that the aliens have absolutely no idea where they could stick that finger. Repeatedly.

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### **Post by “Don” of March 9, 2024 at 10:37 PM**

I'm sorry to have taken this thread on a tangent; however, from my perspective, here are some Vatican Sayings that speak to the idea of satisfaction:

VS35 Don't ruin the things you have by wanting what you don't have, but realize that they too are things you once did wish for.

VS67 A free person is unable to acquire great wealth, because that is not easily achieved without enslavement to the masses or to the powers that be. Instead, he already has everything he needs, and in abundance. But if by chance he should have great wealth, he could easily share it with his fellows to win their goodwill.

VS68 Nothing is enough to one for whom enough is very little.

VS69 The ingratitude of the soul makes a creature greedy for endless variation in its way of life.

It's not being stagnant or complacent. It's appreciating the things you do have, gaining pleasure from what you do have, without always grubbing for the next thing or always struggling for the thing you don't have. We miss our lives as they fly by if we live that way. Of course, one can work to achieve more comfort, more steadiness, more stability in one's life. Philodenus wrote a whole treatise on managing ones affairs well. But if we don't stop and pluck the ripe fruit when it is available, we miss our one life.

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### **Post by “Don” of March 9, 2024 at 11:40 PM**

If we're going to say that...

▮ [Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus also talked about happiness as what we are aiming for. Epicurus defined happiness to mean total pleasures predominating over total pains, as he (for example) experienced in his last days while happy but in extreme pain.

(which I agree with), it behooves us to know how Epicurus talked about eudaimonia.

Letter to Pythocles, 116:

For the animals offer no necessary reason why a storm should be produced ; and no divine being sits observing when these animals go out and afterwards fulfilling the signs which they have given. [116] For such folly as this would not possess the most ordinary being if ever so little enlightened, much less one who enjoys *perfect felicity*. (παντελή εὐδαιμονίαν pantele eudaimonian > pan "all" + telos "goals" > a well-being where all goals have been met)

Then we have all of the mentions of eudaimonia in the letter to Menoikeus.

Plus there are translations that use "happiness" in place of makarios (as in the blessed happiness of the gods) like this in the letter to Herodotus:

*"Further, we must hold that to arrive at accurate knowledge of the cause of things of most moment is the business of natural science, and that happiness (μακάριον makarion) depends on this (viz. on the knowledge of celestial and atmospheric phenomena), and upon knowing what the heavenly bodies really are, and any kindred facts contributing to exact knowledge in this respect.*

So if one is to be not only possessing eudaimonia but also be considered makarios, that feeling/state/condition also "depends on" knowledge of how the natural world works... most likely because we would otherwise not know how to pursue pleasure wisely and would be subject to empty fears and empty desires.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of March 10, 2024 at 7:03 AM**

I meant to post this yesterday too, but since we are diving back into the Greek it would probably help to compare the Latin, since those words are more familiar to most of us.

So in the recent back and forth between Cicero and Torquatus it appears that the words that are most often being translated into happy / happiness is a form of beatus:

Book II:XXVII : (Rackham)

Latin: XXVII. Sed in rebus apertissimis nimium longisumus. Perfecto enim et concluso neque virtutibus neque amicitiiis usquam locum esse si ad voluptatem omnia referantur, nihil praeterea est magno opere dicendum. Ac tamen, ne cui loco non videatur esse responsum, pauca etiam nunc dicam ad reliquam orationem tuam. Quoniam igitur omnis summa philosophiae ad beate vivendum refertur, idque unum expetentes homines se ad hoc studium contulerunt, beate autem vivere alii in alio, vos in voluptate ponitis, item contra miseriam omnem in dolore, id primum videamus, beate vivere vestrum quale sit. Atque hoc dabitur, ut opinor, si modo sit aliquid esse beatum, id oportere totum poni in potestate sapientis. Nam si amitti vita beata potest, beata esse non potest.

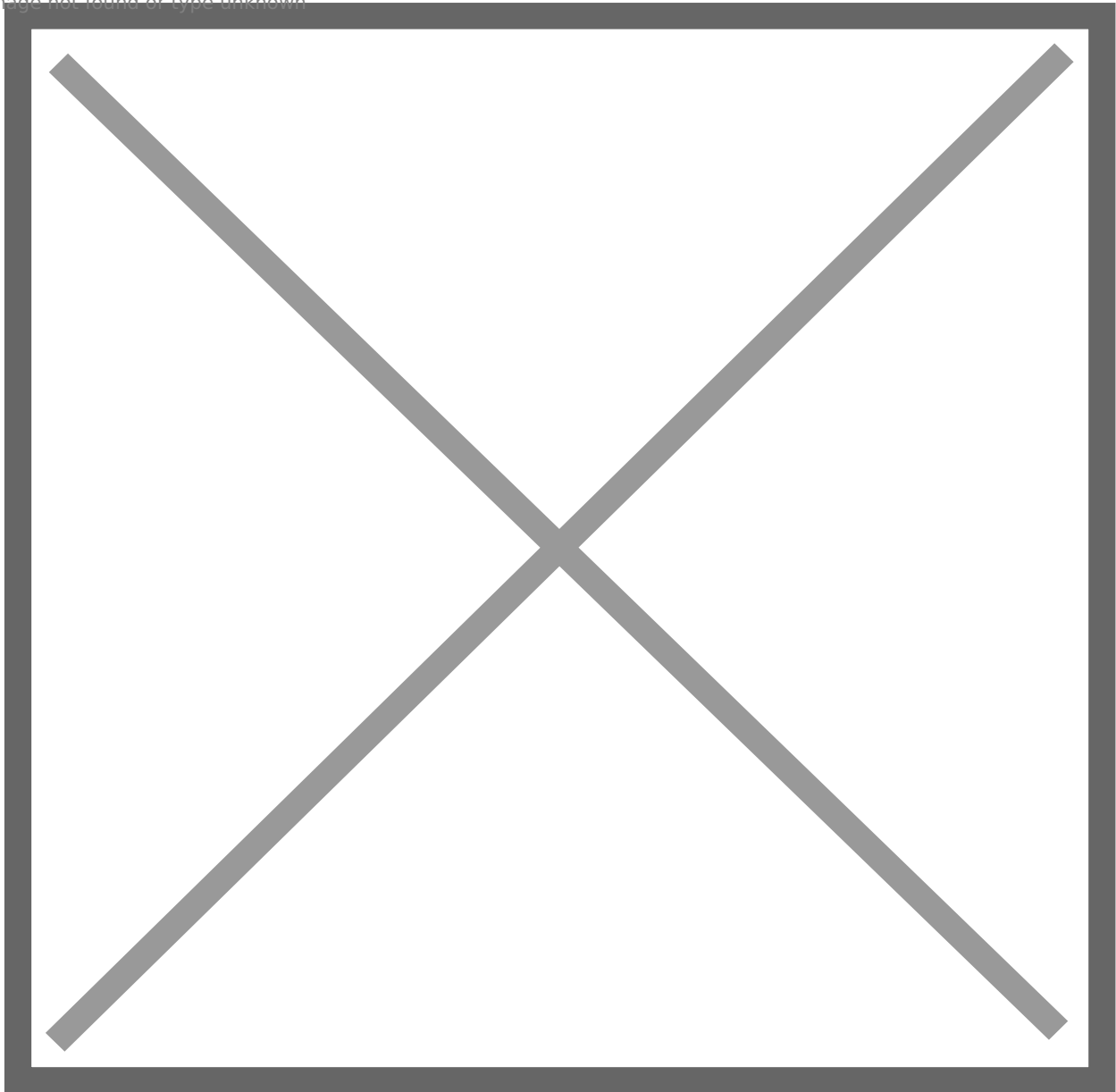
XXVII. "But we dwell too long upon the obvious. For when it has been conclusively proved that if pleasure is the sole standard there is no room left either for virtue or friendship, there is no great need to say anything further. Still I do not want you to think I have failed to answer any of your points, so I will now say a few words more in reply to the remainder of your discourse. The end and aim of every system of philosophy is the attainment of happiness; and desire for happiness is the sole motive that has led men to engage in this study. But different thinkers make happiness consist in different things. According to your school it consists in pleasure, and conversely misery consists solely in pain. Let us then begin by examining what sort of thing happiness as you conceive it is. You will grant, I suppose, that if there is such a thing as happiness, it is bound to be attainable in its entirety by the Wise Man. For if happiness once won can be lost a happy life is impossible.

What does that tell us? That we ought to be looking into the subtleties of "blessedness".... but that takes us back to "happy" as the asserted best translation.

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=b%20%95%20%81tus&la=la&can=b%20%95%20%81tus0&>

[beatus - Wiktionary, the free dictionary](#)

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### [Etymology of Beatus](#)

Latin word beatus comes from Proto-Indo-European \*deh<sub>2</sub>-, and later Proto-Italic \*dweos (Happy.)

cooljugator.com

The Latin appears to have no "religious" or "divine" connotation at all(?)

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**Post by “Don” of March 10, 2024 at 8:54 AM**

I find it interesting that if Cicero is using *beatus*, that's the exact word used in the Beatitudes in the Latin Vulgate Bible with the original Greek being *makarios*.

"In the Latin Vulgate, each of these blessings begins with the word *beātī*, which translates to "blessed" (plural adjective). The corresponding word in the original Greek is *μακάριοι* (*makarioi*), with the same meaning. Thus "Blessed are the poor in spirit" appears in Latin as *beātī pauperēs spīritū*. The Latin noun *beātitudō* was coined by Cicero to describe a state of blessedness and was later incorporated within the chapter headings written for Matthew 5 in various printed versions of the Vulgate."

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### Post by “Don” of March 10, 2024 at 10:44 AM

Again, sorry for derailing this thread. The big picture takeaway I'm encouraging everyone to consider is this:

When we read:

"You must study and meditate upon that which produces ***eudaimonia/happiness***. For if indeed that is present, we have everything; if that is not present, we do anything to have it." (*Menoikeus* 122)

We have a current, contemporary idea of what "happiness" means, and *eudaimonia* doesn't \*really\* mean anything to us. Words have meanings, but those meanings are not static. They evolve. Did Jefferson mean the same thing we mean when he penned "pursuit of happiness"? No, not really... But are they related? Sure? Maybe? But not exactly. I'm advocating we know what we mean - what we all mean and agree to - before we assume we're all talking about the same thing. Epicurus advocated use of the ordinary or common usage... But we have to know what those ordinary and common usages of words were \*at the time\* the texts were being composed.

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### Post by “Pacatus” of March 10, 2024 at 2:57 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

"Happiness" is not incorrect, but well-being is better.

For myself, I find "happiness" to be fine -- and something I understand (for myself). If I want to clarify, I say "happy well-being." I don't think that's entirely redundant. 😊

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### Post by “Pacatus” of March 10, 2024 at 3:56 PM

#### [Quote from Don](#)

"In the Latin Vulgate, each of these blessings begins with the word *beātī*, which translates to "blessed" (plural adjective). The corresponding word in the original Greek is *μακάριοι* (*makarioi*), with the same meaning. Thus "Blessed are the poor in spirit" appears in Latin as *beātī pauperēs spīritū*. The Latin noun *beātītūdō* was coined by Cicero to describe a state of blessedness and was later incorporated within the chapter headings written for Matthew 5 in various printed versions of the Vulgate."

I recalled having seen English translations that rendered *μακάριος* as "happy" – including in the beatitudes. The two I found are Young's Literal Translation (1898) and the Good News Translation by the American Bible Society (1976).

"Beatitudo" from Wiktionary: <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/beatitudo>.

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### Post by “Don” of March 10, 2024 at 4:12 PM

#### [Quote from Pacatus](#)

I recalled having seen English translations that rendered *μακάριος* as "happy" – including in the beatitudes. The two I found are Young's Literal Translation (1898) and the Good News Translation by the American Bible Society (1976).

There seem to be SO MANY specific Greek and Latin words that get chopped down to just "happy" in English.

Case in point: VS48 ( [Pacatus](#) 's footer) -

While you are on the road, try to make the later part better than the earlier part; and **be** equally **happy** when you reach the end.

πειρᾶσθαι τὴν ὑστέραν τῆς προτέρας κρείττω ποιεῖν, ἕως ἂν ἐν ὁδοῦ ὦμεν· ἐπειδὴν δ' ἐπὶ πέρας ἔλθωμεν, ὁμαλῶς **εὐφραίνεσθαι**.

which is related directly to εὐφροσύνη (euphrosúnē) mirth, merriment; gleefulness; etc.; especially of a banquet, good cheer, festivity

[εὐφροσύνη - Ancient Greek \(LSJ\)](#)

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### Post by “Pacatus” of March 10, 2024 at 4:24 PM

#### [Quote from Don](#)

There seem to be SO MANY specific Greek and Latin words that get chopped down to just "happy" in English.

An interesting anecdote on translation: I read once that Martin Buber's and Franz Rosenzweig's translation of the Torah from Hebrew into German was much longer than the original – because they wanted to capture all the nuances of the highly polysemous Hebrew! No "chopping down" for them! 🤔 😄

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### Post by “Don” of March 10, 2024 at 7:47 PM

You had me at "polysemous" ❤️ 😄

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### Post by “Don” of March 12, 2024 at 6:06 AM

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Here is an excerpt from the above article (found in the Notes number 1):

Quote

Aristotle, in fact, identifies a tripartite division of goods: external goods (ektos agatha ), somatic goods (ta soma agatha ), and psychological goods (ta peri psychen agatha). In this tripartition, the external goods include only goods external

to the body, like money, while bodily goods like health are called somatic goods. However, Aristotle typically collapses the categories of somatic and external into one, indicating the real distinction he wants to draw: that between psychological

goods and everything else. Aristotle takes this division to be commonplace (P1323a24-26), as does Plato (cf. Euthydemus 279b, [Philebus](#) 48e).

I was rereading this, and it struck me that Epicurus seems to riff off of Aristotle's categories in a couple ways. First, somatic goods (ta soma agatha ), and psychological goods (ta peri psychen agatha) sound like the health of the body and the serenity of the mind, namely aponia and ataraxia. soma σώμα is just Greek for "body" (plus some other connotations in the polysemous Greek) and psyche is "mind" (for our purposes, but sometimes translated "soul"). I was also reminded of the division of the necessary desires in the *Menoikeus* letter:

#### Quote

of the necessary ones: on the one hand, those necessary for eudaimonia; then, those necessary for the *freedom from disturbance for the body* (αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ **σώματος** ἀοχλησίαν); then those necessary for life itself.

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### Post by “Don” of March 12, 2024 at 8:16 AM

It strikes me that, according to Epicurus (and the other ancient philosophers), there's only one Greatest Good (tagathon), and that's pleasure in Epicurus's school. All other goods (agathos) are instrumental to achieving that greatest good. It seems to me that Epicurus was willing to employ any of the instrumental goods, for the body or mind, in service to achieving the greatest good. Other schools limited which goods or virtues were to be employed or were to be considered "good."

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### Post by “Pacatus” of March 12, 2024 at 3:17 PM

[Don](#) How does *tagathon* relate to *telos*?

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## Post by “Don” of March 12, 2024 at 7:13 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

[Don](#) How does *tagathon* relate to *telos*?

In connotation. Tagathon ταγαθον is ultimately simply "good" agathon with the definite article "the" added to the front: t + agathon = "The Good". As opposed to agathon "a good, good (adjective)"

They're basically referring, I think, to the same thing: that to which all other things point; the ultimate reason why we do what we do.