

The Relationship of Happiness and Blessedness

Post by “Pacatus” of July 9, 2026 at 11:00 AM

I know this has been discussed before, but I forget. 😞 What exactly do we mean by “blessedness” (in simple terms)? It seems to me something like “sainthood” (say, in the sense of Orthodox Christianity - not the Lutheran “sainthood of all believers”).

It does not seem like something I strive for, or am much interested in. I just try to live a happier life - in terms of more pleasure (kinetic/katastematic), less pain (physical/mental) by my choices, one day at a time.

But maybe I misunderstand ...

Sorry if this is an interruption of the discussion.

Post by “Cassius” of July 9, 2026 at 11:15 AM

No problem Pacatus I think the main part of the thread to which your refer is winding down with the opposing positions clearly stated -

Your question may go on longer so I'll move to another area.

Post by “Cassius” of July 9, 2026 at 11:23 AM

Here's my view:

I would agree with the direction you are coming from Pacatus and "happiness" is the term I prefer to use for the reasonable human goal.

I'd also say it appears that just as today, Epicurus' time was filled with religious speculation and terminology. Most people were familiar with looking to the life of "the gods" as an example of the best life possible. Epicurus wouldn't have believed that the gods "bless" anyone directly, but as a shorthand for the best life, which is presumed to be what the gods live, the term

probably can be used without injecting too much supernaturalism.

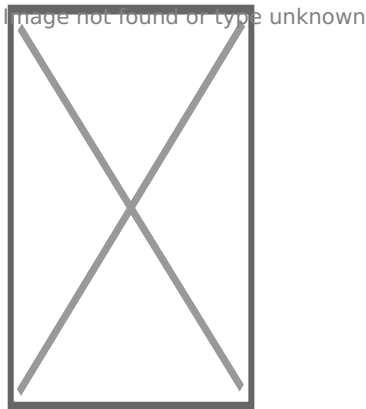
Same problem with "eudaimonia," and it's good demon, but Epicurus used the term anyway. if you want to be understood at all sometimes you have to adapt the common vocabulary.

Post by “Don” of July 9, 2026 at 11:34 AM

FWIW From my Menoikeus commentary:

μακάριον

This word is often translated as "blessed, fortunate, wealthy, 'well-off.'" There appears to be no certain etymology of the root [makar] or the longer form [makarios/on]. It appears to possibly have something to do with being wealthy, either literally or figuratively. *Taking Ancient Mythology Economically* by Morris Silver (see link below) has a very interesting section on the origins of the word. This is yet another example of the inadequacy of using one word to translate from one language to another.



[Taking Ancient Mythology Economically](#)

books.google.com

A quick digression on eudaimonia is appropriate here. εὐδαιμονία is defined by LSJ as "prosperity, good fortune, opulence; true, full happiness."

[http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...57%3Aentry%3Deu\)daimoni%2Fa](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?do...57%3Aentry%3Deu)daimoni%2Fa)

The word is derived from εὖ- (eu-) "well, good" + δαιμονία (daimonia) "spirit, divine power." This is where English gets the word "demon" but it could be either benevolent (eudaimon) or malevolent (kakodaimon). If you have a good, benevolent in-dwelling spirit, you will lead a

prosperous, healthy, flourishing, fortunate life. Socrates claimed to be listening to his daimon for guidance which was used against him at his trial as evidence of impiety. But the term generally in common parlance means what LSJ refers to. However, it encompasses a range of qualities but is often pared down in English to simply "happiness" which is woefully inadequate. It's much more than that, encompassing that and more. Translators try to convey this with paraphrases like "complete happiness," but our comparative translations just use "happiness." Sometimes it's left untranslated and only transliterated eudaimonia, but this is somewhat of a cheat, too. A cheat I may be guilty of shortly! If you look up that word in Merriam-Webster, it gives "well-being, happiness." So you see we can go in circles. Personally, I think "well-being" is better than "happiness" since it is almost a literal translation with a twist: eu- "well" + daimon "being" (the latter having a little double entendre). So, when you see any of those -- happiness, well-being, flourishing, eudaimonia -- remember that it's that word plus a little more. That's why I advocate using eudaimonia itself. There's a rabbit hole of papers, essays, and websites that convey the deep meaning of εὐδαιμονία if you feel intrepid.

Post by “Pacatus” of July 9, 2026 at 11:42 AM

[Don](#): Not intrepid. 😎 We've exchanged this before, but I use both terms when translating (mostly for myself) εὐδαιμονία: i.e. "happy well-being."