

## MANANA GAGOSHIDZE

Doctor of Philosophy, Professor of Sukhumi State University (Georgia)

## THE CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52340/isj.2024.29.03>

**Introduction.** Happiness is a rather broad and complex concept in philosophy. The problem of the phenomenon of happiness attracted thinkers even in ancient times. Nowadays, the problem of happiness is very relevant. Modern people tend to delve deeper and deeper into their own «I» and look for answers to eternal questions, one of which is the problem of finding happiness.

This article attempts to answer the question of what a good life is and what a person should strive for first and foremost. The possible reasons for a person's conscious or unconscious reproduction of the trajectory of his life path are analyzed, the movement along which can lead him to a happy life.

Each of us at least once in our lives thought about happiness. The idea of \u200b\u200bit and the ways to achieve it are different for everyone. For one, happiness is the achievement of the desired well-being, for another, it is the closeness and joy of meetings, the awareness of being needed and in demand, for a third, it is the fullness and meaningfulness of one's own life. Happiness is a certain ideal, realized in something specific. It is a good, the necessity of which is recognized by everyone. That is why a person consciously or unconsciously reproduces a peculiar trajectory of the path of life, the movement along which can lead him to his happy life. Depending on how he understands the purpose and meaning of his own life, his understanding of happiness occurs. The question of happiness is, first of all, a question about what a good life consists of and what a person should strive for first of all. As a philosophical category, happiness is presented in the works of philosophers of different periods of history. We are interested only in the ancient period.

**Keywords:** *human relationships, ethics, spirituality, feelings, happiness, loneliness.*

Ancient treatises are built in the form of dialogues between a philosopher and a commoner, in which a different understanding of happiness is given by a sage and a man from the masses, from the crowd. In ancient texts, happiness is called the highest state of joy, the satisfaction of a strong desire, the joy of achieving a cherished goal. Happiness is understood in different ways due to the differences in people's desires and goals. In other words, there are as many opinions about happiness in the works of ancient authors as there are people writing and thinking about this subject. Often these opinions are naive, but they are quite humanly understandable to modern people, because who does not want to be happy. The desire to fulfill desires, peace, joy and well-being is understandable to everyone without words. But what about ethical standards? And here, through oppositions and clashes, philosophers examine in detail the pairs: happiness and fate, happiness and pleasure, happiness and power. And, as a rule, in the process of their reasoning, the sages come to a paradox. Happiness and unhappiness are neighbors, two sides of the same coin. At that time, philosophers put forward the idea of liberating man from the power of the outside world and not including him in the social whole. This was largely the idea of the hedonists and eudaemonists, the Stoics, Epicureans, and also the Cynics. Let us briefly consider the teaching and history of hedonism. In antiquity, two different types of hedonism developed. The author of one was Aristippus, the other - Epicurus. These were two poles between which the history of hedonism passed. The dividing line passed in two dimensions. There were differences

of a practical nature and differences between the egoistic and non-egoistic understanding of hedonism. The essence of the differences of a practical nature was as follows: pleasure is the only good, but it is worth using every pleasure that can be obtained, or it is necessary to take into account the consequences and choose only those pleasures that do not entail troubles. The hedonistic position formulated by Aristippus, as the primary basis of existence, placed the principle of the priority of carnal pleasures over all others [1; 209]. The latter in this case were considered the highest good and the meaning of life. Their maximum achievement is happiness, which we must strive for.

The philosopher considered the only good to be one's own, physical, transient pleasure, regardless of what caused it. Aristippus' rules for life consist of the fact that one must only care about experiencing pleasure as much as possible. Since «pleasure differs from another pleasure only in that one is more pleasant than the other,» there are no pleasures of a lower or higher order. Nothing can restrain a person in his pursuit of pleasure. Everything outside of it leaves a person indifferent. Therefore, according to Aristippus, life could be very simple: enjoy today, use all pleasures, especially physical ones, do not worry about life and do not restrain yourself with any rules. After Aristippus, there remained a school called Cyrene, although its students, faithful to the principle of hedonism, still did not preserve its extreme form. They gradually abandoned its marginal theses and made hedonism more moderate. The life program according to Aristippus was replaced by a program of conscious selection of longer and higher pleasures. This new program takes into account the requirements of virtue and wisdom. Its implementation is capable of limiting suffering and making life more pleasant.

The later representatives of hedonism according to Epicurus introduced the concept of benefit and understood it as pleasure guaranteed from undesirable consequences. The benefit understood in this way gave the name to the type of hedonism - «utilitarianism», and the term

«hedonism» remained with the type developed by the Cyrenaics. The difference between the egoistic and non-egoistic understanding of hedonism manifested itself in its history.

Hedonism recognizes pleasure as the only good. However, this can be either only one's own pleasure, or also pleasure that someone else experiences. Those who adhered to the first type believed that everyone knows only their own pleasure and can only appreciate it. Supporters of the second type, in turn, believed that if one's own pleasure is a good, then every pleasure experienced by others must be so. Egoistic hedonism has two varieties. One of them postulates: if the only good is one's own pleasure, then one should only care about it. The other variety proclaims: since one's own pleasure is connected with someone else's, then one should also care about it, that is, the only goal for it is one's own pleasure, and someone else's serves only as a means.

The hedonism of the ancients, being egoistic in its essence, historically developed from a radical variety to a moderate type.

Utilitarian theories are a development of hedonistic ones. Cyrenaic hedonism existed in its pure form only at the very beginning of its development.

For example, one of the representatives of this school - Hegesias even came to negative results: pleasure is either unattainable, or deceptive, and possibly insignificant compared to suffering.

Prudence, according to Hegesias, cannot ensure happiness, because we do not have true knowledge of things and can easily be deceived in all our calculations. If happiness is unattainable, then it is madly sought. It is necessary to limit oneself to freedom from suffering, and this is best achieved by an indifferent attitude towards everything. To react with indignation in response to someone's intentional or unintentional behavior means to disturb one's peace of mind. When indifference is impossible to achieve and suffering is unbearable, then life is not worth living.

Subsequently, Hegesias, as the author of the work «Death by Fasting» and eloquently

proving the misery of life and the consolation of death, was nicknamed «the instigator of death.» Eudaemonism and Cynicism should also be attributed to hedonistic teachings. The Cynics substantiated the idea of a special way of life for a person - outside of connection with society, which imposes alien and hostile obligations on him, as well as the propaganda of freedom from established moral norms and voluntary solitude.

The founder of the school, Antisthenes of Athens, spoke about the best life, which consists in getting rid of conventions, in freedom from the possession of excess and useless. He argued that in order to achieve good, it is worth living, combining simplicity of life, following one's own nature and contempt for conventions.

A happy life, according to Antisthenes, is achieved by detachment from what is not essential for human life, the ability to exist independently and self-restraint. One of his followers, Diogenes of Sinope, claimed that the one who is not free is lonely, since lack of freedom is an indicator of excessive attachment to life and to the benefits that a person can receive. Citing himself as an example, he said that his freedom is the path to happiness, which is a state of joy, peace of mind and soul, and therefore he does not grieve about less or more. The latter acquires the status of a kind of problem of human existence in Diogenes, since people in pursuit of wealth and material well-being forget about what can truly be useful to them for a happy life. People are overly pampered, burdened with passions and sometimes excessively striving for wealth. They are so attached to life and so strongly strive to prolong it that their actions contribute to the emergence of the opposite effect: most of them do not live to old age, suffering from numerous diseases. In this, man, according to Diogenes, is even more unhappy than animals. Eudaemonism also recognized the human desire to achieve happiness as the basis of his behavior. Happiness was associated with the possession of virtue.

Eudaemonism asserts about happiness what hedonism asserts about pleasure: happiness has a

higher value compared to everything else.

However, eudaemonism plays with the meaning of the word «happiness». Eudaemonism uses the word «happiness» in different meanings. Sometimes the word «happiness» means intense pleasure, sometimes - a prosperous fate, sometimes - the perfection of a person, sometimes - a life with which he is satisfied. And each meaning of the word «happiness» is another theory.

According to Plato, man himself, or rather his way of perceiving the world, formed under the influence of random or intentionally created circumstances, influences his style of life and behavior in the future. In this case, the philosopher asks himself what makes a person better. Plato finds the answer to the question posed in the statements of Socrates, who claimed that a person should not care about his affairs earlier and more than about himself [4,70-97] in the matter of self-improvement. In this case, it is necessary to «go beyond» the framework of material dependence, well-being and comfort and devote his life to serving goodness and justice. It is in this case that it is possible to achieve true good, both for the person himself and for the whole society.

Good, according to Socrates, is what people do certain actions for, not always thinking about whether they will make him happy or not. To the question of who should be considered happy, Socrates answers - a worthy and honest person, whose thoughts and actions are not unfair, and therefore are not considered the creation of evil.

Characterizing what was said, Socrates gradates happy people. At its highest level is a person, «... whose soul is not touched by evil. Next comes the one who endures evil and gets rid of it, and only then comes the one who remains unjust and does not get rid of evil,» and it is he, according to Socrates, who is the most unhappy person in the world.

This misfortune is compared to a sick body, burdened with the most terrible diseases that arise due to a person's unhealthy lifestyle, unrestrained accumulation of wealth, as well as harm from the introduction of laws in society that lobby the



interests and benefits of the minority, squandering praise and blame on people, the desire to be higher and better than others. All this can lead to something that will become even worse, then why, according to Socrates, live at all ... «since life becomes unfit for this.» As for loneliness, according to Socrates, it is the inability to control oneself, lack of restraint, as well as the inability to act as prudence and justice dictate. In addition, those who, succumbing to behavioral stereotypes and attitudes of the «powerful minority», act «in spite of something» because of the fear of not being who they need to be and who they do not expect to see you as can also be considered lonely. In this case, loneliness is also the result of the confrontation between strong and weak social forces, the first of which are actions under the influence of some artificially instilled patterns of behavior, the second - actions dictated by reason. Unfortunately, the second, according to Socrates, are the most vulnerable.

In Plato's works, loneliness is presented as a consequence of disharmony of social relations, loss of social solidarity, as an evil, the deliverance from which should be sought in rapprochement with others to enjoy the blessings of friendship and love. The latter categories in Plato's understanding are a limiter of unseemly actions, the exposure and censure of which by loved ones and those who love a person is perceived as more burdensome than any severe punishment.

Plato represented love as an irrepressible desire for the integrity and inseparability of the existence of the male and female principles. Before, we were one, and now because of our injustice we are placed separately by God... and are forced to be outside of close connection with our other half, a part of our «I» and strive for the integrity and beingness of our existence, something that few people can achieve now. For Aristotle, happiness is perfect activity and virtuous behavior that gives a person pleasure and satisfaction with himself. In this sense, a happy person is the owner of the good and the beautiful.

Aristotle believed that happiness is the possession of what is most valuable. If the most

valuable thing is knowledge, then the one who has it is happy, but if the most valuable thing is activity, then the active person is happy. In this case, happiness is not only pleasure and luck. A happy life is usually pleasant and successful. The one who has some value is content. Contentment is a natural consequence of happiness, but not as its essence. A person is happy not because he is content, but is content with being happy.

This understanding of happiness was long entrenched in the ethical works of philosophers of later periods. In particular, all debates about happiness began to include questions about the goods necessary for happiness. Aristotle himself believed that various goods were necessary for it. In order to be happy, a person cannot be too ugly, or of low birth, or weak and sick, or poor, or lonely, deprived of family and friends; only a combination of various goods constitutes the basis of human happiness.

In addition, Aristotle, wishing to express complete happiness, supplemented it with blessedness. Those who achieved it, he called «happy and blessed.» In the case when a person is pursued by an evil fate and takes away external goods from him, then, even possessing other highest goods (in the case of illness and loneliness), he does not know blessedness. He knows the first, but not the second.

Thus, happiness is a combination of favorable fate, blessedness, satisfaction with life, as well as the possession of the highest goods. The Ethics of Epicurus contributes to the assumption of the primacy of human interests in relation to the demands and needs of society.

Epicurus sees society as a fair union of people interacting on the basis of a certain agreement on the useful - «with the aim of not harming each other and not suffering harm.» In general, the idea of justice is reflected in Epicurus wherever ethical issues are covered. It is a necessary criterion for the worthy existence of both society as a whole and an individual in it. It is everything that serves the benefit of mutual communication between people, which is built on the basis of subjective desires, considerations

of benefit and pleasure.

Such ethical issues are reflected not only in Epicurus, but also in the works of Democritus. The latter's judgments had a significant influence on Epicurus's beliefs and formed the basis of his statements about happiness, pleasure and justice.

Pleasure for Epicurus is a sure way to eliminate sorrow and suffering - unlimited in time and volume, something that can make our life perfect even when we are no longer here. It is the beginning and end of a happy life. Such is a pleasant life, born not of debauchery and gluttony, but of reason, morality and justice, sober reasoning and prudence, the greatest of blessings, allowing a person to live like a god among people.

Democritus also reasons in the same way, speaking about what is necessary for a person: spiritual joy and a good state of mind. The first can arise due to moderation in pleasures and a measured life, the second - due to calmness and balance, not disturbed by any fears and experiences. Happiness, according to Epicurus, is a good that gives us everything we need. In its absence, a person does everything to have it. For Democritus, happiness is in the moderation of available goods and in the calmness of the soul, free from fears. It can arise as a result of the delimitation and selection of joys, which is valuable in itself. Value is in rarity, which in itself increases joy and multiplies pleasure. Friendship is important for realizing oneself as a happy person. Its presence is desired not so much when asking for help, but in the very confidence of receiving it. For Democritus, friendship is unanimity. In search of an answer to what a person is, Epicurus comes to the following: a person is an inseparable union of body and soul. Epicurus understands the soul as a certain collection of subtle particles scattered throughout the body. This idea of the soul of Epicurus originates from the atomistic reasoning of Democritus. An example of one of such statements of Democritus: the soul is spherical atoms that cause the movement of living beings. It is the soul that, according to Epicurus, allows a person to react emotionally

to everything that happens. The lack of ability to feel is a sure sign of the destruction of the shell of the soul or the dispersion of some of its particles. Excessive fear, suffering or «surging» happiness are also caused by the movement of particles of the soul.

For Epicurus, human suffering is a confusion in his soul that arises when mythical plots are transferred to real life, when real events are replaced by fictitious ones, when fictitious experiences and sensations are accepted as true.

For Democritus, the source of human suffering is the soul - a piggy bank of misfortunes, with the property of accumulating and splashing out various passions.

The only way to get rid of suffering is to reflect on the reasons for the emergence of this or that phenomenon and an appropriate attitude to the feelings and experiences of both all people and an individual.

According to Epicurus, appropriate behavior can lead to a state of serenity and peace. For Epicurus, solitude is natural, and sometimes even necessary. Together with prudence and moral behavior, it contributes to the improvement of the mind and leads to a serene life. In society, solitude is one of the ways to protect oneself from unfriendly attacks from other people, alienating everything that deviates from the accepted «norm». Thus, Epicurus claims that people, constantly in close contact with their own virtues, treat their own kind well, and look upon everything that is not like that as alien. For Democritus, loneliness is unacceptable. Society arose due to the conscious need for people to help each other. Another question is that society, changing in the process of historical development, is capable of giving rise to loneliness - as a form of escape from vices, finding another path to gaining virtue. The Roman philosophers, the Stoics, believed that the true meaning of human existence is the search for a path to a virtuous life through knowledge of oneself and one's relationships with others. According to Seneca [8,40-64], a person must acquire the necessary system of knowledge and skills throughout life. However, contrary

to common sense, most people, firstly, prefer to accept something on faith and not to reason. They have no judgments about their own lives, only someone else's behavior, which they take as a model. If a person dares to stand out from the crowd, to become noticeable for something, he immediately becomes an object of censure and ridicule.

Secondly, people are used to trusting the first person they meet with their most intimate secrets, if only he would listen. Or not to trust anyone, even the closest ones or themselves. Both try to avoid loneliness. The first are optimistic. They look for an opportunity to get closer, trusting everyone as themselves. The pessimism of the second is based on the fear of loneliness and unity with themselves.

Thirdly, people are afraid and hopeful, anticipate and worry at the same time. People do not know how to adequately perceive the present, as well as compare the past and the future, they are afraid of everything that could and could not happen.

Fourthly, they erect a halo around material well-being, prosperity and devalue themselves against its background. Such actions cause the greatest harm and can drive one to madness when a person's thoughts are focused on the possible loss of wealth. In such a case, life for him is a constant race for the means of life instead of life itself. He unsuccessfully hurries to catch up with what eludes him, postpones life in the hope of returning to its intended segment and living it with dignity.

Fifthly, people perceive life differently.

Seneca is convinced that for some it is too short to do anything in it. They live it in the hope of being useful to others, thereby sacrificing it without the slightest hesitation, not realizing the full value of their stay on earth. They are dissolved in the desires and whims of others, fear their loneliness and are ready to exchange life for an imaginary union with others. Such people are not able to be with themselves for a minute.

Others, on the contrary, having left everything and having risen above human prejudices, spend

all the time allotted to them on freedom and independence. They easily sacrifice connections and closeness in exchange for the opportunity to retire and devote their free time to «learning to live.» Others, on the contrary, master the art of adapting to the social environment so much that sometimes it is impossible to distinguish the truth and sincerity of their actions and speeches from the false. They are driven by an undeniable desire to climb and gain a foothold on a certain pedestal in order to acquire the desired status and role.

Thus, the loneliness of a person, according to Seneca, is a certain impoverishment of his inner world, in which vices, dominating over him, proclaim the supremacy of passions and alienation from the true good - himself.

Another representative of the Stoic philosophy, Marcus Aurelius, introduces the concept of «a single Whole.» He describes it as a general guiding principle, the elements of which are arranged in a certain order, interconnected and follow each other.

Movement within the Whole is an endless, continuous flow of events replacing each other in a circle determined by someone. Everything has its beginning and its end.

Man is a part of the Whole and everything that does not make him worse than he is does not make his life worse and does not harm either the external or internal side of his being. His life is an insignificant moment during which all his suffering and experiences appear as an indispensable source of movement and development. What he receives and what he loses does not depend on his personal characteristics. Everything that happens to him is destined for him in advance, and he is powerless to prevent it. He is capable of either steadfastly overcoming or perishing along with what is destined.

The relationship of a person with society is built on the acceptance or non-acceptance of the ideology of life together and common activity. Since all people are born for each other and die in order to make room for others, loneliness is unnatural. A person as a part of society is not able to go beyond its limits without irreversible



consequences for him. Separation from one is a rejection of the whole society. This is a betrayal of one's purpose and certain death. A repeated reunion is possible, but it is not realistic to restore the old relations and the old connection. These will already be different, qualitatively new relations. Another thing is solitude «in oneself». It is the path to self-improvement and spiritual well-being.

Exploring the nature of the ongoing rejection of society, Marcus Aurelius comes to the following conclusions. Alienation occurs as a result of irreconcilability to the actions of others, committed by them out of ignorance and error. Only reciprocal good deeds and socially useful activities become a benefit both for oneself and for the good of the Whole.

It is necessary to understand the guiding principle of people, what worries them, what they strive for and what they avoid. True evil is rooted not in the thoughts and actions of others, but in their understanding and interpretation. It is something that depends on ourselves. Can't find what you need? Try literature selection

service. Communication and unity of people are natural and inevitable. No matter how much people avoid unity, they still cannot escape it, for nature is stronger than they. Therefore, it is easier to find something earthly, not in contact with anything earthly, than a person who is not in communication with a person. No thoughts of a person about himself can be compared with the assertion of others about him. A person attaches special importance to the latter, making it paramount in determining his actions and thoughts. So, you should love everything that happens to you, steadfastly endure the misfortunes that befall you, do not act against your will or in contradiction with the common good. Happy is he who has prepared a good fate for himself. A good fate is good inclinations of the soul, good aspirations, good deeds.

To sum up all of the above, it is worth noting that understanding the views on the problem of happiness of the greatest thinkers of the past will allow us to avoid many mistakes in its definition and interpretation in the future.

## References:

- [1]. Lurye S.Ya. Democritus: Texts, Translation, Research. -L.: Nauka, 1970.
- [2]. Plato Apology of Socrates // Plato Collected Works in 4 volumes: Vol. I / General editors A.F. Losev and others; Transl. from ancient Greek. - M.: Mysl, 1990
- [3]. Plato Feast // Plato Collected Works in 4 volumes. Vol. 2 / General editors A.F. Losev, V.F. Asmus, A.A. Takho-Godi; Transl. from ancient Greek. - M.: Mysl, 1993
- [4]. Tatarikiewicz V. On the Happiness and Perfection of Man // Compiled and translated from Polish by L.V. Konovalova. Preface and general editorship by Doctor of Philosophy, Professor L.M. Arkhangel'sky. - M.: PROGRESS, 1981. Seneca Lucius Annaeus On the blessed life. Historical and philosophical yearbook '96. - M.: Nauka, 1997.
- [5]. Seneca Lucius Annaeus Moral letters to Lucilius / Translation and notes by S.A. Osherov. - M.: «Nauka», 1977.
- [6]. Lucius Annaeus Seneca On the transience of life. Historical and philosophical yearbook '96. - M.: Nauka, 1997.
- [7]. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Reflections / Translation, article and textual notes by A.K. Gavrilov. -SPb.: «Nauka», 1993.
- [8]. Epicurus Main thoughts // Materialists of Ancient Greece. Collection of texts by Heraclitus, Democritus and Epicurus / General editorial board and introduction by prof. M. A. Dynnik. - M.: State Publishing House of Political Literature, 1955

- [9]. Epicurus Letter to Herodotus // Materialists of Ancient Greece. Collection of texts by Heraclitus, Democritus and Epicurus / General editorial board and introduction by prof. M. A. Dynnik. - M.: State Publishing House of Political Literature, 1955.

## **МАНАНА ГАГОШИДЗЕ**

**Доктор философских наук, профессор Сухумского Государственного Университета  
(Грузия)**

### **ПОНЯТИЕ СЧАСТЬЯ В АНТИЧНОЙ ФИЛОСОФИИ**

#### **Резюме**

Счастье - довольно обширное и непростое понятие в философии. Проблема феномена счастья привлекала мыслителей еще во времена античности. В наши дни, проблема счастья весьма актуальна. У современных людей прослеживается тенденция все больше и больше углубляться мысленно в свое собственное «я» и искать ответы на вечные вопросы, одним из которых является проблема поиска счастья.

В представленной статье сделана попытка ответить на вопрос о том, в чем заключается хорошая жизнь и к чему человеку следует стремиться в первую очередь. Проанализированы возможные причины осознанного или неосознанного воспроизведения человеком траектории своего жизненного пути, движение по которому способно привести его к счастливой жизни.

Каждый из нас хотя бы раз в жизни задумывался о счастье. Представление о нем и способы его достижения у каждого свои. Для одного счастье - достижение желаемого благополучия, для другого - близость и радость встреч, осознание нужности и востребованности, для третьего - полнота и осмысленность собственной жизни. Счастье - есть некий идеал, реализованный в чем-то конкретном. Оно есть благо, необходимость которого признают все. Именно поэтому человек осознанно или неосознанно воспроизводит своеобразную траекторию жизненного пути, движение по которому способно привести его к его счастливой жизни. В зависимости от того, как он понимает назначение и смысл собственной жизни, происходит и понимание им счастья. Вопрос о счастье — вопрос, прежде всего о том, в чем заключается хорошая жизнь и к чему человеку следует стремиться в первую очередь. Как философская категория счастье представлено в работах философов разных периодов истории. Нас же интересует только античный период.