

UNITED WISDOM

Eudaimonia: flourishing beyond a pleasant state

Meaning and Direction

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

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@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

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Epigraph

> *“For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day”*

— Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, I.7. Opening clause before the semicolon; the following text concerns a complete life. W. D. Ross translation.

What this article is about

A pleasant day can leave questions about a life's direction unanswered. Work can be tiring yet meaningful, without making permanent entertainment a desirable replacement. “Eudaimonia” helps examine this distinction: flourishing concerns more than feeling good now. The article relates enjoyment, activity, relationships, duration and available conditions. Aristotle and Seneca appear as different philosophical interlocutors; their historical answers do not become a shared scientific formula. Hypothetical scenes of learning and making music together clarify what someone actually does, whose participation supports their path and which limits need acknowledgement. Reflection does not assess human dignity through achievements or promise wellbeing through a correct attitude. It seeks more precise words for a meaningful life allowing joy, difficulty, reconsideration and periods of limited opportunity. The inquiry remains open enough to recognise a worthwhile activity without requiring an entire biography to receive a final verdict.

I. A pleasant day and a good life are different questions

Imagine someone after a successful day off: enjoyable food, a walk and no urgent tasks. These can be genuinely good; pleasure need not be dismissed to make philosophy serious. Feeling good now nevertheless differs from considering the quality of a life. Someone can enjoy a day while noticing a significant promise long postponed. They can be tired by difficult work and still regard it as meaningful participation. These hypothetical scenes prove neither that pleasure is shallow nor that difficulty is noble. They distinguish two objects of assessment that can coincide, diverge or require clarification. How I feel now matters, but is not the only way to discuss how I live.

“Eudaimonia” here opens a philosophical perspective on flourishing connected with activity, relationships and a life's direction. It names no medical condition, compulsory constant joy or outwardly successful biography. Reducing flourishing to pleasant experience overlooks

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

worthwhile activities requiring effort. Reducing it to moral heroism overlooks rest, enjoyment and necessary conditions. The article does not replace joy with severity. It asks how different aspects acquire connections through which someone can recognise life's substance without demanding that every minute feel equally good or establish their path's final correctness.

Instead of a general rating, ask what is pleasant, what merits participation, what can be performed and which conditions sustain it. Answers need not form a number. In an invented scene, an adult learns a craft and finds mistakes uncomfortable. Enjoyment may come later, but the selected activity already matters. Difficulty alone nevertheless proves no value: the activity could be unnecessary, unsuitable or arranged so that important commitments are damaged. Eudaimonia requires considering what is done rather than declaring every struggle profound. We begin by distinguishing objects while retaining the right to enjoy, tire, revise and avoid making life a permanent flourishing examination.

II. Flourishing as activity rather than possessing a quality

In Book I of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle considers human good through activity in accordance with virtue. This is a philosophical argument, not a measured universal law. It helps distinguish a capacity or self-image from actual participation. We can regard ourselves as attentive without hearing a request, or possess knowledge without using it where it matters. Action remains between a resource and its application, requiring time, conditions and relationships. Flourishing therefore concerns more than the good qualities we can list; it addresses how they acquire a place in life.

Imagine an adult knowledgeable about music who wants to play with others. The task is not proving that previous knowledge was wasted, but finding a form of use: a small rehearsal, suitable difficulty and participants willing to learn together. Comparison with an ideal performer can leave the selected activity without space. Elsewhere music may matter precisely as listening rather than performance. The article does not require turning every interest into a productive skill. The narrower question is whether actual life fits the participation someone values, or merely protects an attractive description of possibility.

Activity does not mean uninterrupted busyness. A day filled with tasks can lack an intelligible connection to what matters. Some activities require pauses, reading, rest or attentive conversation that cannot be judged solely by output. If flourishing becomes another word for efficiency, the distinction disappears. What do I do, why does it matter, and how does it connect with other aspects? An answer may reveal the need to reduce volume, change methods or relinquish an unnecessary task. This perspective commands no extra work. It returns to life's content, which cannot be replaced by achievements, hours or a belief that a good capacity will eventually realise itself.

III. One episode does not describe the whole

A successful evening can matter without determining every relationship in a life. A difficult day need not invalidate an entire path. Eudaimonia introduces time: what connection does repetition create, and where does an action belong in a longer history? This is no requirement to postpone all judgement until life ends. It prevents each current result from becoming a complete measure of self. Today we can make a mistake in worthwhile work and retain reasons to continue; today we can enjoy conduct whose consequences require repair tomorrow. A moment matters within context, rather than pleasant or difficult feeling becoming an immediate universal assessment.

In an invented story, someone returns to drawing after a break. The first attempt disappoints them despite genuine interest. If one sheet measures their entire ability, participation ends before acquiring form. If errors are ignored in the name of development, learning remains incomplete too. A more precise relation allows both: this result is unsatisfactory, but does not settle the whole story; the next step should address the particular difficulty. A smaller task, appropriate explanation or pause may help. Persistence guarantees no success here. The distinction is between a local assessment and a final account of a person's worth too readily inferred from one attempt.

Good episodes need context too. One vivid success can conceal a regime nobody wants to repeat permanently. After a project, the result can be recognised alongside its cost: postponed promises, unnoticed labour and time needed to restore resources. Scrutiny does not cancel joy; it gives a fuller context. Flourishing retains enjoyment without treating it as proof that every condition was correct. We can celebrate while changing subsequent work, or acknowledge failure while retaining a worthwhile direction. Today's state need not judge all past and future. Connections are examined through information, repetition and actual relationships.

IV. Pleasure is no enemy, but not the only orientation

If pleasant feeling is no complete measure of life, it does not follow that pleasure is unnecessary. Food, walks, friendship and rest can have value in themselves; every joy needs no justification through future usefulness. The difficulty arises when enjoyment determines the permissibility of every action or hides others' costs. A witty humiliation of a colleague can be enjoyable without enjoyment establishing its permissibility. A quiet evening can preserve a manageable rhythm after heavy effort without producing an external achievement. The distinction concerns pleasure's role in a relationship, rather than dividing all enjoyable things into high and low categories.

In Of a Happy Life, Seneca distinguishes virtue from pleasure, refusing to make the latter supreme. His Stoic position is stronger than this article's application. We do not adopt historical

contempt for bodily things as a rule or medical conclusion. The limited comparison is that enjoyment can accompany meaningful action without being its sole grounds. “I enjoy it” remains relevant alongside “What does this action sustain?” The source proves neither that all rest is dangerous nor that needs require constant conquest. The distinction serves accuracy, not compulsory new self-denial.

Not every unpleasant action deserves continuation either. Flourishing-through-difficulty can excuse poor conditions. Work lacking substance, humiliating someone or denying available choice does not become noble through its burden. Safety, commitments and possibilities for change need appropriate consideration, with competent support where needed. An essay cannot determine these conditions for someone. Its boundary is simple: absence of pleasure establishes neither absence nor presence of value automatically. Eudaimonia asks about content and methods of living; enjoyment and difficulty reveal important aspects without becoming the sole judges of permissible action.

V. Flourishing does not reduce to appearing successful

External signs can convey something real: income enables possibilities, recognition opens collaboration, completed work confirms a task. None automatically establishes an entire life's quality. Success can destroy trust; a modest result under difficult conditions can preserve worthwhile participation. This romanticises neither resource scarcity nor suspicion of recognition. An achievement differs from asking which relationship with oneself, work and others a life sustains. A measure answering the first question should not answer the second without further grounds, as though a favourable number supplied everything necessary.

Imagine two people in one profession. One wants larger projects and audiences; the other a stable, smaller practice with clear commitments. Scale alone cannot assess them. Content, conditions, agreement and costs matter. A large project can be worthy when participation is accountable; a small practice can have substance when sustaining the selected work. Conversely, either scale can conceal unwelcome consequences. The article establishes neither one flourishing style nor equal goodness of every biography. It allows several forms while retaining requirements concerning methods, grounds and relationships that personal uniqueness cannot erase.

A public image need not coincide with the private question. Someone can look calm without clear connections between activities, or openly discuss difficulties while preserving meaningful direction. Photographs, titles and observers' accounts cannot establish all this. Eudaimonia should not become a ranking of others. It is more useful as a question about available participation: what has substance, what remains merely a sign of approval, where do resources support activity and where have they become demands for endless growth? Answers can change the form of success without cancelling work or opportunities. Flourishing

does not require defeating another biography; it requires examining connections between one's life and what one is prepared to sustain.

VI. Contemplation and participation: the limits of one ideal

In Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle gives contemplation the highest place while discussing moral action and necessary conditions. This is a particular philosophical hierarchy, not a neutral description of every life. It should not receive the modern claim that any interest automatically constitutes full flourishing. Nor does this article require copying an ancient ideal. The source reveals differing grounds for feeling good and considering a person's highest activity. Our contemporary examination remains separate: which forms of participation have substance for someone, and how do their permissibility, relationships, resources and chosen direction connect?

Imagine someone valuing quiet reading, reflection and discussion. No visible product may emerge every hour, without the activity being empty. “Contemplation,” however, does not excuse an unfinished promise or using others' labour unrecognised. Another invented person finds meaning in practical work requiring attention to materials and people. Their participation deserves consideration without claiming a philosopher's identity. Both examples allow discussion of substance without automatically ranking visible output. A historical preference does not oblige contemporary people to devalue every other worthy action or need for shared life.

A life may contain several forms that cannot be pursued equally intensely at one time. Reading, craft, relationships and everyday conditions need time. Eudaimonia does not promise room for everything. It asks about connections and costs: what receives space, what temporarily remains less expressed, and which commitments persist? A form currently unsupported can still matter, which differs from promising it will appear automatically. A reader can select another philosophical ideal and leave disagreement open. Flourishing here is neither a compulsory identity nor a competition for the highest lifestyle, but a question about the substance and arrangement of one's participation.

VII. Conditions cannot be replaced by the right attitude

Eudaimonia can become burdensome when improving life is reduced to changing an internal attitude. Missing time, premises, funds or safe participation may genuinely obstruct a chosen activity. Conviction alone cannot remove those conditions. Someone without learning resources should not be declared insufficiently interested merely because another learned under different circumstances. The article measures no particular influence and offers no economic recipe. It preserves a logical limit: recognising an activity's worth and being able to perform it are different aspects. A worthy ground does not automatically produce an hour, a suitable instrument or another participant's consent.

In an invented scene, an adult wants to join a small ensemble, but rehearsals coincide with accepted duties. Another time, reduced involvement or a different form might be possible, yet need checking. If agreement is unavailable, missing rehearsals does not show music lacks meaning. Limits can be recognised without promising unavailable participation. This differs from abandoning an interest entirely and from overcoming conditions at any cost. Honest description preserves a relation to the activity. The next step may involve finding resources, waiting for changed conditions or revising a form unsuitable for the current period.

Conditions also have moral significance when one person's convenience rests on another's unnoticed burden. Someone may gain free time through others' labour and call the lifestyle wholly independent. A substantive account recognises that connection. Assistance need not be rejected: shared life involves distribution of tasks. Distribution nevertheless needs intelligible grounds, agreement and attention to costs. Flourishing is not an isolated achievement simply because enjoyable activity happens alone. Who makes it possible, which commitments arise, and does the philosophical ideal protect an unagreed privilege others never selected? These remain important questions.

VIII. Relationships are substance, not only support for it

Relationships can be treated solely as conditions enabling worthwhile work. Sometimes they are the substance itself: friendship, learning together, keeping promises and attentive participation. Another person then is no instrument of my flourishing. They possess their own direction, resources and right not to sustain my chosen form. Ensemble members do not merely help one individual realise a talent; they want to play, learn and agree on pace themselves. If someone declares their activity supreme and stops hearing others, the shared undertaking changes. Music continues outwardly, while the relationship requires examination that praise of the sound or personal absorption cannot replace.

What does living well together mean? It need not imply no conflict or identical views of happiness. People can have different grounds while sustaining a limited, clear arrangement:

who prepares, who learns, which mistakes are permissible and when absences require notice. These questions sound modest beside flourishing, but reveal relational substance. Persistent breaches have consequences despite a shared aim. Revising the arrangement does not automatically abandon friendship or music. Another should not prove loyalty to my good life through unlimited availability, nor should every boundary threaten my worth.

Relationships include receiving assistance too. Flourishing need not mean continual independence or always being the giver. Someone can need support while retaining dignity, interests and available participation. Their quality of life is not determined here by doing everything independently. Our philosophical question concerns whether they remain a participant rather than evidence of another's kindness. Assistance can sustain activity without purchasing authority over the recipient. A more accurate account includes reciprocity, agreement and actual dependence rather than hiding these to preserve an attractive image of wholly self-sufficient flourishing.

IX. Different periods need not look the same

Participation changes with circumstances. One period centres on learning, another on a major task, and a third on maintaining everyday arrangements after change. If flourishing means only expanding possibilities, preservation and recovery are judged failures beforehand. Their substance needs separate consideration. Reducing work can sustain an important promise or manageable rhythm without necessarily abandoning growth. “A period,” however, should not excuse indefinite postponement without acknowledging why. Circumstances, resources and accurate relations to plans are needed instead of slogans making every pause wisdom or every burden progress.

Imagine someone formerly rehearsing weekly who can now only listen to recordings and discuss music occasionally. They can recognise loss without inferring disappearance of all meaning, retain an interest differently and avoid promising unavailable regularity. Future change is possible, not established. The scene distinguishes direction from current volume. A less conspicuous life need not lack substance; reduced action need not be assigned an invented secret success either. What remains, what is unavailable and what actually occurs should be named honestly rather than continually compared with a previous self.

This allows difficult uncertainty. Someone may not yet know which activity can be sustained next. The article does not demand a new grand meaning before a period is permissible. Available relationships, a small interest, a clear commitment or acknowledged missing information can be starting points. Appropriate support may matter and an essay replaces none. Eudaimonia here measures no personal completeness. It preserves respect for actual life without requiring an attractive story for every change. Flourishing is no certificate

continually renewed through identical activity. Its consideration can include reduction, dependence, waiting and revision when honestly described without hiding costs for others.

X. The question of a life’s connections remains open

Eudaimonia expands the good beyond current enjoyment, returning to activity, relationships, time and conditions. Expansion should not demand a final assessment of an entire life or immediate conformity to one ideal. Several meaningful aspects may lack complete coherence. Some forms are unavailable, others need change or remain on a smaller scale. Describing this honestly is more useful than declaring flourishing achieved or permanently lost through one sign. Philosophy gains substance when revealing relationships and actions rather than supplying another status used to assess today's right to self-respect.

Return to the pleasant day off. It can remain a good part without proving all life's success. Difficult learning can continue where worthwhile and feasible without calling every discomfort compulsory growth. Time for contemplation or practical work can be protected alongside promises and the labour enabling it. No single term automatically produces these decisions. Facts, personal choice and agreement where others are affected remain necessary. Dignity does not depend on presenting a convincingly flourishing biography. A philosophical ideal is a subject for reflection, not a condition of receiving respect or assistance.

A next step may be small: finding an available interest, distributing duties more accurately, restoring rest or recognising a condition obstructing action. None guarantees continually pleasant feelings. It can clarify the connections between activities and grounds. This is the article's limited purpose: seeing life as neither a sum of fortunate sensations nor a list of heroic deeds. Flourishing concerns participation attentive to meaning, reality and relationships. The discussion retains joy and difficulty, achievement and loss, independence and support without demanding their immediate combination into a final answer about how everyone ought to live.

What this means in practice

If you wish to continue, choose an available activity occupying a small part of your present life. It might involve learning, shared work, an agreed responsibility or rest. You need not select your most significant experience or prove its value. Record what is enjoyable, which action matters and which relationships or conditions support it. Enjoyment and substance may coincide, or a difference may emerge. Neither answer means passing or failing a test of a good life. Start with a bounded situation that you can consider without needing to account for everything at once.

Next, consider duration and the cost of participation. What can one episode show, and what takes time to understand? Does your activity rely on someone else's unagreed labour? Which

limits cannot be removed by attitude alone? These questions concern the chosen situation rather than every circumstance simultaneously. Missing information can be named, and the inquiry can stop there. Limited opportunity can be acknowledged without turning it into a concealed victory. If rest matters more now than further effort, reflection does not require effort to produce an attractive philosophical conclusion. The point is to see a real condition more clearly, including a condition that you cannot change today.

Finally, formulate one available next step: clarifying a condition of participation, setting aside a little time, agreeing a responsibility or reconsidering an unsuitable activity. This is voluntary editorial philosophical reflection, without established efficacy or guaranteed changes in experience. It replaces no medical, psychological, social or legal assistance when needed. Its purpose is to clarify connections between substance, action and conditions. There is no need to grade a whole life, compare yourself with another biography or make the ability to flourish a prerequisite for respect. An unanswered question may remain unanswered while you attend to something particular and possible.

Key quotation

> *“We must, therefore, escape from them into freedom.”*

— Seneca, Of a Happy Life, IV, p.210. Them refers to pleasures and pains as masters in the preceding sentence. Aubrey Stewart translation; this is a philosophical position, not a medical prescription.

Connections between traditions

Question	Comparison	Boundary
Feeling good now or living well?	Aristotle examines activity and duration; our scene distinguishes a day from a direction.	Flourishing is not defined as uninterrupted pleasant feeling.
What place does pleasure have?	Seneca subordinates pleasure to virtue; our discussion retains questions of joy and substance.	The Stoic answer does not require neglect of bodily needs.
Is one episode sufficient?	Aristotle considers a complete life; our example shows one event's limits.	This is no procedure for a final verdict on a biography.
Does Aristotle rank activities equally?	Book X elevates contemplation; the article discusses several available forms of participation.	A contemporary perspective is not attributed as historical absence of hierarchy.
Can attitude resolve everything?	Aristotle considers external conditions; our ensemble needs time and agreement.	Real limits are not declared individual moral failures.

Primary sources

1. Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, chapters 7–10: activity, a complete life and conditions. W. D. Ross translation.

2. Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics, Book X, chapters 7–8: contemplation and necessary conditions. W. D. Ross translation.

3. Lucius Annaeus Seneca. Of a Happy Life, I–IV, IX, XII–XIII, in Minor Dialogues. Aubrey Stewart translation, 1889.

Only the passages identified in the research notes were read. Russian quotations are United Wisdom translations from the named English translations, not direct translations from the ancient originals. All contemporary scenes are hypothetical editorial examples.

Tags

eudaimonia, flourishing, good life, pleasure, activity, virtue, duration, complete life, conditions, opportunities, limits, contemplation, participation, relationships, learning, craft, rest, joy, reconsideration, agreement, responsibility, shared activity, Aristotle, Seneca, Nicomachean Ethics, happy life, Stoicism, dignity, philosophy of life, meaning

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.