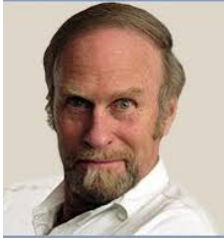


Eudaimonia: That Perfect Moment in Your Life



By Frosty Wooldridge

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It's summer! Let's go on some adventures!

Eudaimonia—"A Greek term often translated as "happiness" or "flourishing," represents a state of living well and doing well, which is the ultimate goal in Aristotelian ethics. It's not merely a fleeting feeling of pleasure, but rather a deep sense of well-being and purpose that comes from living a virtuous life, aligning actions with one's true values and potential."

Aristotle spoke about it being "a moment of happiness." In *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Richard Bach wrote, "You will begin to touch heaven, Jonathan, in the moment that you touch perfect speed. And that isn't flying a thousand miles an hour, or a million, or flying at the speed of light. Because any number is a limit, and perfection doesn't have limits. Perfect speed, my son, is being there." Buddha spoke about it as 'Satori' or that 'instant of perfection.' Those who smoke mind-altering drugs call it being 'high.' The Dalai Lama said, "People take different roads seeking fulfillment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road doesn't mean they've gotten lost."

While riding my bike, eudaimonia strikes me at the most felicitous of times. It could be sunny, rainy, cold, hot, hilly or flat-as-a-pancake riding. Eudaimonia might strike

during the spring, summer, fall or winter while riding my bike. For certain, it can hit you during your rides on your bicycle, or backpacking, or skiing, or rafting, or anything out in the wilds. How many “perfect moments” have you journaled in your own travels? What epic moments changed your life? What profound ideas sat on your shoulders while pedaling your bike? It’s a bet that you could write your own stories.

One time, while on tour around Lake Superior in the autumn, Doug and I wrote our colorful bicycle jerseys through the fall colors. We pedaled on the southern shore of the lake, which featured endless miles of red, crimson, pink, purple, lavender, topaz, green orange and stunning combinations in the underbrush. At one point, we stopped to take pictures. A couple of fishermen drove up in their pickup truck.

“What are you guys doin’?” the driver asked.

“We’re riding our bikes around Lake Superior for the next three weeks,” Doug said.

“On bikes?” The other guy said...“For me, no motor, no fun!”

“That goes for me, too,” the driver said. “You guys would be better off on motorcycles.”

“You know the old saying...different strokes for different folks,” said. Doug.

“Suit yourselves,” the driver said, before blasting away.

Once again, the woods quieted. The air stilled. The leaves rustled in the slight breeze. The sun shone down through the cornucopia of colors while a bluesy overdosed us. Through the myriad of maple, oak, poplar and spruce trees, the crystalline waters of Lake Superior shimmered with millions of diamonds. For us, the quietude served our spirits and calmed our souls.

At that moment, a hummingbird, mistaking my jersey for a flower, flew right to within 12 inches of my face. He looked

at me as if he might find nectar from one of the flowers on my jersey. His wings beat at 72 times per second. He hovered for five seconds, eyeball-to-eyeball with me. Not seeing an opening of a flower, he gave his little motor chirp, and vanished as quickly as he appeared. The woods swallowed him into its grand scheme.

“Man,” I said to Doug. “Did you see that little guy?”

“Sure did,” Doug said. “Pure Magic! He thought you were a wildflower.”

“It doesn’t get any better than this,” I said. “As the man said, ‘no motor, no fun.’ Let’s try to do the best we can without motors.”

Another ride up to Splugen Pass in the Italian Alps, my friend Gary Hall, sat on his bike guzzling his water bottle. As he finished, a metallic-blue-winged butterfly landed on his finger. It sat there for 30 seconds, flapping its wings in a kind of dance. We both watched it in wonder as to why it had landed on Gary’s finger. Seconds. Later, it flew up to his shoulder. Again, it sat there for 15 seconds. From Gary’s shoulder, it flew up the mountain and vanished into a field of wildflowers.

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last summer, on Route 287 in Montana, as we started out in the morning, a golden eagle with an 8-foot wingspan. Leaped right out of the bush beside the road and flew at eye level not 20 feet in front of us. The rising sun caught his underbelly so brightly that we watch his muscles ripple as his wings beat. We watched the sheer energy of this magnificent flying miracle in action. Down the road that day, the image of his muscles working under his feathers and the sun bouncing off his body continued to amaze me. David and I talked about that moment for the rest of the day. And, we will take about it around the campfire to others in the coming years.

There's some kind of 'eudaimonia' moment awaiting anyone on a bicycle, carry a backpack, scuba diving, windsurfing, and/or rafting through the wilderness. Any moment in the wilds can stun you with incredible "perfection."

Some of those moments might dramatic such as the bear-moose

event I lived through up in the Yukon Territory years ago. Others might be as serene as watching a beaver cross a pond on his way to his lodge at sunset. I will always remember that V-wake behind him as the sun sparkled off ripples he created on his journey home.

John. Muir said it best, "How many hearts with warm red blood in them are beating under cover of the woods, and how many teeth and eyes are shining? A multitude of animal people, intimately related to us, but of whose lives we know almost nothing, are as busy about their own affairs as we are about ours."

Hopefully, you ride your bike into 'eudaimonia' moments that bring a smile to your soul, face or spirit. Each eudaimonia instant offers you creative engagement, emotional uplift and a sense of your common bond with all. Life on this planet. Let's make the 'Roaring Twenties' of the 21st century a bicycle phenomenon for all people on Earth.

(Photograph: Frosty and friend Bob, Lofoten Island, Norway. A moment of eudaimonia.)

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