

# Eudaimonia



## That Perfect Instant While Pedaling Your Bicycle

by Frosty Wooldridge

**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.

**A**ristotle 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.”

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While riding my bike, eudaimonia strikes me at the most inopportune 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 travels on your bicycle. How many “perfect moments” have you journaled in your two-wheeled travels? What epic moments changed your life? What profound ideas sat on your shoulders while pedaling your bike? I bet you could write your own stories.

One time, while on tour around Lake Superior in the autumn, Doug and I wore our bicycle jerseys through the fall colors. We ped-

aled 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,” Doug said.

“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 blue sky overdomed us. Through the myriad of maple, oak, poplar and spruce trees, the crystalline waters of Lake Superior shimmered with billions 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 a foot 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 a 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 in 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.”

On another ride up to Splügen 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 in a field of wildflowers.



Another time, in fact, 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 watched 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 talk about it around the campfire to others in the coming years.

There’s some kind of ‘eudaimonia’ moment awaiting anyone on a bicycle, carrying a backpack, sporting scuba tanks or paddling a canoe through the wilderness. Some of those moments may be 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 can’t forget that

V-wake behind him as the sun sparkled off the ripples he created on his journey home.

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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 bicycle 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.



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