

Eudaimonia

by [Gracjan Kraszewski](#) (April 2023)



A Student of the Latin Quarter, Hugh Ramsay, 1901

“Ben, can I ask your opinion on something?”

“Sure.”

“I once knew this guy who was a small time actor,” Hans says, scratching his nose—the outer portion of the right nostril—with his left index finger while he speaks, “did commercials and that kind of thing. I don’t think he ever got his break. He might have, maybe, I mean maybe might have been in like one or two independent films. But, Ben, these were somewhere on the spectrum between independent on the high end and thoroughly homemade on the low end.”

“Okay.”

“Yeah, so anyways, he actually was pretty successful in getting a bunch of local ad spots, being the face of local stuff around town, you know?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah, so he was the face of the local bus line in town, literally, his face was on the side of the buses in town, with the words ‘Call me Mr. Punctuality’ below it, below his smiling face. The point being that he, Mr. Punctuality, could live up to that nickname by riding public transit everyday as it was super reliable, hassle free, and always on time, nothing sort of German train *pünktlichkeit*.”

Ben nods as he drives.

“So we knew this guy,” Hans continues, “me and my friends, we were all friends. And so we decided to bust him about it and started calling him ‘Mr. Punctuality’ to his face, all the time. At first he took it kind of good natured but then when we didn’t stop he started getting uncomfortable about it—*C’mon, guys, really? C’mon, just stop*—and then he finally started getting super pissed about it. But we refused to call him anything other than Mr. Punctuality. And so one day he

just stopped hanging out with us and we've never heard from him again, at least I haven't, I can't speak for the others. Someone said he moved to Urbana^[1], Illinois. Or maybe it was Champaign, Illinois. Who knows? I do care. You know how that usually goes: who knows, who cares? No, I really do care, wouldn't mind getting a text or a postcard from 'im. Still, don't know and that's the last I heard of anything concerning him and his story."

"I don't understand what you're asking me, Hans. Are you asking me something?"

"Yes. My question is do you know what his real name is?"

"..."

"Ben?"

"No. You're not asking rhetorically? No, I don't know his name."

"Well, that was my question because someone hearing this story would probably sympathize with the guy and basically conclude we were terrible friends who didn't know when to drop a joke and that we basically harassed him and made him stop being our friend because of that."

Ben nods.

"That is what you were thinking, right?" Hans asks.

"Sure. That seems obvious from what you said."

"Right. But that's why I asked if you knew his real name. His real name is Buhjonathan Overbobs-Sloblorinno. See, Mr. Punctuality is a definite upgrade. Ben, I mean he gave himself the nickname 'B-slob.' I wasn't trying to harass him, again, can't speak for the others, only to give him a better shot in life with this name change. He didn't seem too keen on the switch but, in my mind, I was like a nurse forcing a sick kid

to take their medicine. It's not what they want, but it's better for them in the long run, the long and short run."

"..."

"Did he study dog poetry, like you?" Hans asks, moving off the subject. "Your roommate, Pat."

"No, he didn't go to ESSNNAU-AL. He's actually still in school, over at NNU. I think he majored in art when he first went away to college but his main thing has been working at this pastry shop. He's been there the past ten years. Seems like that. No, no can't be ten years. Probably half that, but, man, it seems like forever. You'll have to ask him. I do know it started off as something to help pay for college but he eventually dropped out and made it his full-time thing. Now he's back in school."

The two park and then take the shuttle to Ben and Pat's apartment. "Remember," Hans says, "ESSNNAU-AL gave us the tools to succeed, it didn't succeed in making us tools."

Ben unlocks the front door. Hans and him walk into the kitchen.

"What are you in the mood for?" Ben asks.

"Whatever you have is good," Hans answers.

Ben opens the cupboards. "What about some pasta? That always—"

"No, that won't work. Make it Mexican."

Ben nods. "Okay ... yeah, I think that can work. Just let me check if we have all the stuff."

"Do you mind if I grab a quick shower before we eat?" Hans asks.

What? Ben thinks. *Really?* "Sure. Go up the stairs, second door on your right. There should be some fresh towels in the side closet. When you're done bring it downstairs and I'll throw it

in the hamper.”

“What about fresh socks and fresh underwear?”

“No, sorry. Don’t have that.”

“You don’t have fresh underwear? That’s gross.”

“For you I don’t. Of course, of course for myself but I’m not going to let you borrow my underwear.”

“I wasn’t asking.”

“That is what you just asked.”

“I was asking just, uh, generally speaking, inquiring if you had fresh socks and fresh underwear.”

“Right.”

“I meant like a guest pair. People have guest rooms, guest beds. Why not be a really stupendous host?”

“Sorry, Hans. Don’t have any underwear for you.”

“Would you be offended if I went commando at the dinner table? I once went commando wearing a tuxedo.”

“As long as you’re wearing pants, knock yourself out.”

“Good. I will. And thanks for letting me grab that shower. I do like to do that after a long, hard day’s work: shower in a shower I’ve never showered in before.”

“Sure. No problem. Towels are in the closet. Use whatever one you like.”

“Hey, Ben.”

“Yeah?”

“Would it be weird if I called to you while I’m in the shower

and you came up and exfoliated my back, the parts I can't reach, with a pumice stone?"

"You have a pumice stone with you?"

"Carry one with me at all times. An authentic one too, from Many Farms."

Ben nods. "Yeah."

"Really? You don't mind! Thanks, man."

"No, I meant, yeah, it would be weird. I was responding to your question. Not gonna do that."

"Oh. So I'd assume you wouldn't want to wash the parts of my back I can't reach either?"

"That's right. Sorry."

"No worries. I appreciate you letting me ask."

"You just asked. You didn't ask to ask. You just asked. What does that mean, 'letting you ask'?"

"I'm saying if I was in a foxhole on the Western Front back during the, I don't know, the War of 1916, the one of that time, I'd want you there both for moral as well as military support."

"Thanks, man."

"I'm saying," Hans says, "what I'm saying is that, if, for example, I mean fat chance, but if, *if*, okay? If I ever get married to Blue in some type of once in a blue moon type crazy scenario, do you like think you'd make sure no matter what period full stop no excuses no matter what I'm being literal though to be there?"

Ben takes a sip of water. "Yeah, of course. Of course I would."

“What about being the guy who’s the guy getting married’s main guy there?”

“Best man?”

“Yeah, that. Look...do you believe in marriage, Ben? Or do you agree that it should be illegal like it is and all?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah what?”

“I do believe in marriage,” Ben says.

“Why?”

“Why, do you?”

“I don’t know that I do,” Hans says, “I know for sure that before I met Blue I’d say that I didn’t. She does. And what if she makes me marry her?”

“She can’t make you marry her.”

“You don’t know this woman like I do, Ben.”

“I don’t know why I believe in it,” Ben says. “But I do. I absolutely do, one-hundred percent. I think if it’s the right person it’s almost like you can’t not do it. I think, and putting everything else aside, especially the government prohibition, people that are, I don’t know, called to it, they kind of have to do it.”

“But you just said no one can force you to do it.”

“I’m saying it, marriage, forces you to do it. Another person—or people, or a family, or a legislative body—can’t coerce you. Can’t coerce you either way, yes or no. But I’m saying the thing itself demands it. Maybe like the way a pencil demands to be used to write or will otherwise, failing this, have to be left alone and used for nothing at all. The

way, you know, a song demands to be sung. Wow, sorry. I hear myself and I want to hit myself in the face with a crowbar. Sorry. I'm saying the Greeks defined perfection as something attaining the end it was created for. I believe, and don't ask me why, I don't freakin' know why, a man and a woman have like their natural end in each other and they're supposed to be together no matter—"

"You're talking about *ergon*, the Greeks, right?"

"*Ergon*?"

"*Ergon*. Yeah," Hans says. "Yur-budd'hee. You said a pencil is used to write. A pencil is perfect if it meets its end. Its function, the *ergon*."

Ben nods. "Okay. So then and, and this would lead to *arête*, the excellence of the thing. The proper function would lead to an excellence of result; an excellent, ideal result."

"Well," Hans says, licking his bottom lip. "I see where you're going but I'd like to think of *eudaimonia* as the real final goal, you know? The *telos* that get's the club poppin beyond belief."

Hans grabs a piece of paper and a marker from the counter. He writes *eudaimonia* in Greek, in bolded black letters, and shows it to Ben.

Ευδαιμονία

"*Eudaimonia* means like total happiness or total completion," Hans says, "a perfect happiness in completion, you know? So, in my opinion, I'd think that the proper function of something, its purpose, mixed with the *arête*, which is best described as an excellence in morals, virtue, would lead,

again in seamless combination, to this final goal of completed happiness and bliss: *eudaimonia*.”

Ben nods.

“Yeah,” Hans says, “so like a pencil being used to write, and writing with excellent care and style, will produce the blissful happiness of like super artistic looking calligraphy at the end. It’s perfect. Or, I guess like you were saying, men and women being given to one another by each another, freely—their proper function as you claim—and then this mutual love being lived in excellence of moral virtue will, also, lead to a great, maybe even perfect, as perfect as we can make it anyways, happiness. Which of course some people would further extend to progeny. Would say that this happiness is so great, so uncontainable, that it, naturally, cannot help but be, in its very essence, fruitfully reproductive? Would say, people who believe in God, that here’s the closest you can get to Holy Trinity this side of heaven: a mom, a dad, their kids? Did you know, Ben, that Catholics celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family the first Sunday after Christmas? That I guess they’re saying, for the idiot Catholics who can’t still tie their shoes or the dudes tie a tie, look: That doctrine of The Incarnation, Christmas, the Baby Jesus in the manger, a baby *is part of a family*, and so we’re going give pride of place to the Holy Family, the very family that baby’s part of like a split-second later so you don’t miss it; the Holy Trinity this side of Heaven, that just as the Father and the Son’s eternal exchange of love produces the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, all three consubstantial, three Persons One God, so does the love of husband and wife bring forth a third made form the parts of A and B! Fruitfully reproductive, I’ll say again, auctioneer two time Louisiana state champion duck caller, no, I’ll say it thrice for thrice is nice on ice: fruitfully reproductive, multiplication tables galore!

“Ben, I’m talking about Григорій Яковлевич Перельман status

gone bonk haywire but with infants not numerals, babies being multiplied outwards by a love just about endless extending far out into space; babies, not numbers; infants, Ben, pacifiers upon mountains of pacifier molehills everywhere! And, Ben, broh, you surprised an atheist, an agnostic, a 'seeker' like me can go so seamless on Catholic doctrine? U mad, bro? There's nothing, nothing I tell you, as interesting in the whole of human history as U-235 radioactive Catholic theology, as real and authentic Catholic theology; should make every believing Catholic a saint and every spiritual seeker a philosophical savant. But you want a surprise about sex, considering we're talking about marriage which means we're talking about sex? That people last century, that people before that around the time of the 'Sexual Revolution' really didn't know that sexual liberation means social, political, mental, every type of tyrannical control. It's funny and sad they didn't know, *aw, you guys really did think the world was flat back then! Haha, okay, well here's your Crayola box back.* Funny because, how stupid do you have to be? Oh, really, really, you're really surprised that if you sit in a dark space at home masturbating all day in front of a blue lit screen you're probably not going to ever finish that degree, not going to ever get that job, maybe any job, not going to make any friends and so not have a real social life and so not going to ever meet a real woman instead of all the disgusted, inverted, offensive to everyone everywhere fake shit streaming off that blue light polluting you down to your very core; a real woman, for who, yeah because of that disgusting habit you can't give up, won't ever be able to get it up for. And so this makes it not funny at all in the end but sad, so sad, all the ruined lives, all the unnecessary suffering, all the bullshit and the worst part being those pulling the strings behind the scenes.

"Just read the history books, Ben. And then tell me, you think it's normal, no, natural, just coincidental that high school kids of this time took it as a serious proposition that they

might lose their virginity on their prom night? Are you fucking kidding me, dude? Are you fucking serious? Sex is for men and women, not wet-behind-the-ears, still pee-the-bed pimple-faced teenage kids. Lambs led to the slaughter, lives destroyed, the sex on the prom night teenage mom drop out of high school welfare option or, worse still, the sex on prom night abortion immediate and unremitting regret I hear phantom baby cries in the middle of the night max out depression pills can't ever get close to anyone again can't forgive myself can't go on option. Who, exactly, does it, *rather did it*, or, maybe still today still *does it* because as if these things can go *puff* and go away just like that, just tell me, who, who exactly, did it benefit to have teenage kids think they, *they!*, were weird if they weren't having sex in high school, to have young men and women think they were strange if they weren't sex-robot slaves to pornography, glued to their screens for hours at a time while real life slipped faster and more surely away by the second the minute the hour the day the week the months the years the-oh, wait, what? I just let ten years pass and have done nothing, been nowhere, accomplished nothing of note, buried my talents, buried my head in the sand although you could should more accurately say buried my talents in my dick and, by the way, I'm a huge dick for wasting all the good stuff about me and for what—for what—for what? Fuck me!

"Someone please tell me what the fuck for! Yeah, who exactly? Who, Ben? Who benefited from kids, young men and women, thinking that relationships are supposed to be transient and superficial, that the only right more inalienable than promiscuous sex is the right to abort the whole planet out of existence, who—tell me I'm begging you—was excited about this exchange of goods, the very trade off Foucault famously talked about in *Death Valley* in the 1970s, the *me and everyone on the left will shut up about economic justice and a fair living wage so long as you give us unlimited sexual freedom* trade off, the suicidal pact with the devil all these kids just went

along with, willingly incurring inescapable avalanches of debt and being paid jackshit for shitass jobs shitter than the degrees which got them the jobs—degrees from places I won't can't even call 'universities,' because you don't get to call yourself a university when you have more stress management adult coloring books than actual art offerings, more 'woke' linguistic guidebooks than actual languages offered, and the true major of every student, boy, girl, all, is come eleven minutes late to class Monday through Wednesday looking like shit, girls in those XXXXXXL oversized T-shirts worn over workout spandex, guys with backward hats and sweats and untied sneakers over mismatching, hole-ridden socks, then proceeding to half-pay attention to course material that so dumbed down to the lowest common denominator a fifth grader could get a B-without even trying, half pay attention while checking what they then called 'social media' just to figure out where you were getting plastered Thursday, Friday and Saturday night and at whose frat's toilets you were going to be vomiting those following early morning hours—and so who—who—who? Tell me, I swear I'll get off this soapbox if you tell me who—who? Who in the—who—who? I'll tell you who—you don't think the Silicon Valley CEO with eighty planes, eighty cars laughing to the bank in his Porsche (driven by a chauffer, of course) cashing those \$3000/mo. rent checks for a San Francisco spandrel beneath the stairs from the sex-robot wage slave kids who can't stop masturbating to blue light all night in between trying to cry themselves to sleep over their million dollar debts and moral debts that came from embracing the sexual libertine culture as teenagers and learning pretty quickly, from personal experience, the difference between antidote and poison, you don't think this guy and all his guys and gals who pushed this shit'dogshit culture through their feudal serfs in the media and in education benefited? You don't think they made out like the bandits they are? And, Ben, you think they give one percentage of one ounce of fuck who got hurt along the way?"

[1] Hans' Dad wanted to do something special for his son's fifteenth birthday. "We're not Latino, son. And you're not a girl. But there's got to be some kind of Gringononisto male version of the *Quinceañera*, right? You name it, Hans. You name your present, your party, your fiesta even, I dare say, and it's yours." Hans knew just the thing. A trip to his favorite map in the U.S, his most hobbyinfatuatiobsessionized place ever: Urbana, IL. And, no, we're not talking here about "Champaign-Urbana," no Chambana stuff, please. And not just Urbana, IL. Only the *West Urbana* section of Urbana, a city usually twinned with its ugly sister (or pretty, depending on your perspective, dude, whatever floats your boat, woah, relax, it was a joke...c'mon, really, you're going to call your lawyer? Over this? Your lawyer is also your dog? I don't get it) Ms. Champaign both of which are most famous for being in the same sentence as the University of Illinois (ie. The University of Illinois at *Urbana-Champaign*). West Urbana can be loosely defined as follows (according to Hans): the southern perimeter is Vine Street running from Lincoln Square all the way to Florida Ave (which is a thrice-named street: Honorary Illini Blvd on campus and Kirby Ave in Champaign up near the St. Matthew Catholic parish and school environs); Florida, heading north from Vine, makes up the Western border before running into the Northern border, Lincoln Ave (the demarcation point between Urbana and the UIUC campus proper), which then runs all the way from Florida to West Main St (although some might go as far as W. Griggs Street near Leal Park, this was a serious point of contention on WUNA* email chains many years ago) which then marks the Eastern border of W. Urbana as it winds down again to Lincoln Square passing by, a few streets away, the comely and homely Urbana Free Library (the Lincoln Square area being home of the weekly Saturday morning farmers market and the extra buttery August classic, the Sweetcorn Festival). "I got it, Dad. I know what I want."

“Perfect, son! What is it?” “Can I sing you a song about it?”
“...” “About my gift, what I want?” “...” : “Dad?” “Absolutely,
Hans! Can’t wait to hear it.” (set to the melody of *Dixie*.
“Dad, I wish you’d a take me to West Urbana, I know the roads,
best in Chambana, take me, Dad, take me, Dad, central
Illinois’a here we come! I wanna sit shotgun while you drive,
me as busy as a bee in the hive, lookin’ out, lookin’ out,
lookin’ out my window here we go. Real quick down Vine Street,
then right, then right, go real slow up Michigan Ave, it might
take all night. Then left, take a left, a real nice left on
Orchard, and go straight, Dad, it’s fate, this will turn out
great. It’ll be fun because there’s Busey, there’s Race,
there’s Race, there’s so many streets named after states, what
can I say but great. Great, Iowa, can you go round Carle Park
twice? Great, Vermont, then let’s go get some ice. Ice as in
cream, as in scream as in I scream, you scream, we all scream
for Ice cream...

*West Urbana Neighborhood Association.

The following is presented as a representative example (Item #2331 B.144-C.2010sSCE-A) of the general “extreme liberalism” of Urbana in the time immediately preceding the Time of Troubles and is available, along with the full trove of WUNA emails, for researchers at the Urbana Public Library Special Collections Research Room.

Item #2331 B.144-C.2010sSCE-A; October 29, SCE 2018;
timestamp approx. : 1:34 PM.

–#NotMyPresident.gmail.com [WUNA-list]: Does anyone, perchance, know when Trick or Treaters are coming through the area? What times? –Dolores Johnson.

–DumpTrumpTakeOneOnHim@eiu.edu [WUNA-list]: I think between 6-8 PM?

–ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com [WUNA-list]: Yes. I think Dumptrump is right, Dolores. But I have a question for you, WUNA. Can

anyone guarantee that this year's Halloween costumes are going to be appropriate?

-DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com [WUNA-list]:
[@ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com](mailto:ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com), ???

-DumpTrumporTakeOneOnHim@eiu.edu [WUNA-list]: @
DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com, I think he/she/they are talking about cultural appropriation.

-ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com [WUNA-list]: RE: ???, Yes. But not just-, well, yes, yes last year I had a group of white girls dressed up as Pocahontas!!! Can u imagine that! The nerve! It's like now with the current administration in office, anything goes. I see these white girls dressed up as Pocahontas, little white girls dressed like Jasmine, dressed up like Mulan, where does this end!!!?

-DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com [WUNA-list]:
[@ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com](mailto:ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com), Ur mad b/c some girls dressed up like Elizabeth Warren? But she is white, wutz wrong with that?

-F***RodneyDavisUnseatingHimnotenough@UrabanaParksandRec.gov
[WUNA-list]: @ DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com, Fuck off, troll!

-ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com [WUNA-list]:
[@F***RodneyDavisUnseatingHimnotenough@UrabanaParksandRec.gov](mailto:F***RodneyDavisUnseatingHimnotenough@UrabanaParksandRec.gov), Thank you, Rodney! [...system failure...]

-ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com [WUNA-list]: RE: [...system failure...]
stupid email server I tried sending two raised, clenched fists of
of color @
[@F***RodneyDavisUnseatingHimnotenough@UrabanaParksandRec.gov](mailto:F***RodneyDavisUnseatingHimnotenough@UrabanaParksandRec.gov).
didn't go through. Nevertheless, I appreciate the solidarity,
brother!

-F***RodneyDavisUnseatingHimnotenough@UrabanaParksandRec.gov
[WUNA-list]: @ ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com, Thank you for the

support but as a non-person of color, non-gender identifying cisgender white patriarchal non-woman I would feel that I was appropriating many things to have accepted the gesture. So looks like the WUNA server is woke after all J J J !!!!

–DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com [WUNA-list]:
@F***RodneyDavisUnseatingHimnotenough@UrabanaParksandRec.gov
ur a douche. And ur the reason Trump got elected. So thanks keep up the liberal microtrigger b-shit and we'll keep runnin da country

–#NotMyPresident.gmail.com [WUNA-list]: @
DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com, You are the reason the country is in trouble, Mr. Smiths. You need to get a clue and a basic lesson in grammar (and manners!). You're not 'ur.' Running not "runnin"

– ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com [WUNA-list]:
@#NotMyPresident.gmail.com. I think as a policy going forward we should just ignore Mr. Smiths and his ilk. But I'd be careful, Dolores, when you state that people are not at liberty to use ur instead of you're. You're playing a dangerous game of intellectual colonization and subliminally enforced super-structural white guilt oppressive paradigmical manipulation longgame-endgame aimed at, however unintentionally, restricting people of color, women, and the disabled from the structures and strictures of power...and (especially) the means of production.

– DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com [WUNA-list]:
@ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com, WTF????????!!!!!!!!!!!! Hahahahaha, LMAO, LMFAO u librulls!!!!!!!! Hahahaha

–# NotMyPresident.gmail.com [WUNA-list]: @
ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com, I'm so, so, so sorry!!! I did not mean even the slightest offense. What can I do, oh whatsoever can I do to make it up to you and everyone that I've potentially macro-triggered by my careless words? Oh me and

my, I feel like I just assumed the role of Christopher Columbus and have committed some kind of unspeakable crime against the underprivileged 'New World' 'natives'. I am so sorry.

– DirkSmiths@SmithsPlumbing-ILL.com [WUNA-list]: @# NotMyPresident@gmail.com, ur only crime is bein a complete douche and libtard shitfur-brains.

– ObamaMama2998@yahoo.com [WUNA-list]: @WUNA-list; I just wanted to say, going back to what I was saying before about the Trick and Treaters. It's not just the cultural appropriation that has me worried. Yes, this must indeed be ruthlessly stamped out at each and every turn. What I was really trying to bring to

@WUNA-list's attention was the lack of sustainable, eco-friendly costumes. I hereby encourage everyone to take my lead and do as I did last Halloween. I would ask each and every Trick and Treater if their costumes were environmentally friendly, aimed at reducing carbon emissions and mean global temperature and, above all, made from 100% recyclable products. If there answer was not an affirmative—a clear yes, yes, no doubt—then they received no candy from me.

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Gracjan Kraszewski is the author of two books, the novel *The Holdout* and the Civil War history *Catholic Confederates*. His third book, and second novel, *Thermonuclear Mirth*, is forthcoming and due out this summer, 2023, with Arouca Press. Gracjan holds a PhD in history. Selected fiction, essays, historical articles and reviews have appeared in *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *New English Review*, *Riddle Fence*, *Nashwaak Review*, *The Catholic Historical Review*, *Wilderness House Literary*

Review, Eclectica Magazine, The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, The Journal of Southern Religion, The Journal of Southern History, Black Bear Review, The MacGuffin, The Scriblerus, and Idaho Magazine.

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