

# What Would Epicurus Say About Searching For "Meaning?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 12, 2024 at 4:29 PM

You have a good memory! I think what I would say today to expand on what you quoted would be to clearly explain a definition of "certainty." If the word is defined to mean "godlike" certainty in that you are omniscient and omnipotent and have a full view of the universe through time and space, then you can never be certain (in that way) of anything, and that's the false standard that is foolish to seek.

If being certain is being used to me "I know this as well as an human can know it" then that definition of certainty is practical and usable.

So I think that's what Epicurus was talking about when he was using his canon. He set forth a set of tools that you can use, and if you use them appropriately then it is appropriate for you to say that you are "certain" of your conclusion. If you're talking to a priest and he says that he is certain of something, or that you can never be certain of anything, then I'd reject that proposition.

But just like when you're talking to Epicurus about "pleasure" you have to understand that he's talking about more than sensory stimulation, you can use the word "certain" in the proper sense of a human-style of certainty and be using the word acceptably.

I'd have to go back and see what else if anything I wrote at the time to see if I provided that context, but that's the context I would give it now. All the important words in Epicurean philosophy seem to have their own subtleties of meaning, and "knowledge" and "certainty" would be right in there with "pleasure," "virtue," "gods" and the rest! 😊

## [Quote from Pacatus](#)

Confidence is necessary, but absolute objective certainty is only available in deductive logic and pure mathematics.

I'm not sure that we should accept that "objective certainty" has a meaning unless we limit the term, should we? So I think I would be concerned about granting to deductive logic or pure mathematics the status of "objective certainty" either. I wouldn't want to go around casually implying that I think mathematics or logic have "objective certainty" when "objective certainty" sounds like a term that normal people would think applies only to that supernatural omniscient god whose existence we are rejecting.