

What Would Epicurus Say About Searching For "Meaning?"

Post by "Pacatus" of January 12, 2024 at 7:09 PM

Some comments on this question of "meaning" herein:

First, for Viktor Frankl, meaning was just what enabled you to endure – to get through, perhaps to flourish (given the contextual possibilities). His immediate context was his interment in a Nazi concentration camp. His personal "meanings" there were (1) the hope that he would be reunited with his wife (both of them surviving) and (2) that he would have the opportunity to complete and publish his theories of psychotherapy (logotherapy). Nothing more idealist or esoteric to the word "meaning" than that (and his understanding was likely more therapeutically powerful for that reason).

Second, I have seen Camus contraposed to Frankl. But Camus didn't say that the world is (existentially or metaphysically) absurd: what (for him) is absurd is the attempt to locate some exogenously-given meaning by a universe that discloses only facts and patterns. Deriving any "meaning" from those is up to us. The notion of being "given" meaning by the universe is what is absurd.

Third, when such down-to-earth ideas of "meaning" are seriously considered, the notion that Epicurean philosophy offers no means to (or opportunity for) personal meaning itself seems absurd.

With that said, [Kalosyni](#) is right: the term is broad, and needs to be pinned down – else any idealist/esoteric conception might be had.