

Meaning and Satisfaction for Epicureans

Post by "Godfrey" of August 22, 2024 at 11:34 AM

That's a big topic! But since I'm not yet fully awake, I'll take a groggy stab at it...

I would start by saying that "meaning," at least in the way that I think that you're thinking of it, is a type of pleasure.

Perhaps a "multivalent" pleasure: by this I mean something that brings pleasure (say in the form of satisfaction or fulfillment) on more than one level.

Or maybe better described as an "organizing" pleasure: something that brings one's life into a type of focus, and that serves as a filter for choices and avoidances (commitments and rejections, pursuing and fleeing &c). Actually, I like this take on it better than the multivalent idea.

And that's it. Period. Anything else is just one's personal understanding of it and how it works in their particular situation.

Friendship is highly valued in EP, but I'm not sure that it would be classified as meaning, although it can multiply one's pleasure and one can derive personal meaning from friendship and/or family.

The definition of transcendence is a little hard to pin down, I think, but as I interpret what's written in post #1, that's not something that would enter into an Epicurean equation. I think that the best take on something close to transcendence or a legacy would come directly from the example of Epicurus, particularly in his last letter and his will. One can take steps during one's lifetime to try to influence what happens after they die, but at some point, that can turn into an unnatural desire and do one more harm than good.

VS48 is quite good! However, I don't think that it's referring to meaning, but more to how one can most effectively pursue pleasure in one's life.

My final thought is to reiterate that we can define "meaning" as "an organizing pleasure." However I reserve the right to revise that!