

What Would Epicurus Say About Searching For "Meaning?"

Post by "Kalosyni" of January 13, 2024 at 8:42 AM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

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.

Further thoughts coming up in regard to "meaning". Most concerning to me in the call to "search for meaning" is the implication that happiness is not possible so that the best one can do is have a "meaningful life". This is so divorced from pleasure, especially normal animal pleasures, and shows how there is a mistaken and unnecessary distrust of pleasure. Also, missing is that we have basic human needs for social interaction and for friendship, which we need for living a happy life.

It appears to me that Frankl's advice was born out of an extreme worst case scenario which required extreme coping mechanisms - a scenario that most people thankfully will never need to encounter. We are living ordinary and secure lives which are much much different. I see the "search for meaning" as an attempt to deal with severe mental anguish, but I think it is going about the problem in the wrong way.

Ultimately if we follow that which brings both short-term and long-term pleasure, we will naturally arrive at a "meaningful" life - one in which we do not have to prove that we are good or smart or talented in order to try to get approval from others. So Epicureans have a much different understanding of the word "meaningful".

We also can avoid falling into the trap that something isn't truly "meaningful" unless others also see it as "meaningful" (a "meaningful" life for some could just be one step away from a "virtuous" life, for example according to the common idea that serving others is a pathway to a meaningful life.)