

Meaning and Satisfaction for Epicureans

Post by “Kalosyni” of August 21, 2024 at 4:20 PM

There are a few other threads and posts that bring up the topic of "meaning", but just this morning I was thinking about it again.

It seems to me that "meaning" and "meaningful" - as in "my life has meaning" or "my life is meaningful"...for an Epicurean could be translated to this:

--- I am feeling satisfied with how my life is going ---

We really can't put the "meaning"-genie back in the bottle, and so we need to reframe it in Epicurean terms.

To start, perhaps the idea "meaning of life" comes to us from the Judeo-Christian purpose in life with the roles dictated by God - serving or worshiping God. And also from society - being a "hero" or of service to others, or roles such as being a parent, etc., and all of these also mostly come through religious institutions.

Now, if you think about it, all of the above tends to increase connection or involvement with other people. And they have aspects which touch on "transcendence of time" and an "extension of consciousness into the future" (working for the good of heaven to "do God's will", working for the good of the community or for the good of children (one's own or other's) -- but ultimately they are also all touching on the desire for an "immortality of consciousness" (even if I die there is something that I have done that will exist into the distant future in future generations of people).

So one way of translating "meaning" into an Epicurean understanding, would be to think of it as a natural and necessary desire for human connection. And if there is a question of whether one's life feels meaningful, an Epicurean could examine whether the basic need for satisfying human connection is being fulfilled. (And this may be where the necessity of creating an "Epicurean Church" might be helpful for some people).

The need for "finding meaning" can come up when bad things happen or big changes in life occur (the need to make sense of things) or when life seems devoid of activity (boring/empty), or a lack of close friends (feeling alone/isolated).

So I would say that if you feel that you are not quite happy with your life, look at how your connections with other people can be improved or increased.

Regarding the desire for an "immortality of consciousness" which I brought up above - I think this may vary from person to person, and whether or not there is a belief that one "should"

leave some kind of a legacy (having children is one form of leaving a legacy). [Martin Godfrey Don](#) maybe anything to say about this aspect of "meaning" (agree or disagree? or change it to an Epicurean viewpoint?)

Also, anyone else's ideas on "meaning" and translating it into an Epicurean frame of understanding? Whether it correlates with natural and necessary desire for emotional/relational connection?