

The "meaning crisis" trend. How do you answer it as an Epicurean philosopher?

Post by "Cassius" of September 21, 2024 at 12:04 PM

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

Do you even accept the terms of things needing "meaning"?

Right, I would first question the terms of the debate. "Meaning" to whom? Jordan Peterson and others of either an explicitly religious or a "humanist" bent look for standards of moral worthiness in gods or idealism. Epicurus taught that nature gives us only pleasure and pain by which to determine what to choose and what to avoid. Therefore we don't look to supernatural gods or rationalistic ideals; instead we each individually have to look to the guidance that we feel inside as to physical and mental pain and pleasure for the ultimate answers to all questions of how to live.

I don't doubt that there is a "meaning crisis," but it is a crisis of the creation of the people you listed and their predecessor schools. They won't get past it until they abandon their search for answers in divine revelation and rationalistic idealism. The people you listed are highly unlikely to make that change, so they will just keep at their task of wringing their hands over their self-created angst.

And since I think it's an important part of this discussion I will restate it: the "secular humanists" are just as guilty of this problem as are those preaching supernatural religion. The secular humanists talk like they offer an alternative to revealed religion, but then they turn right around and adopt the central core of the morality of the people they claim to oppose. I think Epicurus would say that all attempts to replace the guidance of nature (through pleasure and pain) with some other standard is doomed to ultimately being unsatisfying.

I started to type "doomed to failure" in that last sentence, but I suppose since the people I am criticizing have been the viewpoint of a large majority of people for 2000+ years, it's hard to say that they have "failed" in their goal. The problem is that their goal is manipulation and suppression of people holding viewpoints not to their liking, and in that respect unfortunately they have largely been successful.