

# An Anti-Epicurean Article - "The Meaning of Life Is Not Happiness" (For Future Reference)

Post by "Cassius" of November 9, 2024 at 8:07 AM

I know nothing about the site from which this comes, but I have a Google search which brings certain topics to my attention, and this came up today. I have read through the article and find it thoroughly anti-Epicurean, but I find it to be helpful to regularly remind myself of the directions from which this kind of thinking comes. This one is pretty representative of the spirit-based "meaningfulness" premise, and that's the reason I am posting it - for future reference as needed. It contains many of the standard references that people from this perspective cite, including references to Huxley's "Brave New World, Viktor Frankl's "Man's Search For Meaning." the argument equating happiness with materialism and that consumerism leads to unhappiness, etc.

Here I see the writer recognizes why so many people want to pursue "peace" and "contentment" rather than pleasure and happiness:

## Quote

Even deep spiritual interventions have the goal of happiness—if you are one with God, or Jesus, or Mohammed, you will be happy. Shouldn't the word "happy" be replaced with "content" or even "peace?" It certainly should be, because that is what I believe most of the religious traditions mean by the word "happiness." "Contentment" and "peace" have very different meanings to "happy."

If we are fully enlightened, are we even allowed to be happy? Of course, we are. Being happy is one of the most precious gifts of being a living creature. Should we expect to be happy all of the time? No, of course not. That would be a curse. Should we expect to be content or at peace all of the time? Yes, I believe that is indeed possible and should be a goal we all strive to attain.

How about this: death, suffering, and pain are illusions of the material world, and for large portions of our lives we should not expect to be happy! (Contrast that with Torquatus' On Ends 1:62 "And pains, if any befall him, have never power enough to prevent the wise man from finding more reasons for joy than for vexation." and Epicurus's **U116 Plutarch, Against Colotes, 17, p. 1117A**: Such is ... the man who, in the letter to Anaxarchus can pen such words as these: "But I, for my part, summon you to sustained pleasures and not to empty virtues, which fill us with vain expectations that destroy peace of mind)

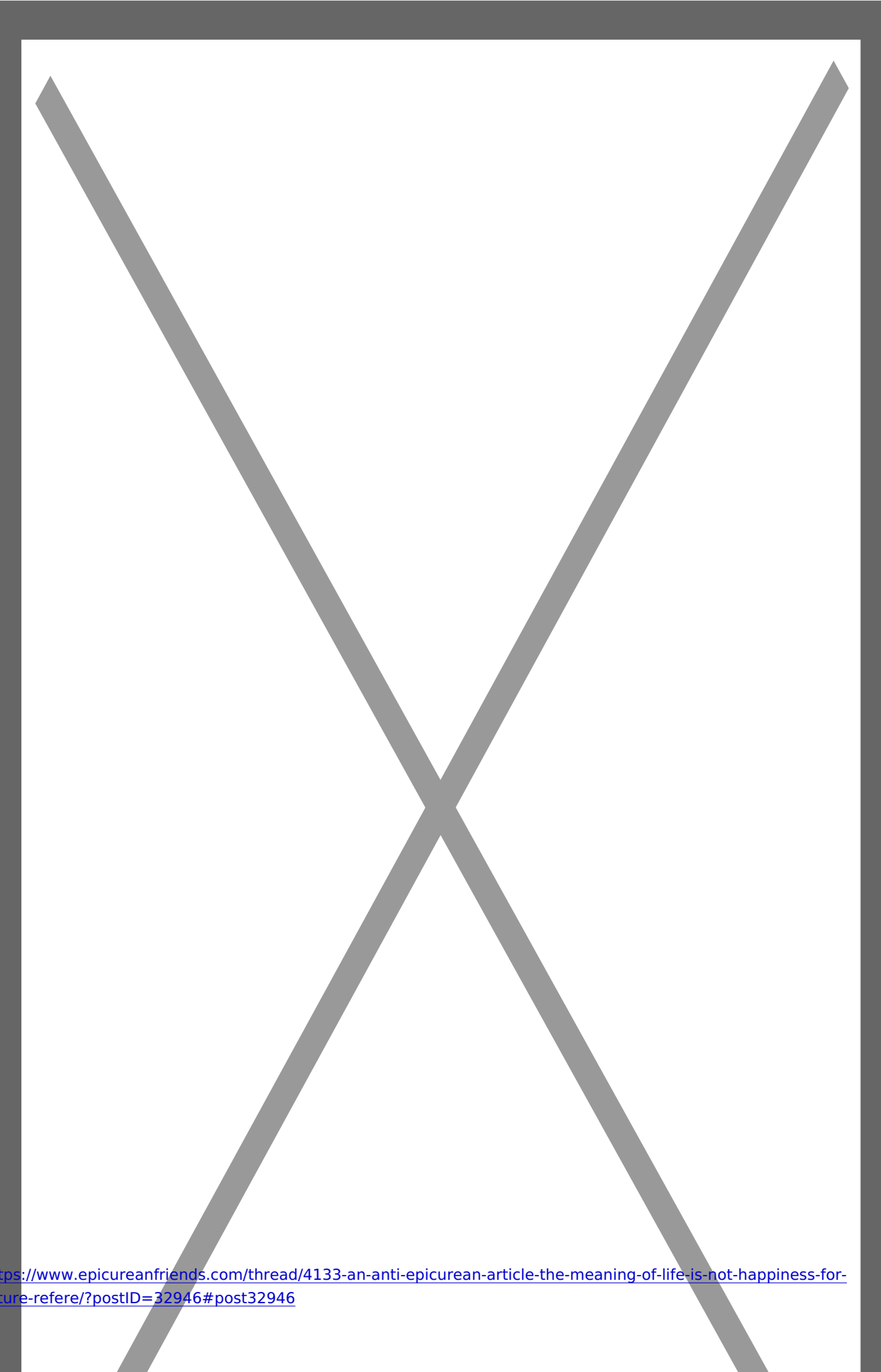
## Quote

However, my view is that as long as we are in the material form, living in a material creation, we have to encounter the manifestation of evil, darkness, and suffering—not ignore it. Part of our purpose and meaning in this world is to deal with everything we encounter, not turn away from any of it. Therefore, for a large portion of our lives, we may not be happy.

Dealing with darkness is not typically a happy endeavour, however, it doesn't mean we cannot be at peace and be content when we are dealing with it. Darkness, suffering, and pain are but an "appearance"—an illusion—in the material realm. Through this illusion, we may even find meaning, and purpose, as we deal with the darker sides of life and existence.

I'm not recommending this article for a run read, but as a reminder of what Epicurean philosophy is up against. i don't consider this something resolvable by simply saying "meaningfulness is pleasure so that means we're all after pleasure so why don't we all agree just to have different definitions of happiness. This is a fundamental difference in world-view that 2000 years ago led to the active suppression of the freedom to hold Epicurean viewpoints.

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4133-an-anti-epicurean-article-the-meaning-of-life-is-not-happiness-for-future-refere/?postID=32946#post32946>

## [The Meaning of Life is Not Happiness](#)

I can't tell you the number of times every day I hear from clients in my practice, "All I want is to be happy." And they don't know why they are not happy,...

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