

Sunday May 25th, Zoom Discussion: "What Would Epicurus Say About the Search For 'Meaning' In Life?"

Post by "Rolf" of May 25, 2025 at 1:55 PM

Thanks for today everyone! Dave, it was good to meet you.

[Quote from Joshua](#)

The first appearance of the phrase 'meaning of life' in the written record of the English language:

This makes me wonder: Did the concept of a "meaning of life" even exist in the modern sense during Epicurus' time? And if not, why should we need it, if the ancient Epicureans got by perfectly fine without it?

Some additional thoughts:

- People who buy into the need for meaning rarely (if ever) talk about other animals having or requiring meaning. Why is that? In a strictly materialist universe, why would only humans have/require meaning?
- Is "meaning" just another platonic ideal, incompatible with a strictly materialist worldview?
- Let's say you eat a delicious slice of cake. It would sound ridiculous and nonsensical for somebody to ask you the meaning behind eating the slice of cake. You eat it because it tastes good and thus gives you pleasure. There is no need for a deeper meaning. With this in mind, why should life itself require a meaning?

With that said, I would personally phrase the FAQ response somewhere along these lines:

Where is the meaning in Epicurean philosophy?

First we must ask ourselves: What do we mean by "meaning"?

Do we mean being a part of something bigger than ourselves? Then it is in friendship and community.

Do we mean a telos, objective, or aim? Then it is in pleasure.

Do we mean a sense of fulfillment? Then it is in the things that give us secure and consistent pleasure, varying by person. Some common sources are friendship, family, and hobbies.