

Why Does Stoicism Seem to Be More Popular Than Epicureanism, Especially In England?

Post by “Don” of October 3, 2020 at 9:41 PM

The whole "meaning of life" thing is problematic from my perspective. Monty Python gave their version of the "meaning of life" at the end of the film of the same name:

Quote

Well, it's nothing very special. Try to be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try and live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations.

That sums it up. The more people look for some kind of transcendent, all-encompassing Meaning of Life (capital M, capital L), the more we're potentially seduced into looking for something outside of the ordinary and into the supernatural. There is also the Make Money, Greed is Good version of the Meaning of Life that also leads to all kinds of problems and pain.

Epicurus provided sound, attainable goals in living your life, pursuing pleasure, and doing your best to not be harmed and doing no harm in turn. That's not Meaning. That's simply prudence and justice in service to pleasure. For me, it's liberating to not have some Search for Meaning hanging over me. I need not feel oppressed by the need to search for some deeper Meaning. Granted, I'm still coming to grips with this idea. I haven't been exploring Epicureanism for very long, around four years. The realization that the universe had no deeper meaning or literally didn't care about me (It's not a conscious being! How can it care! And there is no God dealing out favors or punishments!) was a little disconcerting at first then liberating. There is no external rule book imposed on us. Nature provides the only limitations and guides needed, if we listen. Epicurus listened, then passed that along and encouraged us to listen to Nature, too.