

# What does it mean to have a meaningful life in Epicurean terms?

Post by "Cassius" of March 14, 2017 at 8:00 PM

<http://societyofepicurus.com/dialogue-on-th...ch-for-meaning/>

**RW 4 hrs** Is living a "meaningful" life an Epicurean concept at all? An Epicurean "virtue"? If so, what constitutes a meaningful life for an Epicurean? If there are multiple paths, what are some Epicurean examples?

RW PD 5 comes closest to addressing this. "Wisely, honorably, justly, pleasantly". Is there anything necessarily meaningful there? Many people (e.g. Stoics, probably) would say living honorably and justly are meaningful goals and their achievement inherently rewarding, and that the struggle to live that way is meaningful as well, but for Epicurus, these are merely instrumental goals in service of the goal of pleasure. It's not clear to me that he finds the pursuit of the instrumental virtues "meaningful".

IV: If your life has genuinely been a meaningful -- that is, you've created meaning in it -- then you can take pleasure in it.

It's always the pleasure that determines whether a thing is meaningful, not the other way round. And if you've lived a pleasurable life, it should help you face the prospect of death. Living well and preparing for death amount to the same thing.

Letter to Menoeceus 126:

"And he who admonishes the young to live well and the old to make a good end speaks foolishly, not merely because of the desirableness of life, but because the same exercise at once teaches to live well and to die well."

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IV: "A meaningful life" is usually so vaguely defined that it could mean 1f609.png;) anything. No one to date has been able to define the single meaningful life that every human should have. At least one that wouldn't be torture to some people..

An Epicurean might approach this as the combination of personal interests and morality. "What thing or idea or activity excites me and produces pleasure in me and others.

Having "meaning" in and of itself doesn't seem to be a virtue. Taking meaning in a specific pursuit may or may not be a good thing. They would have to be evaluated by pleasure produced and justice followed.

Perhaps we could say (as Epicureans) that meaning is something that we create in our own lives by pursuing our interests morally and justly.

MS: Is a life of a tiger meaningful? Or a monkey? Or a pig? isn't pig' life the most "useful to others"?!

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CA:: I agree with IV:'s second comment in particular. Unless you define "meaningful" the question cannot be answered, and most of the definitions of "meaningful" are going to be loaded in a non-Epicurean way. (Such as meaningful to the gods, or meaningful in "the great scheme of things, or the like)

CA: I am not at all sure that an ancient Epicurean would ever ask this question, and it would probably come up only with someone whose thoughts are oriented from another philosophy: "what constitutes a meaningful life?"

MJ: Meaning like virtue, is sometimes pretty relative in my opinion. What is meaningful to you may not be to someone else. So it would come down to a value judgement of what is meaningful to you, what pleasure do you get out of this subjective meaningfulness.

MJ: It was meaningful for me to attain a blackbelt in Taekwondo, it was meaningful for me to graduate from college and basic military training etc. others may share these sentiments, but others may not.

MJ: I set goals and upon completion of those goals there was a cathartic sense of pleasure when accomplished.

MJ: So totally meaningful to me, but perhaps not to someone who never shared those goals.

HD: According to nowadays psychology in a meaningful life one's purpose in life exceeds himself, for example living virtuously, faithfully, etc. This is a conceptual end of life that is related to religion, and the idealist in general philosophies. The epicurean philosophy considers the individual and his happiness-in terms of feelings- as the most valuable good in life. The corresponding term related to the Epicurean philosophy is "the pleasant life".

CA: BIG LIKE to that last comment by Haris!

HD:That's why the title of my book is"Epicurus, and the Pleasant Life".

CA: "Epicurus And The Pleasant Life" is much better than "Epicurus And The Meaningful Life"!

HD: The meaningful life has no "meaning".

CA: Exactly! About the same as calling it "Epicurus and The Virtuous Life!" 1f642.png:-)

RW: So life is without meaning and pursuing meaning is a vain thing?

CA: Again, Ron, what is your meaning when you say "meaning"? Does my life have "meaning" in terms is is significant to me? Darn right it does, to me, and that is all that counts.

Dialogue on the Search for Meaning

Philosophers have always disagreed about what is the telos, the ultimate end or aim that we should pursue....

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Hiram Crespo ... And the last Twentieth msg also deals w meaning  
<https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/.../happy-twentieth.../>

MS: It is a strange term 'meaningful life' , for me this has implications or nuances of judgement and validation, both of which are not free from trouble or unnecessary stress.