

Example of meaning of life research paper

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Meaning of Life

I am sure that everyone thinks over the questions of life meaning from time to time, someone more seriously, while others just in a matter-of-fact way. One of the characteristic features of such questions is that answers to them are constantly changing along with the way a person evolves and develops. Moreover, this question is largely influenced by the person's environment and the time period, in which he/she lives. Although there are major differences between different world views, it is possible to single out certain tendencies in the life meaning perceptions that are prevalent among people. And these tendencies don't change in the course of time. There are many different ideas and philosophies of life that we know from ancient philosophers, and it is always interesting to consider them in today's modern circumstances, as I believe.

Personally I have already thought about the reasons why I live my life the way I do and what is the purpose of my living, and in this paper I will present my perception of this question, as well as correlation of my views with life philosophies of two well-known ancient philosophers - Epicurus and Seneca. I have chosen these figures, as in the course of research I performed for this assignment their worldviews seemed to reflect my ideas. After reviewing information on the life principles and philosophies these personalities propagated, I understood that I can extend my understanding of life meaning with their help.

The first of the authors that I have chosen, Epicurus, was a representative of ancient Greek philosophy, who founded his own philosophical school - Epicureanism. He was an author of more than 300 works, but only a few

fragments survived till this day, which is why his philosophy is mostly known to us through descriptions of his followers. His view of the meaning of life can be briefly described in the following way: people should live to attain happy and tranquil life, which is characterized by ataraxia, which is absence of fear, and aponia, which is absence of pain. According to him, people in this way will live self-sufficient life, especially if they are surrounded by friends. He believed that the main measures of what is evil and good were pain and pleasure. Epicurus said that there should be no fear of death, as it is the end of soul and body and that gods don't punish or reward human beings. He thought that the universe was eternal and infinite.

The other philosopher, Seneca, was a representative of Roman Stoic philosophy and an advisor of emperor Nero. He was an author of several philosophical essays and 124 letters dedicated to various moral issues, as well as nine tragedies. His works presented ideas that were popular among Stoics: life meaning of people lies in living unperturbed and simple life in accordance with nature and duty to the state. He believed that universe was governed by rational providence. According to Seneca, suffering was beneficial for people, which is why it should be accepted. Learning and study are also very important for people, as he claimed. One of the central ideas of his letters was the way people should approach their death.

Some of the ideas of these authors are close to me and I want to explain why. When starting to describe my life philosophy, I want to state that this issue is complex and consists of many ideas that can be discussed for a long time. Here I am going to present a brief description of my life philosophy. I am sure that it is impossible to live a peaceful life if a person cannot let go

of the past. In this case, there are always regrets or some pleasant memories that in any case don't let people develop and move further. These memories are anchors keeping people from living their lives completely. There is just no energy left for living in the present. As for the ghosts of future – it is also a major obstacle on the way to achieving harmonious living. In this situation a person always thinks what he/she will do in a day, a year, etc. and how interesting and happy his/her life will be in future. Thus, again there is a difficult position, where there is no energy left for the realization of plans and actual life. In the view of this idea Seneca said that everything that will happen was in the domain of uncertainty, which is why it is necessary to live today (1969). He also said that there was no good in dragging up sufferings that were already over. I am sure that these ideas are absolutely appropriate today and will always be such, and only the circumstances and necessary constituents that can result in such harmonious life can change.

Another interesting idea that I borrowed from the philosophers, is that it is necessary to be unattached to material possessions. Epicurus wrote: “ He who does not think that what he has is more than sufficient, is an unhappy man, even if he is the master of the whole world.” (1980) I think that today such ideas are especially important, as the pursue for wealth is one of today's greatest obsessions and far too often people forget that wealth doesn't necessarily bring happiness. In the course of time this obsession evolved greatly and today people often lose control in this pursue, often feeling disappointed when they get the wealth they wanted most. But the true meaning of life for me is indeed to be content with what you have. I believe that in this way true harmony can be reached and people will have

exactly what they need to maintain this harmony.

Among the other interesting ideas there is looking for pleasure, which was especially well-described in the works of Epicurus. In particular, he wrote that it was necessary to exercise ourselves in those things that bring happiness, as in case of their absence all the actions should be directed towards receiving them, and when we have them, we can be truly happy. I am sure that every person should find appropriate ways of doing what brings pleasure to him/her, as in any other way it is not possible to be really happy.

References

Seneca, L. A. (1969). *Letters from a Stoic*. London: Penguin Books.

Epicurus. (1980). *Epicurus, the extant remains*. New York: Hyperion Books.