

Meaning of life



Jermaine Smith Period 7 The True Meaning of Life What is the meaning of life?

Well known Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato believed that our purpose in this life was to gain knowledge in preparation for the next life.

Other Philosophers such as Epicurus believed that pleasure is the main goal in life. After giving these ideas lots of thought, I have come to my own conclusion that the true meaning of life is far more complex than either of these; far too complex for any human to fully comprehend. In fact these two different philosophies are only part of the grand picture. If it were that easy for men to figure out our lives wouldn't be so messed up now. The meaning of life revolves around many different things. I think these things include: self-understanding, development of mind and soul, and an afterlife.

According to Epicurus, pleasure was the meaning of life. His ideas of life were completely opposite of Plato. Epicurus, in my opinion was a little bit naive and narrow minded in his view on the subject. He would say that the meaning of life was to experience pleasure until the end of your existence. He did not believe in an afterlife or that a person had a soul that lived forever. He just thought when you are gone that's it. I disagree with all of that because I have many religious beliefs from which I derive the meaning of life. One of these beliefs is that there is life after death, and that there is one supreme being of the universe. This goes back to Aristotle's first mover theory. I would however agree that life is a balancing act between pain and pleasure; or good and evil. You can't have one without the other. For every thing in existence there is always something of opposition. Another ancient Greek philosopher was Socrates. Socrates said " the unexamined life is not worth living." I agree with this in a sense that if you can't look back at your life and be proud of your accomplishments, then everything that you ever

did was in vain. You have to be able to look at the mistakes you have made and be able to learn from that or you are doomed to repeat those mistakes. Maybe on a deeper level Socrates might have been talking about analyzing the purpose of one's life. This in my opinion is just as important. I feel that in order for me to succeed in life I have to at least examine the meaning of my being. I believe that it comes to a point in every person's life where they sit back and think "why am I here?" Whether it happens often or not, I wouldn't believe any person of sane health that said they never once thought about it. Socrates also said that "the good of life is knowledge." He believed in a higher good in life that could be achieved through an endless search for knowledge. His definition of higher good was when virtue and knowledge united. Although I agree that what Socrates speaks of is an important part of living, I would not go so far as to say it is the reason for living. I say this partially because of my definition of knowledge. I see knowledge not as just to be found in the universe, but in a way created by humans not unlike myself. Many things that are classified as knowledge such as: language, mathematics, and history are all human created. Our language was created by people in earlier civilizations, as well as mathematics. History is the story of these early people and civilizations. Should I assume that my reason for living is to learn of someone else's life? If so, what was that person's meaning for living? Undoubtedly these things are of tremendous value to our civilization and how we live. But I ask myself once again how does it relate to "why we live." As far as Socrates' belief in a higher good, I agree 100%. I honestly believe that there is a higher good that can be achieved but not just through the search of knowledge. My theory of how higher good can be achieved is that a person must fully understand themselves. That is when a

person is able to recognize their potential and develop it. They also have to be able to relinquish any doubt they have about themselves. One must commit to their spirituality. Finally they have to become physically stronger. Not meant to offend anyone, but the highest good to me, is the best that you can be. A weak body is vulnerable and doesn't complete a person as a whole. An interesting connection to that is how it is said that humans only use a small fraction of their brain. I believe when someone can tap into the rest of their brain, they will be close to if not at their highest good.

Last but not least we have the philosopher Plato, who was the pupil of Socrates. Therefore many of their ideas are similar if not identical. Plato also believed that knowledge was the most essential part of life. He thought that learning and knowing the truth was the only way to achieve perfection, and striving for perfection was the goal of life. I believe Plato may have been on to something. I have made it in one of my personal philosophies in life to strive for perfection. Although deep in the back of my mind I know it is unattainable I still try like it is. This reminds me of a quote that I read that said "aim for the moon, for even if you miss you will land among the stars." I just means to improve you have to set your standards high. Once again that is only part of the bigger picture that is called life. Striving for wholeness and perfection, as I perceive are mere steps to achieving a higher good, and therefore are not the cumulative meaning of life. Plato was probably the philosopher I most agree with. He also believed in an after life and preparation for it. But I don't particularly agree with him when he says that a higher good could only be accomplished by giving up all pleasure. Obviously there has to be some sacrifice, but to give up all pleasure would be to give

up on what you are trying to accomplish. I think of pleasure as one of the most powerful motivating forces in life. Whether it be intellectual or physical a person has to be able to enjoy what they are doing to excel above and beyond. Even Plato had to in some way had to enjoy philosophizing or he probably wouldn't do it.

It is now evident that the meaning of life has to far more complex for any one person to fully understand. All these ideas of these different philosophers are not necessarily inaccurate, just incomplete. All pieces to a puzzle that I have no way of fully figuring out. Socrates spoke of a higher good to be achieved. Nobody has seemed to accomplish this yet in life. There are so many obstacles that we face as we try to achieve a higher good. Many of these are based in the fact that we are human beings, and because of that are flawed by the ways of our culture. Things such as self-doubt, worry, ignorance, and the values put into our heads since the day we were born all are road blocks on our way to a higher level. Also being human beings makes vulnerable to the ways of the world around us, so it is not easy to block these things out of our lives. In a summary I believe this life to be stage in which we are to develop our minds, bodies, and souls to their highest potential in preparation for the afterlife. A person living by this philosophy would probably become a genius or great thinker. But like Epicurus, Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato I could only form my own opinions of the subject. There isn't anyway for me to figure out whether I am right or wrong. Only God could ever really know the true meaning.