

The Meaning of Life from a Stoic Perspective

“The ancient Stoics had a theological reason for thinking their lives had cosmic significance. They believed that the universe itself was a single, great, rational being with providential purposes with respect to human beings. They apparently found this both philosophically and personally significant—a source of solace even though the cosmic purposes were unknowable. God provided for humans in starkly different ways, for reasons that were unclear. God was silent. Negotiation was not possible. Prayer was pointless. Nonetheless, the very idea of this universe was inspiring and a source of awe ... No matter how badly one’s own life was going, it was reassuring to think that following nature was meaningful and rational in the sense that it was following the divine purpose in the universe as a whole.”

“When a Stoic sage in our sense asks questions about the meaning of her life, what matters to her is not whether there is meaning **for** it in its cosmic significance but rather a meaning **within** it in the way it is lived. What matters is its virtue. . .”

“A good life for the sage (happiness) is a life that is unified, replete with activity that exemplifies the virtuous exercise of practical wisdom in every context, from local to global.”

~Lawrence Becker, **A New Stoicism**