

Living a life by kierkegaard and camus



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Does life have any meaning? Stay tuned because two philosophers tried to answer this question for you and I. Soren Kierkegaard and Albert Camus both examined human existence, the meaning of life and the constant struggle to find answers in the world. Kierkegaard, also known as the “ father of existentialism” focused on the Christian faith/doctrine in relation to the existence of God. His view on religion signifies his passion for ethics and for human beings to recognize God and practice what is being preached. Camus, who critiqued Kierkegaard’s writing, had a different view about the meaning of life in which God/faith is not the ultimate. His strong opposition to death is depicted in his writing because if there is life there is hope. Both writers argued differently on whether life is worth living and the different solutions that can lead one towards finding a meaningful life. Many might ask why people exist. I for one, will not deny the fact that I sometimes question my existence. Who are we to determine that life is meaningless? If life is meaningless, why do humans work hard to live a legacy? Interpretation of meaninglessness of life also depends on the respondents’ religious upbringing. So who can answer my question; is it Kierkegaard, Camus or the Universe? Life can only be meaningless if we presume it meaningless; our attitude to life is what makes it meaningless. Stating that life is meaningless because we suffer and die is a subjective statement. Many people claim to be enjoying life and often will admit even in their dying beds that they have lived a very happy life. Both Kierkegaard and Camus have offered different explanations on how to deal with a meaningless life; however, they both have their pros and cons, therefore, no solution are better than the other and cannot be perfect on its own.

What constitutes a meaningful life? What makes life meaningless? It is important for one to examine what life has to offer before making a decision on whether it is meaningless or not. There are times when we feel abandoned and offended by the world, but it does not mean that it is the end of our existence even though we feel that way. Camus's explanation and example is right because if I believe that life is "absurd" and not worth the hassle, I would be inclined to behave in a certain way (I will live a life of carelessness since I know that I have nothing to lose) to make myself happy. Killing oneself is "unfruitful" because there is no guarantee that there is happiness after life or that life will eventually become meaningful. I believe in living life one day at a time; we struggle to make sense of the world but it keeps getting difficult as we try. This action often makes us rebel against the world (we basically give up hope) and search for alternatives to our problem.

We live in a constant state of conflict with the world. The meaning of life needs to be understood in order to feel fulfilled by the world. Because we are born and thrown into the world that offers no explanation of existence, we are left to avenge for ourselves. We all have a feeling or vision of what we want the world to look like, but we get disappointed that the world cannot be shaped to our own individual liking. Camus compares the human attempt to understand the world but the world itself cannot be understood. The feeling of breached relationship amongst the world and human beings is what he calls "absurd." We can equally feel fulfilled when the world has the same opinion as we do. On the contrary, when the world is against us and is on the opposite direction, we conclude that the world is not worth living. The world

can be unreasonable, however, it links humans together, hence we long for clarity to the irrational relationship we have with the world.

Camus explained three different ways man can live in an absurd world and still find meaning in it: the life of Don Juan, the drama life and the conquest life. The Don Juan life is a care free life; it is a life of here and now, a life with limit and no future. The life of Don Juan is the type of life that the majority of society would rather live, including me. I agree with Camus because there are people whose lifestyle is 'living in the moment.' They do not live to find answers to life but live to satisfy immediate desire. People living the life of Don are self centered and they depend only on their decision and judgment because they do not put meaning in anything. They strive for self benefit rather than for anything else. This type of life is one that is not guided by any moral code or conduct. It is a care free life where people are not worried about constant judgment by the society or feelings of guilt for wrong actions. Imagine a world without morals or without law I believe a lot of people would find it difficult to cope. Although, the law and morals exist, living the life of Don Juan would yield no consequences. The quantity of life matters in this kind of life because they are conscious and are aware of what they do, but the amounts of fulfillment they get from such action is what counts. How effective are your actions and decisions on earth? If what I do brings me joy and contentment, I will be inclined to do the same thing to continue to get the same joy. However, I believe that at some point, such life will become lonely because everything revolves around you only and change will be difficult.

The other way of living is the life of an actor. Living a life of an actor means that one has to literally “ put on” a different lifestyle each day. The actor strives to live for others and thus represents lives other than his own. Living such a life makes him absurd, a life with diversity and no specific purpose. I believe that living a life of an actor is a way of finding oneself and a way of searching for clarity. I also believe that people who live the life of an actor will find life more meaningful at some point because they do realize that such life is hopeful that they might find a life they can identify with. I can see where the life of an actor can be attributed to Camus ‘ absurd reasoning. This is because when we continue to live, we have hope that someday something will change or that one decision might lead to a meaningful life. When in doubt and in search of answers to life, we find ourselves contemplating whether to live or to die. When the feeling of emptiness and loneliness engulfs our mind, I think our instinct will be to end that suffering and save ourselves the heart ache of a wicked world. However, an actor continues to live and hope for tomorrow.

The last way of life as defined by Camus, is the life of a Conquest. The conquest life is directed towards achieving an aim, an aim he knows is unattainable, yet he struggles. People who live this life know full well that the end result will not be fruitful, yet that struggle gives their life meaning. The ‘ flesh’ represents life and being alive is worth more than the struggle. Conqueror are people who are aware of their strengths and limitations, they remain constantly on that strength that is enough for them to survive the world. They are not worried about being the best; they are worried about

maintaining the achievement they currently have by being consistent in their actions.

Kierkegaard's view is different from Camus because his view focuses more on religion and on the idea that God's existence conquers all problems. He expressed this idea through his definition of the "knight of faith" and his relationship with God. The knight of faith believes in God and that the ultimate meaning of life is established when we develop a relationship with God; however, he does violate the moral law for the sake of the higher being. But even when we believe in God, there are times when we become overwhelmed with the situation at hand and we feel unfulfilled. However, for Kierkegaard, the knight of faith believes that with God, all things are possible; thus when we sacrifice the material things we have and follow God, we are guaranteed greater possibility in life. Kierkegaard's beliefs are different from Camus Don Juan because Camus' does not believe in God and Don's life is not bound by any ethical code.

His Knight of faith is depicted in the life of Abraham the son of David. Abraham was told by God to sacrifice his only son Isaac; he followed through with this action to murder his only son. This action Kierkegaard calls faith because Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only beloved son simply because "God said so" and this action will make him develop a relationship with God. The knight of faith acts religiously in God's will and faith becomes the ultimate even though a moral law is being violated. There are individuals whose ultimate goal is to pursue God's will regardless of what the moral law is; the higher moral law is what is of importance to them.

Kierkegaard believes that faith is the only meaningful/existential way of life, but if that is the case, Abraham, who is considered the knight of faith, violated the moral law. He violated the moral law because of his will to sacrifice his son just to be closer to God. When we are faced with the decision of the ethical vs. the religious, our love for religion is greater than our love for the ethical. Abraham chose religion because his faith in God was superior to his allegiance to the ethical life. I believe in religion and I am often influenced by it when making decisions, but I have decided to violate any moral law. I counter Kierkegaard's belief because by Abraham willing to sacrifice his son, he might be mistaken for a murderer or a believer. Some might say that he is both, but if you believe that Abraham is a believer, you also believe that it is ok to kill for the sake of God. If we say that he is a murderer, then faith does not exist and the individual does not exist as well. If this is the case, then the ethical way of life (the universal) not the religious is the acceptable way of life.

The way we live our life now speaks our feature. In any situation, I believe that I have a purpose in life. The type of life I choose to live, either the life as explained by Camus or by Kierkegaard, defines who I am. This is where I agree with both Camus and Kierkegaard's philosophical view of life and human attitude. They are both right when they said attitude shapes one's life. The meaning of life is defined by the behavior and the attitude we have towards it. But what if the choices we make are not good enough? Does that mean that life will be meaningless? No, but if we are not open to change, then we are trapped in our own single world of meaninglessness. We have a choice to make every single day we are alive and the kind of attitude we

want to embrace for that day. Making a bad decision or living a rouged life will definitely expose me to many consequences based on my decision. In any given day on earth, I believe that life accounts for 10% of what happens to me and the other 90% depends on how I react to that situation.

I share both Camus' and Kierkegaard's philosophy of life. The religious life of the Knight of faith is what I practice in my daily life with the exemption of violating the moral law like Abraham did. We all have freedom to make our own life choices, if that choice is the life described by Camus, we live it with passion and if it is the life described by Kierkegaard, we also embrace it. Humans have preconceived idea of what they believe to be " happy living." Our creator however; according to those who believe in God has plans for us. He considers our stay on earth as temporary and so do I. What Camus describes as death is considered transition to better places by those that believe in the existence of God. We have only one life to live and I believe in making the world a better place no matter how long it might take.