

Would life still be meaningful in the absence of an afterlife?

[Life](#)



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When people ask about the meaning of their lives, they are more likely concerned as to what worth would their actions be on Earth if there is no specific end to the road that they travel on. Being inherently inclined to the material, Man always seeks reward for everything that we do in our lives. As children, we almost always seek to excel in class in order that we can have the persuasive power to ask our parents for the different goods that we have laid our eyes on.

This is human nature, and our nature always invades into our train of thought. "What would I get for doing this?" would be the collective question that permeates our minds if we think about the meaning of our lives. To them, the meaning of life is the material end which they believe their individual actions would entitle them to. People seek something tangible, something that can be felt, in determining the meaning of life.

Some are also driven by their sufferings, their negative experiences, in questioning why they are here. They want to know to what purpose have they been born into this world, and why do they have to suffer that way. To them, the meaning of life is an answer, a reason that will explain the things that happen to them throughout their lives in this world.

I believe that the question about the existence of the afterlife is detrimental to one's quest to finding meaning in his existence. Instead of finding the true value of our lives, we are now preoccupied with how we should act in order to attain the afterlife, and inevitably forget about the fact that we should be living as meaningfully as we could in this world that we have been born into.

People, especially those who have found themselves in suffering and in great emotional pain, view the afterlife as a form of escape or a greener pasture that they believe awaits them if they play their cards right in their present lives. However, if we take away that notion, would life for us still be meaningful to live if there is no clear end to which we could direct our efforts to?

II. The True Meaning of Life

For me, life can still be meaningful despite the apparent absence, or lack of proof thereof, of the afterlife. From my point of view, the afterlife is a figurehead, a symbolic figure, perhaps created by the ancients to address man's question as to the meaning of his life. It is more of an abstract idea rather than a specific "life" by itself. I define the afterlife for its simplest meaning: "to live after we have died," not an exact place that the supposed soul goes to after death. I believe that the idea of "going to Heaven by doing good" is made especially to cater to man's materialistic nature that everything he does should be given a reward.

Obviously, man has been created with a reason. Each of us has a reason, maybe a mission, in this world that we have been born into. Unless we ascertain what that is, we obviously cannot find the meaning for our existence here on Earth. We will continue to ask ourselves why we are still here. But how can we find that answer?

Perhaps, the famous adage "no man is an island" is what I'll consider the most apt and summarized answer to the question of "Why are we here?"

Man exists for the sake of his fellowmen. We are made for the service of each other. That is what man should live for: the good of his fellow human beings and not himself. Every action that we take should be decided with the well-being of our fellowmen in mind, and not just ourselves.

The key to finding meaning to our earthly lives is to start shedding our selfish human nature and start living for our fellows. Man's suffering in this world is brought about by his earthly desire to preserve his own self, his discontentment and his desire to hoard all good things in this world for himself.

The more material things Man receives, the more he desires, and the more he feels empty because not all things in this world are achievable. Leading such life is meaningless, for there is no point in that life that man can say that his purpose in living has been fulfilled, that he has found his reason for existing.

One would probably argue that the key to self-fulfillment and happiness is to achieve all that we have longed for, definitely including money. However, that is materialism, and anything material is temporary and empty. The feeling is passing, and leads to more emptiness and questions, leading to emotional suffering and discontentment. Like Epicurus said, "the wealth required by vain ideals extends to infinity."

I, for one, would not be able to find happiness even if I had the power to buy everything that this world could offer and money could buy, because there will always be something better than the ones we have. With endless supply

of money perhaps, I would be able to buy those things that I could lay my eyes on. However, I still would not be satisfied because then I find something I do not have, and will then long for it again. The process will go on and on until I find that there is no end to the material wealth that the world offers.

When we die, all the material things that we have worked for will not go with us to the grave. Materialism is human nature, and like I said, we should overcome human nature if we are to start finding the meaning of life. If I spend my life entertaining every material and carnal urges that I would find, I would be living in vain because in the end it will all come down to nothing.

In finding the meaning of life, we should start looking beyond ourselves and start thinking of what is good for the people around us and ourselves as a whole. This constitutes morality, as one does not learn the value of morality without learning to consider what things would be good for him alone, and what things will benefit both him and the people around. When we are morally upright, we will feel a sense of peace and security. For example, an honest man will have nothing to fear from the law than a dishonest thief will.

People might say that honesty is actually subjective because the law has loopholes that can be exploited and bent in ascertaining who is honest from the dishonest, but there is the basic law of morality that we are all governed by. A thief may be able to circumvent the due process of law to his favor, but for the rest of his life he will live in fear that someone will come up with some kind of evidence to implicate him. By then, his life would have been meaningless and without peace, spent in fear of the justice that he has evaded. The time allotted for him to exist in Earth would have been wasted,

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for instead of cherishing every moment that has been granted to him, he instead spends it in dread and apprehension.

III. Conclusion

The lack of proof that the afterlife exists will not deter me from finding meaning in living my own life, even if my death is the most definite end of my journey. A life of service through acts of kindness and selfless is, for me, the most meaningful life that I can possibly lead. The greatest fulfillment that I could have for myself is the feeling of peace and contentment that I can attain by being satisfied and being thankful for the things that I have, rather than wasting it trying to own the world and finding no peace in entertaining my material nature.

To sum it up, the meaning of my life would be the peacefulness that I would get when I look back at my life when I am in my deathbed, knowing that I have done as little wrong as possible in the time that I have lived on Earth. It is the peace I'd feel in knowing that, in living my life, I have not stepped on anyone's rights and lives for my own gain.