

Understanding what taylor to be saying about the meaning of life

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Sisyphus was punished for telling the secrets of the gods to other humans. Taylor cites this activity as “ a meaningless, pointless toil of a meaningless existence that is absolutely never redeemed.” (Taylor, n. d., p. 141) There are no further results of the activity other than its repetitiveness. Taylor then suggests an alteration of this myth: If the gods had given the same punishment while making Sisyphus really want to continuously roll stones up a hill even if it was still considered a pointless activity he would likely find his life to be meaningful. By presenting readers with this alternative scenario Taylor seems to suggest that life is made meaningful by determination, a positive attitude, and acceptance of daily tasks. While Sisyphus is still performing the same tasks as in the previous myth, the only difference is that Sisyphus is determined to complete these tasks. As Taylor explains when discussing the alternative scenario: “ Sisyphus has been reconciled to it, (his task) and indeed more he has been led to embrace it.” (Taylor, n. d., p144) Therefore it is up to the individual to create meaning for his/her life. The meaning of life depends upon the tasks that are done on a daily basis even if they do not amount to anything significant. It partially depends upon one’s attitude about their daily routines. For example, if individuals can accept the fact that they need to go to work to make a living even if they dislike their jobs and they have a positive attitude about it their lives can be meaningful. However, if you feel negative about your job and believe you are not accomplishing anything worthwhile but do not attempt to make changes to improve your situation, you will likely view your life as meaningless. Taylor looks at the lives of the glow worms inside a New Zealand cave. The worms sit in the caves to wait for insects and eat them. This continues for

months until the larva transforms itself into a small winged adult that lives for days. As soon as these adults lay eggs they are eaten by other worms. Taylor indicates that the relevance of this cycle comes from the process of living. It does not matter if the process does not yield significant results. "The point of any living thing's life is evidently nothing but life itself." (Taylor, n. d., p. 145) In the case of the luminous worms, Taylor seems to suggest that the lives of these insects are meaningful because they have accepted their fate and have served their purposes. He is not making an analogy to our human lives because he implies that they contribute to the world in their own way. Taylor cites an example of actions being more important than the results when discussing the men who built ancient civilizations and other structures throughout history. These structures may not have stood up forever so their efforts may have seemed useless but Taylor indicates that they may have felt differently. "The things to which they bent their backs day after day, realizing one by one their ephemeral plans, were precisely the things in which their interests lay, and there was no need then to ask questions." (Taylor, n. d., p. 149) Taylor seems to suggest that the process of building the structures was more important to the men than the finished products because they derived meaning from the act itself and were determined to complete their work.

Taylor suggests another alternative to the Sisyphus myth: Sisyphus is rolling rocks up a hill in order to build a temple. His efforts successfully result in the creation of a grand temple. Once this is done Sisyphus can forever enjoy the results of his efforts without doing anything else. However, he eventually grows bored. "Where before we were presented with the nightmare of

eternal pointless activity, we are now confronted with the hell of its eternal absence." (Taylor, n. d., p. 148) In life, individuals need to do several things in order to make life meaningful. They can even, make small lifestyle changes in order to derive meaning from their lives. For example, people may take up a hobby if they are bored or overweight people may diet and exercise to lose weight. Individuals need to have the desire to try different things once a task is finished. Changes, even small changes lead to personal growth which makes life meaningful.

One of the main points Taylor makes in his view of the meaning of life is that individuals need to be accepting of themselves and their lives, have a positive attitude and be determined to get tasks done. This is certainly a valid point however Taylor is minimizing the importance of accomplishments. If results are unimportant then neither are the actions that produce them. Everyone wants to be fulfilled in their lives. If people are not happy with their life situations (Example: they may want to change careers) they are not necessarily obligated to accept them. People in these situations may find it difficult to be positive and determined. They may make changes in an attempt to make their lives meaningful. I agree with the idea that Taylor had which was that individuals need to do many things in their lives to create meaning. Life should be about wanting more and having different purposes even nothing grand results.