

Last philosophy paper



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Those kinds of questions one might describe as being “ philosophical” in nature have, at the very least, a particular family resemblance to one another. The most unmistakable and essential piece of the philosophical question is the conceptual layering in which it is asked. That is, the philosophical question not only inquires about a fact in the actual state of affairs, but also about the concepts used to express the question. As a result, the philosophical question may be challenged or reworded based on whether it is rational or irrational. For instance, if a philosopher asks whether knowledge originates in the senses or in the mind, this presupposes the philosopher has the right concept of knowledge, of mind, of senses, and of origination. Without these more basic concepts, the philosophical enterprise is doomed to wander aimlessly. An equally popular example of a philosophical question is, naturally, What is the meaning of life? Likewise, this question presupposes an understanding of the terms involved, and through a realized insight into what the terms refer to, one might come to understand the answer to the question.

The question I am asking reflects on that existential quest for meaning. However, the quest for meaning I am concerned about deals not with life in general, but with the subject of a life. What is the meaning of my life? By changing the question, I have introduced a new term, but one which simplifies the issue and makes my life in particular something which must be grasped before attempting to answer the question. However, it is unclear is how I am to understand my life. As opposed to life in general, my life is defined by particular values and experiences that are not shared between different people or cultures. For example, my career as a Director of Sales and Marketing is driven by my experiences, knowledge, and values that I

alone possess. My individuality reduces the issue to one of narrowing down what is important to me and finding values in those experiences.

Asking the question in terms of my life provides a certain methodology for understanding how to answer the question, for if life shares certain essential characteristics, then it would not matter if it were my life the question asked about, or my neighbors life. This is the existentialist slant in trying to find an answer to the question. The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard called this kind of answer a “ leap of faith” ¹, and that the values, which belong to individuals, vary enough to give themselves, and their lives, existential meaning in a world where values do not come simply from nature. Thus, to understand meaning is to understand the nature of my life, which is the sum of these values and experiences. If these values are the things I wish to use my life in order to achieve and keep, then, quite simply, the meaning of my life is to accomplish my own self-generated and self-directed goals. These are goals like to become a mother, to have a successful career, or to continue being a loving and caring person.

Understanding a philosophical question is a matter of understanding the concepts that constitute that question. Often, the concepts presupposed by the philosophical question are as difficult to understand as the question is difficult to answer. Nevertheless, in the case of the meaning of my life in specific, the connection between the terms and the question’s answer is relatively straightforward. The meaning of my life presupposes values and experiences that define what my life, as I define them, exists to achieve. This existentialist approach to looking at the question comes in part from the methods of Søren Kierkegaard and what he called the “ leap of faith”: the process of creating values in a world without inherent values. What this

requires is an understanding of what my life can be defined by, and the goals that I keep living in order to realize.