

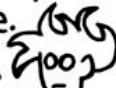


Meaning Of Life

Be born. Go to school. Do well. Graduate. Look for a job. Find a job. Make money. Make more money. Save money. Meet somebody. Go out with somebody. Move in with somebody.  Marry somebody. Make money. Move up  the ladder at work. Make more money. Have a baby. Buy a house. Make money. Get up and go to work. Come home and watch television. Have another baby.  Make more money. Buy things at Wal-Mart. Mow the lawn. Make  more money. Have another baby. Buy a car  that can seat a family of six. Buy Elmo videos for the kids. Make money. Have another baby. Go see the latest romantic comedy movie.  Make more money. Take a vacation to Disneyland.  Eat at McDonald's. Call the plumber when the sink is broken. Make more money.  Say "I love you" to your spouse on occasion. Send the kids to school. Make more money. Cast your vote for "American Idol." Go to your High-School Reunion. Make more money. Take up Golf. Give the kids advice about stuff.  Send the kids to college. Take Bayer aspirin for your Arthritis. Get kind of fat. Become a Grandparent. Finish making money. Retire. Get old. Die.

The meaning of “the meaning of life”

The word “meaning” in this phrase could stand for several things:

- The *purpose* of life, its goal or *telos*:
 - descriptive: what *are* things aiming at or striving for?
 - normative: what *should* things be aiming at or striving for?
- The *value* of life
 - to oneself
 - to others (inc. God, angels, aliens, and animals, etc.)
- The *significance* of life
 - for oneself
 - for others (inc. God, angels, aliens, and animals, etc.)
 - for the environment or for the universe as a whole

The meaning of “the meaning of life”

Similarly, the word “life” in this phrase could also stand for several things:

- it could be short for “life, the universe, and everything”
 - in this sense, it’s about the meaning of existence in general
 - i.e., why is there something (rather than nothing)?
- life in general
- human, sentient, or rational life in general
- an individual person’s life

The meaning of “the meaning of life”

Finally, there are two different standpoints we can take when considering the question.

External



- an external or objective standpoint
 - here we consider things as if from “God’s eye,” transcendent, or all-things-considered perspective
 - e.g.: what is *the* value of a life, not to this person or this group, but *period?*

The meaning of “the meaning of life”

Finally, there are two different standpoints we can take when considering the question.

External



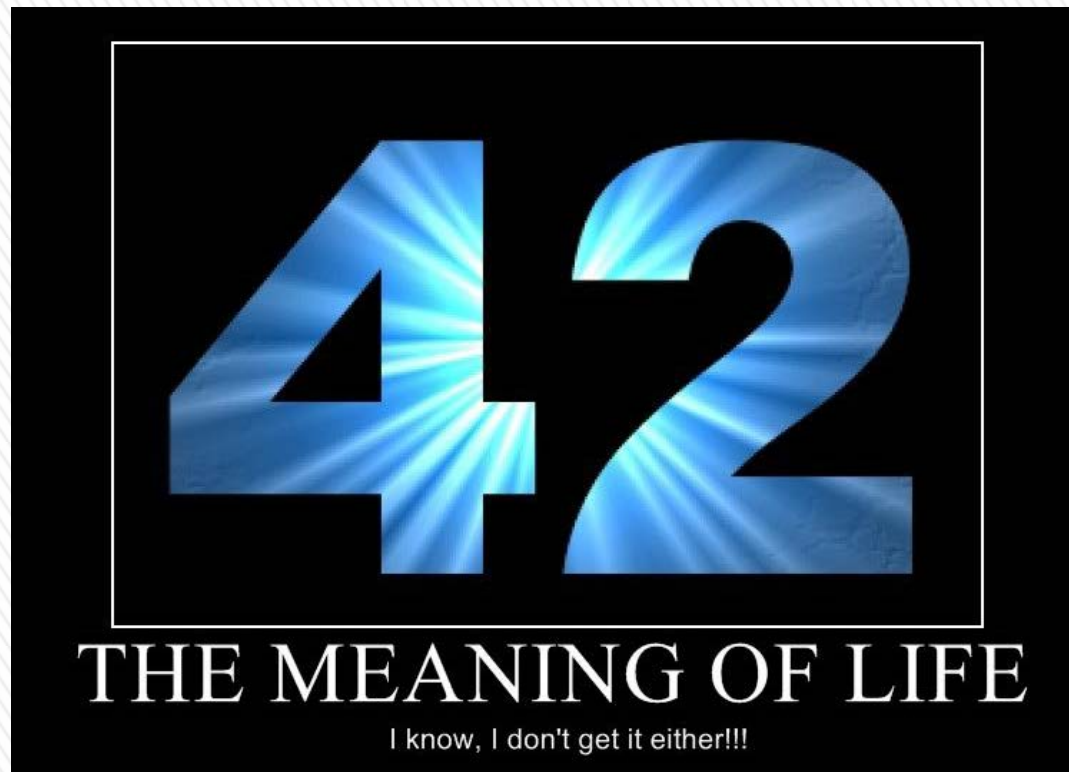
- an internal or subjective standpoint
 - here we consider things from a finite, limited, or situated perspective
 - e.g.: what is the value of a life *to this person?*
- cf. Cottingham, p. 12 on ‘exogeneous’ vs. ‘endogenous’ meaningfulness

**WHAT IS THE
MEANING
OF LIFE?
WHATEVER YOU
WANT IT TO BE.**

Nihilism

Nihilism is the view that *nothing objectively matters*.

- There is no objective right or wrong, good or bad
- Hence, there is no objective meaning to life. Objectively speaking, life and existence are *absurd*.



Subjectivism

Nihilism is consistent with *subjectivism*, the view that the meaningfulness of life is a purely internal or subjective matter.

- Nietzsche: we have to *will* the meaning of our lives in the face of objective meaninglessness

Both nihilism and subjectivism face deep *practical* problems.

- if nothing's objectively good or bad, then why be moral?
 - answer: for subjective (e.g., hedonistic) reasons
 - But what about those who delight in hurting others? What if someone wants to hurt *you*? What do you say? Not “it’s wrong.”
- a purely subjective meaning to life is just “wishful thinking”
 - it’s like “pretending” or “acting as if” our lives really matter, when they really (i.e., objectively) don’t.
 - The Wonmug story (J. P. Moreland)

The Meaning of Life

