

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LIFE?

“What is the purpose of life?” I asked my friend, to which he answered: “I don’t know – uh... family, friends, and loved ones, I suppose?” I asked another friend, and he said: “I think it’s just about getting what you want and being happy.” Then I asked my brother; he said: “Does life need to have a purpose?”

In a way, I agree with my brother; no matter what happens around the world, and no matter what comes next, life just goes on. Do you ever get that feeling of emptiness when you finally get what you wanted – whether it’s completing a game or retiring from your job - and that little voice in the back of your head says: “So, what do I do now?” Turning dreams into reality doesn’t mean your purpose has been fulfilled; it just means one chapter has ended and another is beginning, because your life isn’t over yet. This is because the meaning of time removes the meaning of life. Let me explain.

This is about the purpose of living, not the purpose of the creation of life – being born in a one-in-a-four-hundred-trillion chance is out of pure luck, and it took billions of years before the earth formed a habitable temperature and a breathable atmosphere. Humans soon came and evolved, going from crafting fires to launching spaceships. It’s interesting how scientists can look into the future and predict when the sun will implode, and when the next asteroid will hit, and when galaxies will collide, but can’t seem to answer questions with confidence such as: How did the universe start? Where and how did humans first come to be? And, how does nothing turn into something? We know little about the beginning, and a lot about what could potentially be the future, but the most important part, I believe, is the present.

“My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati,” philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche writes, “that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity... but to love it...” This basically suggests that you shouldn’t want to be anything other than what you are; not to regret the past or fear the future but appreciate everything surrounding the moment that makes you who you are right now. It also suggests that you shouldn’t just endure the moments of sadness and pain in your past that you regret, but learn to love them, because they are essential to who you are. Moments of necessity such as looking after a baby, or enduring the repercussions of drug abuse, or even suffering through the process of unemployment or poverty are essential to who you are. Eventually, in a time in your life, you’ll look around and say something positive to yourself such as: “This is nice.” Because in the moment, you realise that everything that you’ve been through has brought you to that place where you say: “This is nice.” It’s the moments in your past that caused you to say that, so you should learn to love those moments. And, until death, or arguably even after that, depending on what you’ve done, the story of any person isn’t over, which brings me onto my next point.

Something with a beginning needs to come with an ending. With or without forgiveness of the bad things you've done, and with or without closure to the regrets you've made, life just keeps moving, even long after you're gone. There's a scene from the animated Netflix series, BoJack Horseman, between two characters named BoJack and Diane that I find really important towards answering this question. BoJack opens the conversation with: "Life is a bitch and then you die, right?" to which Diane responds with: "Sometimes. Sometimes life's a bitch and then you keep living." This scene took place shortly after BoJack's recovery from an attempted suicide. When he comes out of prison and rehabilitation from drug abuse, he soon learns that everyone around him has changed – getting new jobs, getting married, having a child, moving away... and he is back at square one. The purpose of the message wasn't BoJack's definitive conclusion on trying to be a better person by sobering up and escaping his depression, but rather that he, like most of us, will just continue to be a person, with the potential to be better or worse. There isn't any answer to explain this other than just going on and living to see another day.

This is where I conclude this persuasive essay when I say: The meaning of life is just to experience it. Learning, adapting, changing and choosing are all the things that lay between birth and death, and it's all thanks to time. Life isn't a purpose, but rather a gift; we've been given the chance to explore and discover many different things, whether it's overcoming a drug addiction or launching a space mission. No matter how much you achieve and suffer, the world keeps turning, the stars keep shining, and time keeps moving, until eventually, everything just ends. The drip finally stops. And to know that we have been gifted up to a hundred years of life within the billions of years the universe has existed, I find that so special, and as I look out the window to see the other living things journeying and experiencing, I think to myself: "This is nice."