
THE MEANING OF LIFE: A Critical and Comparative Examination of Non-Christian and Christian Views on the Meaning of Life

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Abstract

This research seeks to find an accurate explanation of the meaning of life that is widely discussed by the 'world' with its various philosophies. Of course, there will be encounters and separations when the philosophical study of the meaning of life in general is re-examined by the study of Christian theology - which in this context the researcher uses a biblical review. The Bible is a book of mystery, revealing with 'secret' sentences like an abstract painting. Yet it contains many philosophical expressions that are no less profound, accurate, and relevant than the philosophical views of the 'world'. In this way, Christian excellence will appear to 'shine' among the various human inventions in the search for the meaning of life. Through a rigorous comparative approach, the study aims to identify common themes, points of divergence, and underlying philosophical assumptions that underpin these diverse views on life's meaning. It delves into concepts such as purpose, morality, suffering, and transcendence, seeking to uncover the underlying principles that guide individuals and communities in their pursuit of a meaningful existence. By critically evaluating these non-Christian and Christian perspectives, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding the question of life's meaning. It provides readers with a nuanced appreciation of the various intellectual and spiritual traditions that shape our understanding of human existence, ultimately inviting reflection and dialogue on this timeless and profound topic.

Keywords: meaning of life, christian view, non-christian

INTRODUCTION

The search for the meaning of life has generated much philosophical, scientific, theological, and metaphysical speculation throughout history. Different people and cultures believe different things to answer this question. The search for the meaning of life is not about filling in the boxes of a crossword puzzle, when you get it right you are happy, when you get it wrong, then all the wrong initial letters will trouble the other answers. This egoistic attitude exists among global civilizations and is visible

among all creatures including those living today. The world sees and laughs at it. The search for the meaning of life is also explored by many personalities, from those of low strata to those who sit on the throne, including Solomon, the son of David. The meaningful writing of David's son, the famously wise Book of Ecclesiastes, also raises many questions regarding the search for the true meaning of life. In the end, he said, "I have seen all the works that men do under the sun, and behold, they are all vanity and an attempt to catch the wind". (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Blown away from all the polemics of searching for the essential meaning of the true meaning of life, it turns out that many Christians are fooled. Philosophical space creates many variables that offer new variants of definitive discourse on the meaning of life. This is especially true for Christians who are not captivated by the philosophies of the world. The apostle was not just scared if his concern was written to the Christian congregation in the city of Colossae.¹

Albert Camus, a classical philosopher who explored the meaning of life, once said, "*The meaning of life is the most urgent question*,"² How the human desire for meaning finds clear expression in the life stories one tells, the diaries one keeps, and in one's deepest hopes and fears, is certain. 20th-century Freudian psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim once said, "Our greatest need and most difficult achievement is to find meaning in our lives."³ Likewise, *holocaust* survivor and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl commented that the human desire for meaning comes before our desire for pleasure or desire for power.⁴ Their opinions all converge on the concept that the meaning of life is something that is considered important, true, and coveted and provides special value to a person. The meaning of life when successfully found and fulfilled will cause this life to be felt so meaningful and valuable. And in the end, it will lead to the appreciation of *happiness* (*happiness*) as a result.

The entire history of mankind is a manifestation of his efforts to find the essence of self and the meaning of life.⁵ Because in the presence of a sense and awareness of the meaning of life, happiness can be realized. The awareness of

¹ Beware lest anyone take you captive with his empty and false philosophy according to the tradition of men and the spirit of the world, but not according to Christ. (Col 2:8).

² Karl Britton, *Philosophy of Life Deconstructing the Meaning of Life*, (Transl. Inyiah Uidwan Muziyir, (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruz, 2002), 16.

³ Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment*. (New York: Knopf, 1978), 3.

⁴ Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 99.

⁵ Elly M. Setiadi, *Basic Social & Cultural Sciences*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2017), 44.

meaningful and purposeful life is obtained by people almost solely because they have goals that are believed to be valuable enough to fight for, if necessary, with sacrifice. However, saying that a person's life is meaningful, or perhaps very meaningful, does not in itself say that the person's life is of positive value, that is, good. Al Capone, the legendary American mobster, and the ruthless Japanese Yakuza, with their black worlds, are all known to have led meaningful lives, with an extraordinary level of earnestness and dedication to the pursuit of their goals, whether positive or good or negative or evil. These few examples of the phenomenon ensure that it points to a search for the meaning of life.⁶

In line with what was revealed in the riddle of life by Solomon the son of David, in the end, humans often live their lives like machines, wake up, shower, eat, work, go home at night, sleep, the next day it's like that again, what we should do is ask God what is the purpose of life so that this life is not in vain.⁷ Capturing this phenomenon is important in finding the "essence" of the meaning of life from something experienced by humans. This research seeks to find an accurate explanation of the meaning of life that is widely discussed by the 'world' with its various philosophies. What is the difference between the meaning of life in a Christian perspective and the meaning of life offered by world philosophy?

The method used in this research is to use qualitative research methods with a literature study approach. According to Creswell, literature study research is a concise written study of articles books, and other documents related to what is being researched through informally describing the theory completely and completely. In conducting the study, the stages are needed, namely: First, collecting data from various sources such as books, journals, the internet, and others related to the topic under study, second by reviewing, comparing, and analyzing various information and theories, providing conclusions on the studies conducted to provide an overview of the meaning of life.

⁶ Felix Josef Pratama, *God Approaches Man*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2015), 69.

⁷ Hengki Wijaya, *Sermons for Congregational Education*, (Jakarta: Jaffray College of Theology, 2018), 27.

DISCUSSION

Various Views on the Meaning of Life

Many major historical figures in philosophy have provided answers to the question of what, if anything, makes life meaningful, although they do not usually put it in these terms. Consider, for example, Aristotle on the human function, Aquinas on the beatific vision, and Kant on the highest good. While these concepts have some influence on the meaning of life-related to happiness and morality, they are directly interpreted as the ultimate achievement that one must realize to have an important and more meaningful life.

Despite the views of these legendary philosophers, it turns out that in the last 50 years, something approaching a different field on the meaning of life has been established in the realm of Western philosophy and only in the last 20 years has a heated debate taken place. With the demise of positivism and utilitarianism in the post-war era, there has emerged an analytical inquiry into non-hedonistic conceptions of value, including conceptions of the meaning of life, that is based on relatively uncontroversial (but not definitive or universally shared) judgment cases, often called "intuitions".⁸ Western philosophers' continuing efforts to discover the meaning of life are of interest as they increasingly realize that this is a distinct topic that admits rational inquiry to a greater degree than more familiar ethical categories such as well-being, virtuous character, and right action.

Naturalism

It goes on to discuss the view that although there is no spiritual realm, meaning in life is possible, at least for many people. Among those who believe that significant existence can be obtained in the purely physical world as known by science, there is debate about two things: the extent to which the human mind shapes meaning and whether there is an invariable state of meaning among humans. The naturalist view of the meaning of life is divided into two:

⁸ Paul Letsch. "The Meaning of Life: The Major Philosophical Aspects Hidden Behind a Fundamental Question of Human Existence." *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts* 6, Issue 3 (2019): 183-210.

Subjective Naturalist

According to this view, meaning in life varies from person to person, depending on the variable mental states of each. A common example is the view that one's life is more meaningful the more one gets what one happens to want strongly, the more one achieves highly ranked goals, or the more one does what one thinks is important.⁹ Subjectivists believe that there is no unchanging standard of meaning because meaning is relative to the subject, that is, it depends on individual pro-attitudes such as desires, goals, and choices. Roughly speaking, something is meaningful to a person if he believes in it or seeks it. In contrast, objectivists maintain that there are some immutable standards for meaning because meaning is (at least partly) independent of the mind, that is, it is a real property that exists apart from being the object of anyone's mental state. Here, something is meaningful (to some degree) under its intrinsic properties, regardless of whether it is believed to be meaningful or sought after.

Objective Naturalist

Objective naturalists believe that the meaning of life is shaped (at least in part) by something physically independent of the mind with which we can have true or false beliefs. Acquiring the object of some variable pro attitude is not sufficient for meaning, in this view. Instead, certain inherently valuable or ultimately valuable conditions give meaning to anyone, not just because they are desired, chosen, or believed to be meaningful, or because they are somehow grounded in God.¹⁰

Morality and creativity are examples of widely held actions that give meaning to life while cutting toenails and eating ice cubes (and other examples of subjectivism above) do not. Objectivism is considered the best explanation for each of these types of judgments: the former are actions that are meaningful regardless of whether anything arbitrary (whether it be the individual, his society, or even God) judges them to be meaningful or seeks to engage in them, while the latter actions have no

⁹ Trisel, B. A., "Futility and the Meaning of Life Debate", *Sorites*, 14: 70-84; Hooker, B., 2008, "The Meaning of Life: Subjectivism, Objectivism, and Divine Support", in *The Moral Life: Essays in Honour of John Cottingham*, N. Athanassoulis and S. Vice (eds.), New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 184-200; Alexis, A., 2011, *The Meaning of Life: A Modern Secular Answer to the Age-Old Fundamental Question*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

¹⁰ Paul Letsch. "The Meaning of Life: The Major Philosophical Aspects Hidden Behind a Fundamental Question of Human Existence": 183-210.

significance and cannot gain it if one believes they have it or engages in it. To gain meaning in one's life, one must pursue the former actions and avoid the latter. A "pure" objectivist thinks that being the object of one's mental state plays no role in making that person's life meaningful. Relatively few objectivists are pure, so interpreted. That is, most of them believe that life is more meaningful not only because of objective factors, but partly because of subjective factors such as cognition, compassion, and emotions.

One of the features of most of the above naturalist theories is that they are aggregate or additive, ominously treating life simply as a "container" of meaningful life considered in isolation from the rest of the world. It has become increasingly common for philosophers of the meaning of life, especially objectivists, to argue that life as a whole, or at least its long stretches, can substantially affect its meaningfulness beyond the sum of the meanings (if any) in its parts. For example, a life that has many intuitively meaningful but also highly repetitive generosity and conditions is less than maximally meaningful. Further, a life that not only avoids repetition but also ends with a large number of meaningful (or desirable) parts seems to have more meaning.

Soul-Centered Meaning of Life

The soul-centered theory is the view that meaning in life comes from relating in some way to the eternal spiritual substance that resides in a person's body when he is alive and that will outlast his death. If one does not have a soul, or if one has a soul but connects to it in the wrong way, then one's life becomes meaningless. There are two prominent arguments for the soul-based perspective.

The former is often expressed by lay people and suggested by the work of Leo Tolstoy.¹¹ Tolstoy argues that for life to be meaningful, something must be worth doing, that nothing worth doing if nothing done will make a permanent difference to the world, and that doing so requires having an eternal spiritual self. Many question of course whether having an infinite effect is necessary for meaning.¹² Others point out that one need not be immortal to have infinite effect because God's eternal

¹¹ Hanfling, O., *The Quest for Meaning*, (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc.), 22-24; T. Morris, 1992, *Making Sense of It All: Pascal and the Meaning of Life*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 26; W. Craig, 1994, "The Absurdity of Life without God", repr. in *Exploring the Meaning of Life: An Anthology and Guide*, J. Seachris (ed.), (Malden, MA: Wiley- Blackwell, 2013), 153-172.

¹² R. Audi, "Intrinsic Value and Meaningful Life", *Philosophical Papers*, 34: 2005,354-55

remembrance of one's mortal existence would suffice for that.

The other main reason for the soul-based theory of the meaning of life is that the soul is necessary for perfect justice, which, in turn, is necessary for a meaningful life. Life seems senseless when the wicked flourish and the righteous suffer, at least supposing there is no other world where this injustice will be corrected, either by God or by Karma. Arguments like this can be found in the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible, and it continues to be defended.¹³ However, like the previous reasoning, the inferential structure of this one seems weak; even if an afterlife is necessary for a just outcome, it is not clear why an eternal afterlife should be considered necessary.

Perhaps the Tolstoian reason why one must live forever to make a relevant permanent difference is the relative necessity that one honor infinite value, something qualitatively higher than the value of, say, pleasure. Perhaps the reason why immortality is necessary to generate struggle is that rewarding virtue requires the fulfillment of their highest free and informed desires, one of which is to evolve immortally in some way.¹⁷ While far from sounding obvious, these arguments at least provide some reason to think that immortality is necessary to fulfill the central premise of what it takes to gain meaning.

Supernaturalism

Simply put, supernaturalism holds that the existence of God, along with being "properly related" to God, is both necessary and sufficient for finding meaningful life, although the specifics differ. Among the innumerable supernaturalists in the ancient world of the Near East and history include Qoheleth (who is called "Teacher" in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes). Such exemplars were followed by Jesus, the Apostle Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Jonathan Edwards, Blaise Pascal, Leo Tolstoy, CS Lewis, and many contemporary analytic philosophers.

Supernaturalist theory is the view that meaning in life must be shaped by a certain relationship with the spiritual realm. If God or the soul do not exist, or if they exist but one fails to have a true relationship with them, then supernaturalism holds that one's life is meaningless. In contrast, naturalist theory is the view that meaning can be gained in the world known only to science.¹⁴ Here, although meaning can

¹³ W. Davis. "The Meaning of Life", *Metaphilosophy*, 18: 1987, 288-305

¹⁴ G. Williams. "Kant and the Question of Meaning." *The Philosophical Forum*, 30: 115- 131; R.

accrue from the divine realm, certain ways of living in a purely physical universe are sufficient for that. There is logical room for a non-naturalist theory that meaning is a function of abstract properties that are neither spiritual nor physical.

Meaningful life in supernaturalism consists of claims along metaphysical, epistemological, and relational-axiological axes. Metaphysically, a meaningful life requires the existence of God because of, for example, the condition that the basic components necessary for meaning such as objective value are considered most plausible in a God-like being.¹⁵ It also requires - at some level - orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxy (right life and practice), although again, there is much debate over the details. In addition to the existence of God, meaning in life requires one to relate appropriately to God, perhaps as expressed in one's beliefs and especially in one's devotion, worship, and quality of life lived with and among others, for example, embodied in Jesus' statement of the greatest commandment (cf. Matthew 22:37-39).¹⁶ It is important to note that supernaturalism, claiming that God (or the soul) will give meaning to life, is logically distinct from theism, the claim that God (or the soul) exists.

Although most supernaturalists also subscribe to theism, one can accept the former without the latter (as Albert Camus did - more or less), leaving one with the view that life is meaningless or at least lacks substantial meaning. Similarly, while most naturalists are atheists, it is not contradictory to maintain that God exists but has nothing to do with meaning in life or may even detract from it. Although combinations of these positions are logically possible, some of them may be substantially implausible. The field could benefit from a discussion of the comparative appeal of various combinations of evaluative claims about what would make life meaningful and metaphysical claims about whether spiritual states exist.¹⁷

Over the past 15 years or so, two types of supernaturalism have been regularly distinguished.¹⁸ That is true not only in the literature on the meaning of life but also in

Audi, 2005, "Intrinsic Value and Meaningful Life", *Philosophical Papers*, 34: 331-355.

¹⁵ Cottingham, John. *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy, and Human Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. See also Craig, William Lane. "The Absurdity of Life Without God." In *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. 65-90. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008.

¹⁶ Verse 37 Jesus answered him: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. Verse 38 This is the first and great commandment. Verse 39 And the second commandment, which is like unto it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

¹⁷ Jason Megill and Daniel Linford. "God, the meaning of life, and a new argument for atheism." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (2016): 31-47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-015-9538-x>.

¹⁸ Metz, T., "The Meaningful and the Worthwhile: Clarifying the Relationships", *The Philosophical*

the related pro-theism/anti-theism debate about whether it is desirable for God or the soul.¹⁹ On the one hand, there is extreme supernaturalism, according to which spiritual conditions are necessary for any meaning in life. If neither God nor the soul exists, then according to this view, everyone's life is meaningless. On the other hand, there is moderate supernaturalism, according to which spiritual conditions are necessary for a great or supreme meaning in life, though meaningless in such a life. If neither God nor the soul exists, then by this view, everyone's life can have meaning, or even be meaningful, but no life can exhibit the most desirable meaning. For the moderate supernaturalist, God or the soul would substantially increase meaningfulness or be a condition that contributes greatly to it.

God-Centered Meaning of Life

The most widely held and influential meaning of life based on God's existence in life is that one's existence will be more valuable, and better if one fulfills the purpose that God has ordained. The prevalent idea is that God has a plan for the universe (all people) and that one's life will be meaningful to the extent that one helps God realize this plan, perhaps in some way that God wants one to do.²⁰ Fulfilling God's purpose through choice is the only source of meaning.²¹ If one fails to do what God wants, then one's life will be meaningless. One may be called a "purpose theorist", but it is different about God's purpose that makes it uniquely able to give meaning to human life. Some argue that God's purpose could be the only source of unchanging (absolute) moral rules and that the lack of moral rules would make life senseless.²² However, the case of Euthyphro²³ arguably disrupts this reasoning; God's purpose in

Forum, 43: 2012, 435-48.

¹⁹ Kahane, G., "Should We Want God to Exist?", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 82: 2011, 674-96; Kraay, K. (ed.), 2018, *Does God Matter? Essays on the Axiological Consequences of Theism*, New York: Routledge; Lougheed, K., 2020, *The Axiological Status of Theism and Other Worldviews*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁰ Affolter, J., "Human Nature as God's Purpose", *Religious Studies*, 43: 2007, 443-55.

²¹ Brown, D., "Process Philosophy and the Question of Life's Meaning", *Religious Studies*, 7: 1971, 13-29; Levine, M., 1987, "What Does Death Have to Do with the Meaning of Life?" *Religious Studies*, 23:457-65; Cottingham, J. (ed.), 2007, *Western Philosophy: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell: pt. 12.

²² Craig, W., 1994, "The Absurdity of Life Without God", repr. in *The Meaning of Life*, 2ndnd ed., E. D. Klemke (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 2000: 40-56; Cottingham, J., 2003, *On the Meaning of Life*, London: Routledge.

²³ Euthyphro, Yun: "εὐθύφρων" (399-395 BC) was a Greek given name meaning "right-thinking, sincere"; he was the Greek philosopher who tried to establish a definitive meaning for the word piety. On the eve of his trial, in 399 BC, Socrates, asked to define piety, could only rely on Euthyphro's definition. This, however, leads to the main dilemma of the dialog when the two cannot reach a

some form for one's life is to gain fulfillment of the meaning of life. Moreover, some critics argue that a universally applicable and binding moral code is not necessary for meaning in life, even when the person has acted to help others.²⁴ Moreover, there are various naturalist and non-naturalist accounts of objective morality - and value more generally - on offer, so it is not clear that it must have a supernatural source in God's will.

Other theories of purpose argue that having been created by God for a reason would be the only way that our lives could avoid debate.²⁵ But it is unclear whether God's arbitrary will would have avoided that contingency, or whether his non-arbitrary will would have avoided contingency more than a deterministic physical world. The theory is still unclear what contingency is and why it is such a deep issue. Still another theory of purpose holds that our lives will have meaning only to the extent that they are intentionally made by the Creator, thus the acquisition of life meaning constitutes creativity. Here, however, freely choosing to do a particular thing is not necessary in the quest for meaning, and everyone's life will have the same level of meaning, both of which have counterintuitive implications. The important question, then, is whether all of these objections make sense, is there any promising reason to think that fulfilling God's purpose (as opposed to any human purpose) is what constitutes meaning in life?

Not only do each of these versions of the theory of purpose have specific problems, but they all face this common objection: if God assigns a purpose to man, then God will degrade that man and thereby undermine the possibility of man deriving meaning from fulfilling the purpose.²⁴ This objection goes back at least to the views of Jean-Paul Sartre²⁵ and there are many replies to it in other literature.

Robert Nozick presents a God-centered theory that focuses less on God as an end and more on God as infinite.²⁶ The basic idea is that for a finite state to be meaningful, it must derive its meaning from another state that has meaning.²⁷ So, if

satisfactory conclusion. Is something godly because God approves of it or does God approve of it because it is godly? This aphoristic ending has led to one of the strongest theological debates in the history of religion. Cf. Liddell, Scott, & Jones, *An English - Greek Lexicon*. piety and justice.

²⁴ Ellin, J., *Morality and the Meaning of Life*, Ft. Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace. 1995, 327

²⁵ Craig, W., "The Absurdity of Life without God", 1994, repr. in *Exploring the Meaning of Life: An Anthology and Guide*, J. Seachris (ed.), Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013: 153-72.

²⁶ Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, Cambridge, MA: 1981, Harvard University Press

²⁷ Paul Letsch. "The Meaning of Life: The Major Philosophical Aspects Hidden Behind a

one's life is meaningful, it may be because of being married to someone, which is important. The partner must be able to express his importance from another place, perhaps from the type of work he does. This work must be associated with something that is meaningful, and so on. The regress to a finite state of meaningfulness is present, and the suggestion is that regress can only end in something infinite, a being so all-encompassing that it need not (indeed, cannot) transcend itself to derive meaning from anything else. And that is God. The standard objection to this premise is that a finite state can be meaningful without deriving its meaning from another meaningful state; perhaps it can be meaningful in itself or derive its meaning by being associated with something beautiful, autonomous, or valuable for its own sake but meaningless to others.

Purpose-based (teleological) and infinite reason are two of the most common examples of God-centered theories in the literature, and naturalists can point out that they arguably face the same problem:²⁸ the purely physical world seems capable of doing the work for which God is supposedly necessary. Nature seems capable of grounding a universal morality and the kind of ultimate value from which meaning can emerge. And other God-based views seem to suffer from this same problem. For two examples, some people claim that God must exist for there to be a just world, where a world where bad people do good and good bad would make our lives absurd and others argue that God remembers us all with love itself which would give meaning to our lives. However, naturalists would point out that impersonal forces of nature, such as imagined 'karma' can just as fairly distribute punishment and reward as retributive personal judges do, and that living together in loving relationships seems to give more meaning to life than loving happy memories.

The second problem that all God-based views face is the existence of counterexamples. If we think of the stereotypical lives of Albert Einstein, Mother Teresa, and Pablo Picasso, they seem meaningful even if we assume there is no all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good spiritual person who is the basis of the physical world. Even religiously inclined philosophers find this hard to deny although some of them

Fundamental Question of Human Existence": 183-210.

²⁸ Archie J. Bahm. "Teleological Arguments." *The Scientific Monthly* 58, no.5 (1944): 377-382. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/18062>; Tim Mulgan. "Teleological Arguments." in *Purpose in Universe: The Moral and Metaphysical case for Ananthropocentric Purposivism*. Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199646142.003.0004>.

suggest that a supernatural realm is necessary for "deep" or "ultimate" meaning. What is the difference between deep and superficial meaning? And why do I think the spiritual realm is necessary for the former?

At this point, supernaturalists invite us to ponder about what God might do in his unique way for humans to be able to make meaning of their lives. For God to be solely responsible for any significance in our lives, God must possess certain qualities that cannot be found in the natural world. This quality must be qualitatively superior to any possible item in the physical realm; hence the meaningfulness of life comes from the deepest element within the human being. Here, supernaturalists can argue that meaning depends on the existence of a perfect being, whereas perfection requires properties such as temporality, simplicity, and eternity that are only possible in the spiritual realm.²⁹ Meaning may come from loving a perfect being or directing one's life towards it in other ways such as emulating or even fulfilling its purpose, perhaps a purpose tailor-made for each individual.

While this may be a promising strategy for God-centered theory, it faces a serious dilemma. On the one hand, for God to be the sole source of meaning, God would have to be completely unlike us; because the more God is like us, the more reason to think that we can derive meaning from ourselves. This is tantamount to negating God. On the other hand, the more God is completely unlike us, the less clear it is how we can derive meaning by relating to Him.³⁰ How can one love a being that cannot change? How can one imitate such a being? Could an unchangeable, temporal, and simple being even have a purpose? Could it be a person? And why is thinking perfectly necessary to gain meaning? Why wouldn't an excellent but imperfect being not provide meaning? Such are the implications of Solomon's (the author of Ecclesiastes) proverbs.

The Meaning of Life According to Christian Faith

The meaning of life, according to the Christian faith, is ultimately found in Jesus Christ. Believers are God's beloved people, created by the heavenly Father to reflect

²⁹ F. Ellis, "Naturalism, Supernaturalism, and the Question of God." *Topoi* 42 (2023): 711-718. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-023-09886-6>.

³⁰ Thaddeus Metz, "Could God's Purpose Be the Source of Life's Meaning?" *Religious Studies* 36, no. 3 (2000): 293-313. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20008297>.

His glory, walk in His love, and do His will.³¹ Man is born into this world without knowing exactly who he is (identity), where he comes from (origin), why he is here (meaning), what he lives for and how he should live (purpose), and where he will end up (destiny). Secular and Christian views on the meaning of life are very different. Love, wealth, happiness, self-development, wisdom, influence, service, or popularity are some of the popular answers one might hear. While some views are relevant to believers, it must be asked, can life have a deeper meaning?

Suppose life was about all of the above, would one be satisfied after achieving all those good things (Matthew 16:26)? What about people who cannot do the same? For example, war victims, victims of natural disasters, stillborn babies, etc. - is it fair to conclude that their lives are meaningless? Of course not. Just because someone has (or does) more good things in life does not mean their life is more meaningful than those who do not. More luck does not mean having had more meaning.

We believe that before one examines the meaning of life, one needs to first embrace the miracle of life. Science has shown evidence of the existence of a Creator. The vastness of the universe, the wonders of nature, and the complexity of living organisms all testify that there must be a highly intelligent Designer who organizes everything precisely. Given this, life cannot be without meaning and must be centered on the Creator of all things (John 1:3). Therefore, the true meaning of life must be seen through the lens of, and found in, the Giver of Life.

CONCLUSION

The study reaffirms the profound diversity of perspectives on the meaning of life, as evidenced by the stark differences between non-Christian and Christian viewpoints. It underscores the richness of human thought and experience in grappling with this existential question. The research reveals that both non-Christian and Christian traditions grapple with existential tensions and paradoxes inherent to the search for meaning. These tensions include the balance between individual freedom and responsibility, the presence of suffering, and the quest for transcendence. One's understanding of the meaning of life is important because it shapes the way one lives.

³¹ Tin-Cheung Chan and Fai Kong. "Christian Faith Enhances Meaning in Life." *Atlantis Highlights in Social Sciences, Education and Humanities* 7 (2022): 206–216. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-096-1_15.

The research concludes that the question of life's meaning is a profound and enduring experience and that the journey of seeking meaning is in itself a valuable and enriching aspect of human existence. According to the Christian faith, the meaning of life is ultimately revealed by Jesus Christ. In him, questions of identity, origin, meaning, purpose, and destiny are answered with deep hope. Believers are beloved children of God, created by God the heavenly Father to reflect His glory, walk in His love, and do His will in his life. When compared to all the views that have been described above, theologically the author states that the view that is relevant to the Christian faith about the meaning of life is the view of the meaning of life based on the existence of God and His teleological reach. In this view, it is stated that everything in nature and life comes from God and has God's purpose in each of them. When there is this awareness, life becomes meaningful. Nothing in life is meaningless. The truth is only found in the context of harmony with divine intent.

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