

In These Days

(A Catalyst for an Article)

Why are we, that is, mankind, existing today? Or are we? Who knows? Why are we going shopping in the malls today to buy clothes? To look pretty... impressive... but for whom, if they don't have a purpose for existing? Is that all there is? Are we all just existentialists?¹ Or should we be known as pragmatists² in these days?

Does anything matter anymore? Why should it, since we are all going to oblivion³ anyway, going to nothingness? We are just a finite pee dab anyway, compared with the infinite but purposeless universe. Purposeless... except for maybe the sun and the moon to give light for our meaningless existence on this planet — the life that we pretend to not think about. “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die,” as someone said. But then what?

So what is the meaning for my life? Why was I born? Would it have been better if I had never been born? Should we all take on that slogan Solomon came up with and pretend that that's all there is to life? *“If that's all there is, my friends, then let's keep dancing. Let's break out the booze and have a ball, if that's all there is...”*

Why don't people of the world admit that life obviously⁴ has no meaning? Maybe they will admit it, but won't face up to its realization. But what can they do then? What is life, anyway? Could someone explain it for me, or define it? What's it for you? Can you please tell me? Why are people living? What are they all living for? They get sick and are

¹ Existentialism — a literary philosophic cult of nihilism and pessimism popularized in France after World War II by Jean-Paul Sartre. Each man exists as an individual in a purposeless universe and must oppose it by free will.

Nihilism — the rejection of all religious and moral principles, often in the belief that life is meaningless.

² Pragmatism — an approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application.

³ Oblivion — the state of being unaware of what is happening around oneself; the state of being forgotten; destruction or extinction.

⁴ Obvious — easily perceived or understood.

about to die, and then they are put on some machine that keeps them breathing as long as possible. But what for? Why? What good do they do? Or what good will it do to just keep on breathing a little longer, since their life has no meaning anyway? We're all going to die anyway, and after you die, it doesn't matter anyway... or does it? Then what?

What difference does it make whether we live a few breaths longer, or whether we die? What is death? Is it peace? No problems? No hurts? Is it oblivion? Is it really obvious, or are we oblivious to the facts of life and death? What made it this way in the first place?

What about the millions every morning in their trek to work, and their long, laborious trek back again? They live in a box. They drive back and forth to work in a box, and when they die, they are put in another box. But what for? What good did they do? What was the purpose for living their 70 years in these boxes? Now the box their bones stay in until who knows when, or until they turn back to dust along with their casket...

Hey, did you say *dust*? *Dust*? You must believe the creation story! Do you believe you were made out of dust? Hey, the Bible says it! Do you have a Bible? Then read Genesis 2:7 and 3:19. As it says, you were made of dust, and to dust you shall return.

But then what? What good is it to return to dust? When you're dead, you're dead. It doesn't matter how long you lived. What good did you do for others who are going to die also? So why should you try to be good? How good will you be dead?

Some people, they say, or a few people anyway, have come to their senses and cried out, "What am I living for? Why was I created? What am I doing here on Earth? If I was created, where is my Creator? And who is He? God? I want to know! I want to know!"

Only when one comes to the realization that the life he is living here on Earth has no meaning, and he comes to the end of pretending, or trying to pretend that it does, will he ever know. Are we going to spend the rest of our lives trying to pretend that our

life has eternal significance or consequences? And if it doesn't, then why are we living in the first place?

So here we are, a finite pee dab, an insignificant speck of protoplasm pitched against the infinite extent of the universe, and we figured out that we, too, like the universe, are purposeless. Then what difference does it make if the sun by day and the moon by night lets us see? What can a blind man see anyway?

So should we show our finite existence by standing up and opposing this hostile environment through the exercise of our free will? Have we all become *EXISTENTIALISTS*, persuaded that each of us exists in a meaningless life in a purposeless universe? What energy can we muster up to oppose this hostile world, as we see ourselves in a mirror?

What chain of causes and effects can cause me to change the world from the way everyone else has caused it to be? But I would not want to make it *my way* either. What shall I do, then? How did we all get into this human predicament? Are we existentialists or pragmatists?

Can we, whoever we are, express our human freedom to affect our human predicament and persuade our fellow man to agree on certain lines of conduct or certain values? If there is a God, as so-called Deists think or imagine, who made man in the predicament that he is in? Would not He have made man with certain instructive guidelines to be able to predict his behavior⁵ — to do what is called *good* and not do what is called *evil*? For there would be no evil if there were no good, and no good without there being evil. So who is evil and who is good? And what is the criterion by which it is judged? And by whom will it ever be judged? Some call good evil, and some call evil good.

⁵ Even animals have guidelines that direct their way, if man hasn't screwed them up for them.

Men today call Alexander the “Great” good, and also “Honest” Abraham Lincoln, the war criminal and serial killer of 700,000 souls. An ocean of blood was left behind by both of these *admirable* men. Who is able to admire one who has not the character to be admired? What is *great* or *honest* anyway? Is this a perversion of the truth? *Great* is eminent, important, an indication of excellence and approval of man. But what kind of a man would approve of them?

But how can the world be so bad and filled with such bad people if God is so good? Why do people suffer at the hands of people like Abraham Lincoln or General Sherman? Then it would be thought that God is not so omnipotent⁶ and all-powerful after all, seeing that the world He made is so bad and filled with so many of us who don’t believe He exists — and act like it as well.

Someone said that God gave man free will, and that’s why things are the way they are. Look at Cain. He had free will. He gave me free will, so that I don’t have to believe He exists. But *I* exist... or do I? But how?

Bad people do bad things, like Hitler and the Holocaust. But why did their children have to suffer so much? (Mt 27:25; Eze 36:16-23)

So again, how can the world be so bad if its Creator is so good? Why do good people suffer? The earthquake took over 125,000 lives in its tidal wave. Is God really omnipotent and omnipresent?⁷ You mean, He sees all these things going on, and He can’t do anything about it? Or He won’t do anything about it when He is so omnipotent? Then if that is the case, why? How come? “How come You do nothing about it when You see it all happening before Your eyes? Why?!” we scream to a God who doesn’t exist in this hostile universe.

⁶ Omnipotent — having unlimited power.

⁷ Omnipresent — present everywhere at the same time.

But what happens when a man dies anyway? Is he just a vapor in the wind, with or without a soul or spirit? He just doesn't exist any longer?

Someone said that Jesus said that death was a place you go when you die (if you have a soul) — a place of torment. “Did He really say that?” I asked. They showed me where He said it in their Bible, in Luke 16:28. But what if He was not telling the truth? But also, what if He was? The Bible even says He went into that place of torment Himself (Acts 2:24; Mt 10:40?). Even the Old Testament predicted it (Isa 53:10).

He was telling a story about a man who was pretty well off in his day and age, dressed in clothing that maybe came from *Saks Fifth Avenue* kinda-like stuff. So I read Luke 16:19-31...

Do you think for a moment that this was a true story? Was Jesus just trying to scare us into being good? And what for, when someone says life obviously has no meaning? What meaning did the two men have in the story of the rich man and Lazarus? What does the word *meaning* mean?

Meaning means what is intended, what life signifies or indicates — the purpose. What is the purpose for my life? What is the significance of the fact that out of nearly a billion sperm cells one reached the ovum? Millions died on the way. But once the ovum was fertilized, and a life was conceived, it would be better if that person was never born if he does not live up to the meaning for his life, the full import of it.

“So what happens when a man dies? Will he live again?” Job asked (Job 14:14).

Life obviously has no meaning if you look at what mankind spends his life doing “in these days.” When I take a look at people today — how they look, what they wear, what they do, their attitudes and mannerisms — can I really admit that I'm one of them?

To be pragmatic one must be dogmatic,⁸ and if one is not dogmatic he is of no account to express what he believes, which even a Christian cannot prove by even the

⁸ Dogmatic — inclined to impose dogma; firmly asserting personal opinions as true.

Bible. So dogmatism is essential for any teacher. But truth depends on the teacher himself, as to what the fruit of his pragmatism is.

So between the two kinds of teachers — existentialists or pragmatists — which do you choose? Well, it's just according to whether the dogmatic pragmatist's opinions are right or not. The problem with both is that their opinions could be and mostly are wrong, especially the pragmatics'. But it is according to the teacher (2 Tim 2:7). Of course, that's a dogmatic statement in itself, if you don't believe in the inspiration of the New Testament letters.

EX NI HI LO NI HIL FIT — exnihilo-nihilfit — “Out of nothing comes nothing; nothing is made from nothing” (*eks ní hil o ní hil fit*).

Existentialism is the literary philosophic cult of nihilism and pessimism.

Nihilism — in philosophy, the denial of the existence of any basis for knowledge or truth; the general rejection of customary beliefs in morality, religion, etc.

Political Nihilism — the thought that all social, political, and economic institutions must be completely destroyed in order to make way for a new institution, as the 1860-1917 revolution in Russia, which advocated such revolutionary reforms and attempted to carry it out through the use of terrorism and assassinations, as in Muslim thought today.

The philosophy of Nihilism is based on pessimism — that man exists in a purposeless world and that he must oppose it by the exercise of his free will.

The atheist believes (whether he realizes it or not) that out of nothing comes nothing, and nothing is made from nothing, so all you see and hear is nothing at all, and you are nothing when you look at yourself in a mirror. (Man did not even come from a monkey.)

Nihilism is nothingness, the state of one who is nihilistic, which is characteristic of nihilism and nihilists.