

What is the meaning of human life?

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Drawn from Philip Bitar, *Why? In Pursuit of the Ultimate Answer: Abridged* (2008)

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◆ Willpower / exertion of effort is necessary for meaning

- ◇ No effort implies no meaning
- ◇ Greater effort implies possibility of greater meaning

◆ Exertion of effort implies system of energy transformation

- ◇ Exertion of effort entails use of resource — energy
- ◇ Body is of finite size, so energy supply is finite
- ◇ Finite supply implies possibility of starvation, hence cessation of function
- ◇ Four modes of suffering due to system of energy transformation:
Starvation, injury, malfunction, wear

◆ Life

- ◇ Organism: object for which integrity of body depends on work
- ◇ Cessation of function constitutes death
- ◇ Fifth mode of suffering: infection
- ◇ Reason for life: body can repair itself to large extent, an ongoing process

◆ Meaning tradeoff

- ◇ Isolation scenario: meaning comes from relations to other people
- ◇ Tradeoff: balancing egoism and altruism in the context of human mortality
- ◇ Tradeoff: helping other people survive as we work to survive

◆ Conclusion

- ◇ Possibility of meaning implies possibility of suffering and death
- ◇ There is no way to make life any better than it is if life is to be meaningful
- ◇ Afterlife means more of the same
- ◇ Cope with trials through relations with family, friends, others, (God)
- ◇ “Heroes aren’t made in heaven.” Quote from book, p. 657.
- ◇ “The reason that a story lacking adversity is of no interest is that a life lacking adversity has no meaning.” Quote from book, p. 658.