

# Review of: "Jung on the Meaning of Life"

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This is an interesting article that provides food for thought. It draws on various aspects of life and presents perspectives for reflection.

This article mentions that Jung stated in his seminar on Nietzsche's Zarathustra, that "*...we don't know what the purpose of life is, don't even know whether it has a purpose...*" - We may not know what the purpose of life is as a whole and this could be a difficult to resolve since everyone's life is different. If one's life seems meaningless to some, it could be due to their own view of what life's purpose ought to be or should be, which we don't really know, as per Jung's statement. However, we may be able to ascertain or draw conclusions of an individual's purpose of life or the general direction it is leading towards based on their life's journey. Evidence of one's purpose of life may be visible for some at a young age based on their interest, activities and/or behaviour.

If everyone's life journey is considered unique, and if each one's life stands out in some fashion at the end of their life for which they are remembered, then it could be viewed that, that was their purpose in life. This could be associated with achieving something, to resolve something, to discover something or simply to inform or reveal something that was not known before. If life is considered valuable then, every bit of what people do everyday, whether it was to fulfil their life's journey consciously or unconsciously, is a contribution to their purpose in life that they will be remembered for. It is my view that regardless of the many challenges that may come by during an individual's life journey, their purpose in life will stand tall through their enduring efforts which will help define or highlight their purpose in life. There is of course, the various roles that an individual plays in a lifetime (such as being a father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunty, grandchild, daughter, son, daughter-in-law, step father, and so forth, and the various professional and community roles they may hold) from which certain roles stand out more than others, for which they are remembered as part of their purpose in life.

Some believe that one's 'true north' defines the purpose of life. There is encouragement in spiritually oriented literature to "discover your true north", a phrase that was coined by Bill George (Waters, 2021; George & Clayton, 2022) because it serves as an internal compass that drives the individual forward (Waters, 2021) towards what they will be remembered for (i.e. as part of their purpose in life). For example, if a person wakes up everyday and sings as the first thing they do because it makes them happy, or they enjoy it and can't think of anything better to do then there is a strong indication they may pursue a path towards singing or where singing becomes a bigger part of their life.

I believe it is human nature, for individuals to strive and find meaning in their lives in an effort to understand their environment and the world at large – This is aligned with the sensemaking theory which highlights that it is a process of

trying to seek better understanding of uncertainties in the environment (Tisch & Galbreath, 2018; Turner et al., 2023). Sensemaking is also recognised as a “core leadership capability” (Ancona, 2012). It is a way of learning and growing as part of our lifelong journey, and so I agree with Jung’s statement that, “*We create the meaning of events*”, however I disagree with his statement that follows, which says “*The meaning is and always was artificial. We make it.*” – Yes, we make meaning but just because we make meaning, it does not mean it is artificial as it may very well be tied to elements of truth from which further research and exploration can occur. As Turner et al. (2023) point out, the sensemaking theory is multifaceted and meaning making is one of its characteristics. Meaning making can be through various techniques such as through interpretation, collaboration, sense, development, various research methodologies, observations, analysis, modelling, evaluation, experience and many others (Turner et al., 2023). Whether the meaning made was artificial or not depends on whether it was validated against the truth (which may or may not be revealed or possible to be revealed) and so it is incorrect to downplay the meaning made as completely artificial. If the meaning can be validated explicitly, it may reveal the elements of truth, artificial or both and provide a pathway for improved practices in teaching and learning. If it is not possible to know the outcomes of the validation, then this poses as a limitation to studies of this nature because we cannot determine if sensemaking (considered as natural human behavior) is one that should be promoted to seek better understanding of our environment for personal learning, decision-making and growth.

I am not entirely clear on the statement “*like God...the unconscious has two aspects; one good, favourable, beneficent, the other evil, malevolent, disastrous...*” – Although it is believed that no one has seen God (“Has anyone ever seen God?,” n.d.), we have wars in this world in the name of God and religion (Ethics guide, 2014), people may prefer to associate God with nobility or goodness (i.e. virtues), and not with evil (i.e. vices) (“Why should we worship God?,” n.d.).

As individuals, what is good or positive for one person, can appear bad or negative for another person, so circumstantial or situational context matters in how something is viewed for acceptance. There is a ‘spiritual divide’, coined by Natanasabapathy (2005) which exists at a spiritual level between virtues and vices in a person which are left to the individual to manage accordingly. As indicated in this article, Jung has pointed out, that man has the ability to use knowledge to destroy the planet, but we live in hope that man will be guided accordingly as it depends on man’s decision whether humanity continues.

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