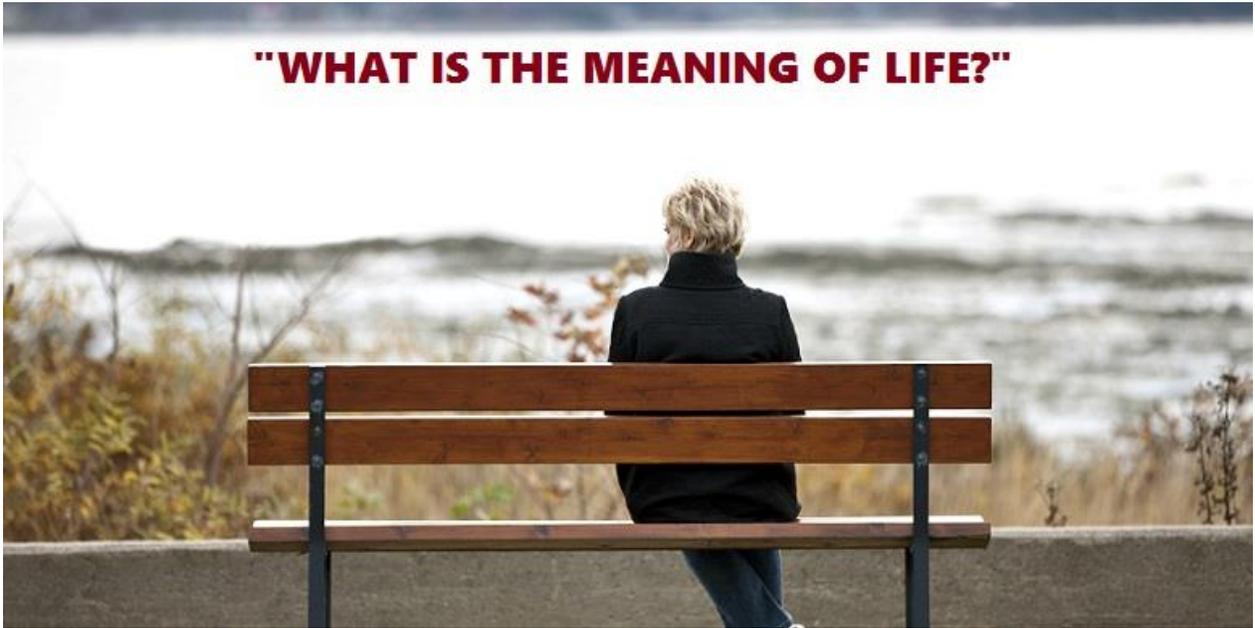


"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?"



Jerry D. Petersen
My Drift

Where Did We Come From?
What is the Purpose of our Existence?
What Happens When You Die?
Is There Life After Death?

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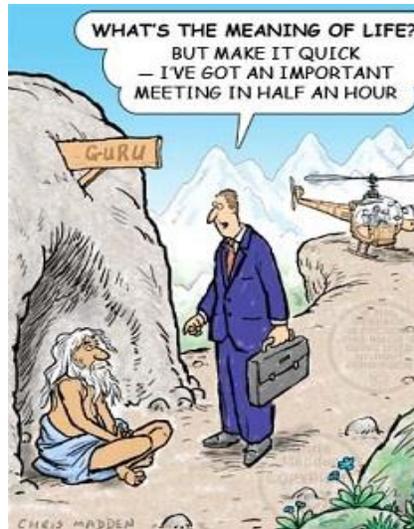
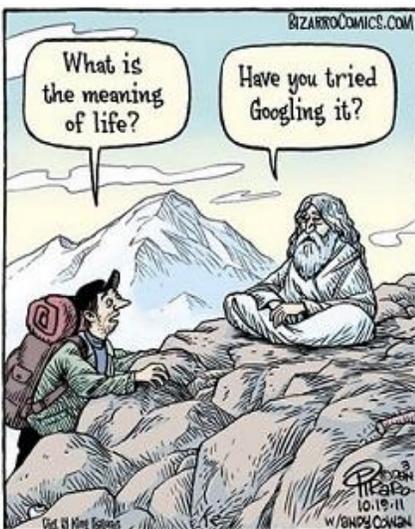
"WHY AM I HERE?"



Here are a few more questions about Life to ponder:

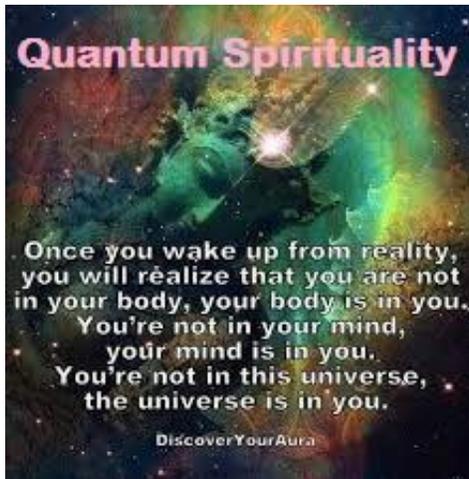


1. If you knew that you were going to die tomorrow, what would you do today?
2. If you were given the opportunity to be born again, how would you change how you lived?
3. If you had the opportunity to be different, what would you change about yourself?
4. How old would you be if you didn't know how old you are?
5. Why do religions that support love cause so many wars?
6. If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be?
7. If you could choose to live anywhere in the world, where would you prefer to live?
8. If you could commit any crime and get away with it, what would you do?
9. If you could be famous, what would you like to be famous for?
10. If you had one wish, what would you wish for?
11. If you could do any job, what would you like it to be?
12. If you were given a choice between being given great wisdom or great wealth, which would you choose?
13. If you could only see three people for the rest of your life, who would they be?
14. What things hold you back from doing the things that you really want to?
15. What is the truth? What is reality? Who defines good and evil?
16. When was the last time you tried something new?
17. What were you doing when you last lost track of the time?
18. What is the difference between living and existing?
19. Are you more committed to dreaming it or doing it?
20. What is true happiness?



Here are a few more complex or deep questions:

21. Have you ever read about the new field of study known as “Quantum Spirituality”? Quantum physics, like the esoteric world of spirituality, is an invisible world. It proves that matter is actually energy and there are no absolutes at the atomic level—matter does not even exist with certainty, it only exists as a tendency to exist.



22. What lies beyond the observable universe? We know that our solar system is part of a huge galaxy. We also know that there are about 100 to 200 billion galaxies in “close proximity” to the earth.

23. What came before the Big Bang? The Big Bang theory describes how the universe came into existence. It is a model that seeks to understand how the universe rapidly expanded from a state of high density. To scientists, the Big Bang marks the beginning of everything. But what came before the Big Bang? Was there nothing? What caused the birth of the universe – to occur? Could that be the work of GOD?

24. How did life on earth evolve? To this date, science struggles to explain how life evolved on planet Earth. Scientists think they have a good understanding of human evolution, but how life itself arose on earth remains one of the greatest mysteries. Some scientists think that earth was formed as a result of frequent collisions with other celestial bodies around 4.5 billion years ago.

25. What is the nature of reality? Some of the greatest minds pondered deeply about the nature of reality. It's the ultimate philosophical question that cannot be easily answered. For centuries, men and women alike tried to understand the nature of existence, life, consciousness, and reality. But only a few found satisfying answers. Is life really just a physical manifestation of matter and energy? Are there also mental elements to existence? Or is reality entirely mental?

26. Is there life after death? The question if there's life after death is perhaps the greatest mystery of them all. While we all have certain opinions about the concept of death, no one really knows for sure what happens when we die. Some people firmly believe in the afterlife whereas others are similarly convinced that there's nothing at all. We never know for sure until we find it out, or rather until we have to find it out.

Usually we're too busy rushing around living life to really ponder the meaning of life. But sometimes we can't help wonder, what does it all mean? Why are we here?

Ah, the **"rat race"**—our darkly humorous term for how we relentlessly run on the endless treadmill of working, paying bills, running to and fro fulfilling family obligations and social responsibilities and ending up exhausted, only to do it again the next day.



WELCOME TO THE RAT RACE



We typically scurry around day to day, month to month and year to year, living life as if it has no end. Occasionally, though, we slowdown from the maddening quest for "success"—pursuing money, love, fame, fun, power ... whatever—and ask ourselves some of the most profound questions in life: Why am I here? Is there more to life than just acquiring "stuff" or doing things? What is the meaning of life? Is there a reason, a purpose, to this existence?



Surely there must be some deeper significance to life other than running the rat race in a wearisome effort to get or achieve something before it ends!



What is the meaning of life? This is one of the most frequently asked questions by all of humanity since the beginning of time. It is a question naturally asked by people because we have the ability to make choices about life. The question would appear to be difficult to answer and different for every individual depending on their circumstances. It is the ultimate search for truth and purpose in life; the reason we were born, wake up every day and exist.

Well, I have reached the age where it is time to find the meaning of my life. Or, at least try to find some answers to life's questions which I do ponder occasionally. The search for life's meaning has produced much philosophical, scientific, theological, and metaphysical speculation throughout history. Different people and cultures believe different things for the answer to life's questions.

**THE
MEANING
OF LIFE
IS _____.**

Stop reading for a few seconds. Think about what you think is the meaning or purpose of your life? If you had to fill in the blank (on the left) with one word, a few words, or a short phrase, what would you write down?

DRINKING BEER AND BEING HAPPY

Okay, that is enough pondering for now. By the end of this article, I hope to come up with a better answer – at least for me.

What do the so-called experts (on the Internet) say about the meaning of life? Everybody has their own views. In fact, we have our own views on the meaning of “Meaning”. Life's meaning consists of the systematic attempt to clarify what people mean when asked about the meaning of their life. Almost all people fall into one of the following categories:

1. **Supernaturalism** – Designation for those who believe that there are beings, forces, and phenomena such as the human soul, God, angels, ghosts, miracles, etc. which interact with the physical universe in remarkable and unique ways.
 - **God-centered** is a spiritual person who believes God is all-knowing, all-good, and all-powerful and who is responsible for the physical universe to constitute meaning in life, even if one lacks a soul.
 - **Soul-centered** is a spiritual person who believes having a soul and putting it into a certain state is what makes life meaningful, even if God does not exist.

- Of course, most Supernaturalists believe that certain relationships with **God and a soul** are jointly necessary for a significant existence.



2. **Naturalism** - Views that even if there is no spiritual realm, a significant existence can be had in a purely physical world as known by science.
 - **Subjectivists** believe that there are no standards of meaning because meaning is relative to the subject and depends on an individual's attitudes such as desires, ends, and choices.
 - **Objectivists** maintain, in contrast, that there are some standards for meaning because meaning is (at least partly) mind independent. There are certain inherently worthwhile or valuable conditions that confer meaning such as morality and creativity.



3. **Nihilism** – Views that neither God or a soul exists - someone who denies that life has meaning.
 - **Agnostics** don't know if God exists. They either think that it is not knowable if God exists, or they simply reserve judgment until they have more evidence.

- **Atheists** believe that God does not exist.



In the beginning,
there was nothing.

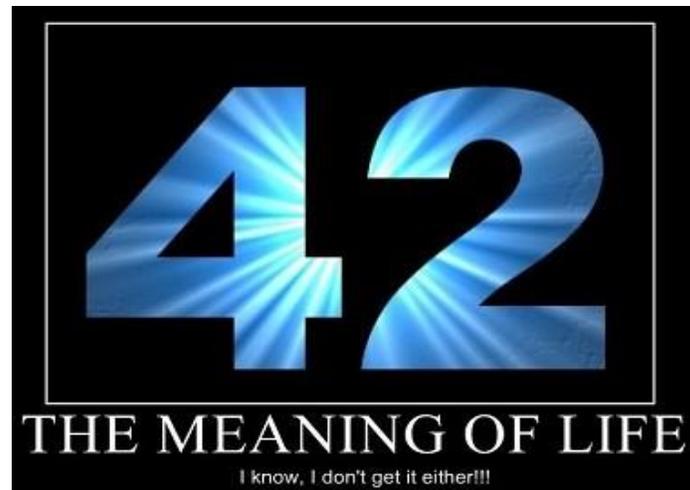
$$\text{NIHILISM} = \frac{\text{EXISTENCE}}{\text{EXISTENCE}} \times 0$$



What, if anything, makes life meaningful? A survey was taken across the United States and these were the most common answers given:

- Happiness
- Serving the Lord – following God’s plan for me
- Belief in life after death
- Having a life that matters
- Life is time – it is limited - the way to have a good life is to use time wisely
- Being rightness
- Positive actions, experiences, and relationships
- Satisfaction with life’s work and accomplishments
- Love
- Helping others
- Suffering
- Life is memory - the future doesn’t exist - the present is gone in a millisecond, so everything we experience in life is a memory
- Making good choices
- Learning something new every day
- Life is just life - it doesn’t mean anything

- 42



These are all good answers and they all make sense except, “what the heck does 42 mean?” After a little research, I found out.

42: The answer to life, the universe and everything!!

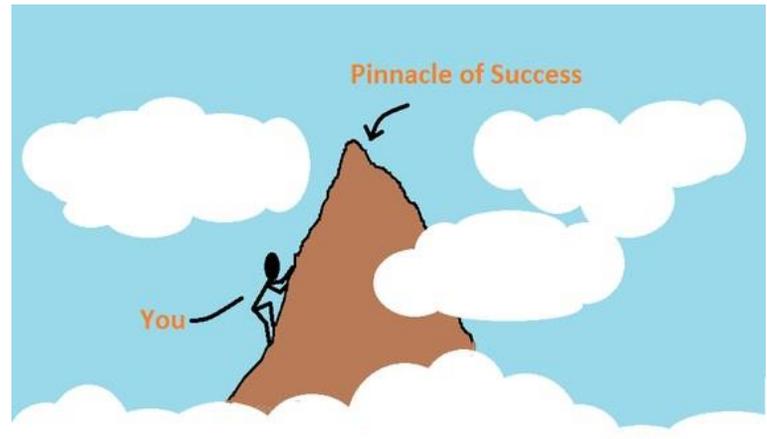
The number 42 is, in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, the "Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything", calculated by an enormous supercomputer named Deep Thought over a period of 7.5 million years. Unfortunately, no one knows what the question is.



Deep Thought Supercomputer

Most people's view of life is a path. That's an image that is often used in the realm of spirituality personal growth. This implies that we are struggling towards a pinnacle. We overcome hardship and climb up and up towards...well, towards what, exactly? In the spiritual realm, we might say that we climb towards enlightenment, wisdom,

awakening, or...what? In the realm of personal growth, we might imagine that we are climbing towards, success, wealth, personal fulfillment, or ...what?



We are pulled through life by promises like a donkey by carrots. We are always moving towards that **pinnacle of success**. First, we go to kindergarten and then we look forward to primary and high school. We are told how wonderful it will be when we finally go to college. Finally, as good citizens we embark on a career, a relationship, marriage, and have a family. We are working hard to get one promotion after another and finally a comfortable retirement. Finally, it seems that we are at last approaching the pinnacle of our life. But, more often than not the pinnacle turns out to be physical problems, or illness. And then – one day the sun goes behind a cloud – and we die. Just like that! And you can't quite remember what the pinnacle should have been. All you know is that you've missed it. That's pretty depressing, isn't it? But, stop! What if life isn't a path?

What if life is a dot? Yes, I said dot.



A dot doesn't have dimension. There is no before and after. The dot is now. This moment. Now.

What if this moment right now is the pinnacle of our life? What if each moment is the pinnacle? That is, if we actually live it and don't miss it through dreaming of the future.

What if the smell of fresh ground coffee is the pinnacle? What if the hug at the door as you go to work is the pinnacle? It would change things, wouldn't it?

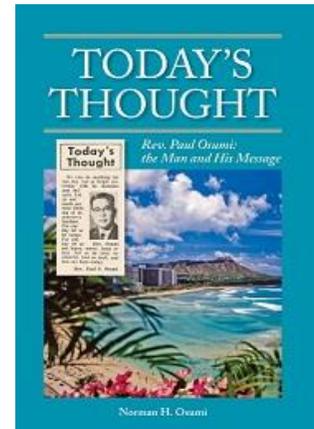
We would focus on what we enjoy, and not on moving up in our career. We would surf more, and dance more, and sing more, and play more, and laugh more, and love more, and hug more.

We would feel the wind in our hair. We would watch the moon rise. We would bask in the sun. We would roll in the mud. We would play in the surf.

We would kick up our heels and feel free. Free to be a bit wild. Even zany. We would live with abandon.

We would enjoy that dot. The dot that is life

Okay, I think we are getting a clearer picture about the best way to live our lives. Back in 2006, I wrote an article titled, **“Today’s Thought”** that I got my material from books written by Rev. Paul S. Osumi. I thought he had some of **the best advice I ever heard on living life to the fullest**. Here are a few of his thoughts on life:



Live Each Day

“Live each day to the fullest. Don’t worry about things that happened 25 years ago, or 5 years ago, or 1 year ago, or 1 day ago. Also, don’t worry about tomorrow because you have no control about what will happen. You might die tonight. Live each day at a time.”

Laughter

“Scientists studying the effects of laughter on human beings have found that among other things, that laughter has an immediate beneficial effect on virtually every important organ in the human body. It reduces health-sapping tensions, relaxes the tissues, and exercises the most vital organs such as the heart and lungs. Laughter is the best medicine for a long and happy life. He who laughs, lasts.”

Living

A credo on living:

1. Learn to laugh. A merry heart is better than medicine.
2. Learn to say kind things. Nobody will ever resent them.
3. Learn to stop grumbling. Try to see good in the World.
4. Learn to relax. Many people get sick by always rushing.
5. Above all, learn to smile. It helps brighten the World.

Forgetter

There is an excellent book, “Total Recall: How to Boost Your Memory Power.” It is advantageous to have a good memory, but it is more important to be a good forgetter.

We must learn to forget yesterday's neglects, failures, and grudges. We must face the future with a clean slate.

Attitude

A man once said: "For every ounce of pleasure in this lousy life, there is a pound of pain. For every good person, there are a thousand scoundrels. Life is cruel and rotten and unjust." Yes, life can be cruel and rotten and unjust, but it can also be interesting and exciting and joyous, depending on our attitude. Life is 90 percent attitude.

Retire to Something

The number of people who are retiring is growing. Someone made this observation: "The trouble with most people is that they have enough money to retire on, but nothing to retire to." It is an erroneous notion that if you have enough money you will be happy. Wealth alone will not contribute to the richness of one's life. It is not enough to have money to live on. You must have something to live for.

Close the Gates

"Please tell me how to forget my past. My past haunts me and makes me miserable." You must make it a habit all through life to close the gates behind you. You must close the gates on what has already happened. You must close the gates on your past mistakes and failures. Put yesterday behind you and keep your mind on today.

Problems

A minister met his friend George on the street. Seeing that he seemed depressed, he asked him, "What's the matter, George?" He answered, "It's these problems. Nothing but problems and more problems." The minister said, "I just visited a place where there were more than 100,000 people and not a single person had a problem." George suggested, "That's the place for me." The minister replied, "Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. All are resting in peace."

Fight Today's Battles

"Yesterday is a canceled check. Tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is the only cash you have. Spend it wisely." It is useless to worry about our past mistakes and failures. It is futile to spend sleepless nights thinking about what lies dimly in the future. Today is here. Why not fight the battles of today as bravely as we can?

Take Time to Play

It is tragic that many people forget to play. A couple getting started with their home and family have to work hard. But the trouble is they forget to stop "getting started". A young man works hard to get good things for his family, but in doing so often loses his family. Take time out from your busy hours. Play with your family.



The relationship between religion and science has been a subject of study since classical antiquity, addressed by philosophers, theologians, scientists, and others like me. Perspectives from different geographical regions, cultures and historical epochs are diverse, with some characterizing the relationship as one of conflict, others describing it as one of harmony, and others proposing some interaction.

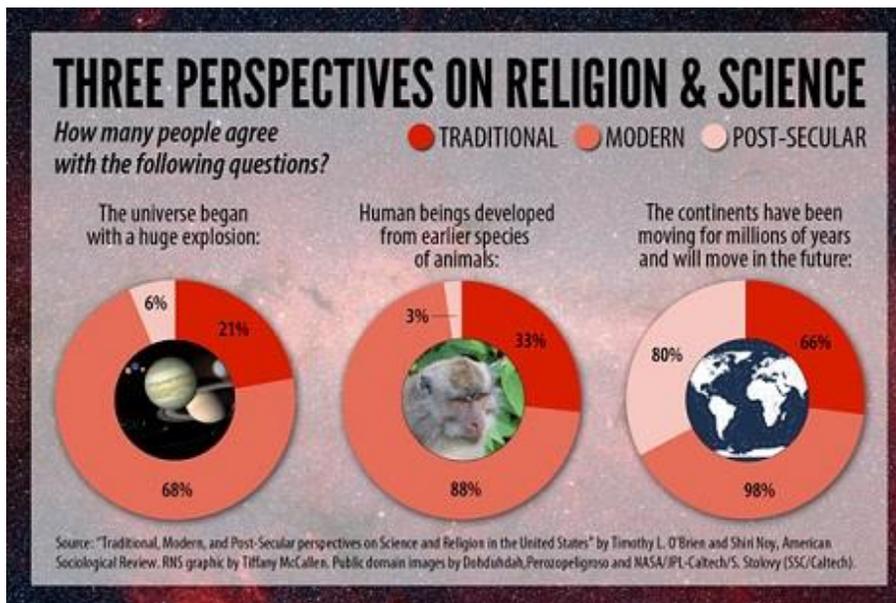
Science acknowledges reason, empiricism, and evidence, while religions include revelation, faith and sacredness while also acknowledging philosophical and metaphysical explanations with regard to the study of the universe. Both science and religion are complex social and cultural endeavors that vary across cultures and have changed over time.

Most Americans fall into three main categories:

Traditional (43 percent) - They believe in God and are the more strongly religious group.

Moderns (36 percent) – The more scientifically knowledgeable group who stand on science alone over religion.

Post-Seculars (21 percent) – This group is pretty knowledgeable and appreciative about science and technology but who are also religious and who reject certain scientific theories.



Yes, there is a large group of people in America who are both religious and scientifically minded but who break with both packs when faith and science collide. Post-Seculars pick and choose among science and religion views to create their own “personally compelling way of understanding the world”.

Which group do you fall in?

Religion – GOD - Faith



OR

Science - Facts



OR

BOTH

My research is done and it is now time to announce the MEANING OF LIFE!!

The Meaning of Life is or can be different for each individual person living on Earth. The following personal information and analysis is for me and me alone. I realize that everybody has their own views on the Meaning of Life and I'm not saying my views are any better than yours.

As we have found out, **the meaning or purpose of life depends on several factors:**

- The Country and City you grew up in
- Your Religion - if you have one
- The major Choices you have made
- Satisfied with your Life's Work
- Do you believe in GOD?
- Believe in Religion or Science
- Positive or negative Experiences
- Your level of Happiness

My living Environment

1. I was lucky to have been born in the State of Utah where I lived until the age of 30. I grew up on a small farm in the town of Pleasant Grove, Utah where I learned the value of hard work. I had loving parents and a happy childhood.

Religion and My Beliefs

2. I belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and was active in the church during my younger years.
3. I believe in God, having a soul, spirits, angels, ghosts, miracles, and life after death.
4. I believe there is a Heaven and a Hell. I think that good people will go to Heaven and bad people will go straight to Hell. I have not lived a perfect life but I think I'm a good person and I do plan on going to Heaven.

Religion or Science or Both

5. I also believe that there are aliens from outer space and in flying saucers since I have saw one.
6. I believe that Religion and Science can co-exist. I believe in both so I guess I'm part of that group called Post-Seculars where I will come up with my own conclusions when faith and science collide.

Major Live Choices

7. I believe for the most part that I have made good choices in my life that include:

- Playing many different sports
- Staying away from illegal drugs
- Going to college and getting an education
- I enjoy reading and writing and try to learn new things every day
- Joining the Navy which were four of the best years of my life
- Seeing many other countries in the world and how other people live
- Going to work for the Federal Government
- Moving to the most beautiful state in the U.S. – Hawaii
- Getting married and having a family – I have a great family
- Retiring from my government job after 49 years of service
- To continue working

My View on Living each Day and my Level of Happiness

8. I believe that we should live each day to the fullest and don't worry about things that happened in the past or things that might happen in the future.
9. I think my level of happiness is on the high side even though I might not show it on a regular basis.

So, what is the Meaning of Life? The meaning of life isn't "out there" - Rather it's "within you". The real meaning of life cannot be found on the Internet. I found that out! Making life an adventure, experiencing love, having fun, helping others, and being happy is a big part of a meaningful life. Although I still like my initial thought on the meaning of life, **"DRINKING BEER AND BEING HAPPY"**, I'm going with the following:

"THE MEANING OF LIFE IS WHATEVER YOU MAKE OF IT"

I welcome your thoughts on the matter and I hope all of you have a great life.

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