



It Is Life That Asks The Questions Of Us, by Viktor Frankl

The question can no longer be "What can I expect from life?" but can now only be "What does life expect of me?" What task in life is waiting for me?

Now we also understand how, in the final analysis, the question of the meaning of life is not asked in the right way, if asked in the way it is generally asked: it is not we who are permitted to ask about the meaning of life -- it is life that asks the questions, directs questions at us. We are the ones who must answer, must give answers to the constant, hourly question of life, to the essential "life questions." Living itself means nothing other than being questioned; our whole act of being is nothing more than responding to -- of being responsible toward -- life. With this mental standpoint nothing can scare us anymore, no future, no apparent lack of a future. Because now the present is everything as it holds the eternally new question of life for us.

The question life asks us, and in answering which we can realize the meaning of the present moment, does not only change from hour to hour but also changes from person to person: the question is entirely different in each moment for every individual.

We can, therefore, see how the question as to the meaning of life is posed too simply, unless it is posed with complete specificity, in the concreteness of the here and now. To ask about "the meaning of life" in this way seems just as naive to us as the question of a reporter interviewing a world chess champion and asking, "And now, Master, please tell me: which chess move do you think is the best?" Is there a move, a particular move, that could be good, or even the best, beyond a very specific, concrete game situation, a specific configuration of the pieces?

One way or another, there can only be one alternative at a time to give meaning to life, meaning to the moment -- so at any time we only need to make one decision about how we must answer, but, each time, a very specific question is being asked of us by life. From all this follows that life always offers us a possibility for the fulfillment of meaning, therefore there is always the option that it has a meaning. One could also say that our human existence can be made meaningful "to the very last breath"; as long as we have breath, as long as we are still conscious, we are each responsible for answering life's questions.

