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MEANING OF LIFE PROFILE

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What does happiness mean to you?

After this course, this is probably a question I could write a ten-page essay about. I could talk about what each school of philosophy defines happiness as and how to achieve it, but this is not about thousands years old philosophy school, this is about what I define as happiness after being exposed to them.

Taking into count that I am a 19-year-old student going through finals week, my definition of happiness right now would be surviving the end of the semester without a mental breakdown, for example. Just joking (not really though). I guess that what happiness means to me is a state of peace. To feel that my life is in balance. However, what I mean by having my life balanced is not having everything perfectly scaled out or being completely sorted out. I am painfully aware that this is not going to happen because it is not what reality will ever look like. Francesco Petrarca said "Hate I shall, if I can; if I can't, I shall love though no willing" in his essay Ascent of Mount Ventoux (Page 80), and I take that as an advice: I will do whatever I can, but if I cannot, I will let it go.

Being happy are the moments where I feel like I am exactly where I am supposed to be and I know that even though I still have an awful lot to go through, I am ok with that. Like those very rare moments when you suddenly become aware of where you are and what you are doing and you feel satisfaction. I guess then, what happiness means to me is a mixture of acceptance, peace and amusement.

A truly fulfilling, beautiful life must include...

I still think that life by itself is fulfilling and beautiful no matter how one lives it. Just the fact that we are alive is something to rejoice about. We are just a conglomerate of molecules, and yet, how amazing is humanity and what we can achieve and how our body works.

"Man's position, according to Buddhism, is supreme." was states in What the Buddha Taught (Chapter 1. Page 1), and I truly believe that.

Therefore, a truly fulfilling, beautiful life must include happiness and a sense of awe.

I would like to dedicate these last paragraphs of this question to discuss, clarify and upgrade my answer to this question on the original profile.

I still would really like to go to space, but the reasoning behind it is much more complicated than what I implied on my last MOL. Some people want to change the world; I would be content with just understanding it. I am so fascinated with the outer space because it is something none of us fully understands and we probably never will.

I do not want to go to space, I want to understand it in the most absolute level, and for me the closest way to do it, is traveling through it; even if that mean being sucked by a black hole.

"Save all the dogs in the world." Yes, that was my answer and yes, I still stand by it. Not being considerate of all other animals, but dogs are the best living creature on the planet. Because I grew up with dogs, I am attached to them; even to my aunt's schnauzer, that is clearly the impersonation of evil. If everything were going to be sucked into oblivion by a black hole, I would save all the dogs because they are the purest creatures on earth.

Lastly, I still would like to not freak out during finals week (except it is already happening so). I guess I will have to exercise what I have learned in Taoism and just roll with it.

Do you agree with the idea that people are fully for where they end up in life? Why or why not?

No one is in absolute control of anything. There is one thing I learned during my college semester is that sometimes things are out of our hands.

Take this hypothetical situation as an example. Imagine a boy was born in a middle class family; he works since a very young age because he has the dream of going to university. However, no matter how much he works, things get in the way. His father dies and the boy ends up having to provide for the family, and has no chance to go to school. It was not the boy's fault that the father died. He could not have done anything to change it. Yet, it got in the way and it was beyond his control.

Aristotle said "It is possible to fail in many ways, while to succeed is possible only in one" (Book II. Page 27), I think that applies to any situation in life. Succeeding is hard because there is only one way to do it, and sometimes, that one way is out of our control.

Where would you like to see yourself in about 10 years? Comment on whatever is relevant to your self-image: relationships, personal accomplishments, social status, emotional state, profession, finances, geographical location, etc...

This is probably one of the most complicated question I have ever had to answer and yet, teachers have been asking me since I was in pre-school. Obviously I would like to have everything figured out by then, however, as I stated before, that is not going to happen. I would still like to be in touch with my family and friends, I would like to be financially stable, I would like to work with something that I like (whatever that turns out to be). I do not care about geographical locations; rather I go back to Brazil or stay in United States or end up in a submarine with Captain Nemo, as long as I am happy, let it be. I also don't care about status so I will take whatever comes. I would still like to travel the world.

Now, I always had a depreciative behavior towards myself, as the cliché states "I am my biggest enemy", so in 10 years from now, I would like to be more gentle with myself.

And lastly, my hidden ultimate life goal is to understand how (literally) everything works, which was one of the reasons I decided to take this seminar. "For is the mark of an educated man is to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits." said Aristotle (Book 1. Page 21) I am not saying I am going to accomplish that in the next 10 years, especially with all the other things stated above getting in the way; but this is something I will always crave: absolute knowledge.

What would you like to tell yourself from 10 years ago?

That was about the time my parents got divorced, so firstly, I would tell myself that everything eventually will be ok.

Secondly, I would warn myself against some obstacles, I would tell myself that there we are going to face some challenges, and some of them are going to look impossible; but we are strong and we are going to survive it.

Thirdly, I would tell myself not to be afraid. Not to be afraid of public speaking or not to be afraid of going to that field trip on the following year. Not to be afraid for your parents, they are grown-ups. Not to be afraid of mathematics or little things that used to take time.

And lastly, I would tell myself what Giovanni dell Mirandola said once "And, if we will it, we shall be inferior to them in nothing", we are remarkable and do not let anyone tell us otherwise.

Out of the Questions and Quotes, what would you like your epitaph to be?

“‘Shall I then no longer exist?’ You will not exist, but you will be something else, of which the world now has need: for you also came into existence not when you chose, but when the world had need of you” Epictetus. Discourses 3.24