Exam 2 Rewrite Siyang Jing PID 730042022

Question 4

Our life wouldn’t necessarily have more meaning if it was part of a larger purpose.

First, if being part of a larger purpose brings meaning to one’s life, then that larger purpose itself must be meaningful.

Second, suppose that purpose is somehow justified and therefore meaningful, it’s not clear how contributing to the purpose would make our life meaningful.

For example, suppose the purpose of our life is to provide food for some aliens, it still does not necessarily give our life meaning. First, we still have no idea what the meaning of their life is, and if their life is meaningless, then so is ours. Second, even if we admit the meaning of their life, how is serving as their food provide meaning to our life? The connection between the meaning of the purpose and the meaning of our life is obscure.

For the second point, there is a practical way to address the issue. Usually, people who seek meaning by serving a higher being is less concerned with what they themselves can achieve. Rather, they consider themselves part of that larger purpose and therefore naturally relate fulfilling the purpose or serving the being with the meaning of their own lives. For example, many soldiers sacrifice their lives in war out of certain patriotism, where they identify themselves as part of their country, and the interest of the country is thus naturally related to their own. The same is true of service to any higher being, such as a King, a God, or a social movement.

Nevertheless, even if we admit such approach to identify oneself with certain larger purpose, we still have to justify the meaning of that purpose. However, the same kinds of considerations that lead us to think that our lives lack meaning apply to the larger purpose just as well. Then we have to find some ultimate justification for that larger purpose as well, like we find meaning for our life. What makes doubt inescapable with regard to the meaning of individual life also makes it inescapable with regard to any larger purpose that attempts to bring meaning to individual life. By the same reasoning, what we do is just finding a larger and larger purpose and the chain of justification cannot be stopped this way. In fact, the justifications can only come to an end when we want to have them end - when we do not find it necessary to look any further. For example, if the meaning of our life is to serve as food for aliens, then what is the meaning of their lives – to serve as food for some other aliens?... Once the fundamental doubt has begun, it cannot be laid to rest.