

# PHILOSOPHY 101

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# WOLF ON MEANING IN LIFE

# MEANING IN LIFE VS. MEANING OF LIFE

- What is it that makes life, as such, meaningful? (Meaning of life)
- What is it that makes one's life meaningful, or one life as compared to another? (Meaning in life)

# MEANINGFULNESS OF A LIFE

- Meaningfulness as part of the conditions for living a good life

*[the] idea of meaningfulness...is an idea of philosophical interest, for it is an idea of a significant way in which a life can be good, a category or dimension of value, if you will, which we have a serious reason to want for ourselves and for those we care about, and which is neither subsumable under nor reducible to either happiness or morality. (Wolf, 8)*

# SUBJECTIVE & OBJECTIVE

1. Do what you love (subjective)
2. Be part of something larger than yourself (objective)

# SUBJECTIVITY & THE FULFILLMENT VIEW

*The reason one should find one's passion and go for it, then, is because doing so will give one's life a particular type of good feeling. (Wolf, 13)*

## The Fullfillment View

Do what you love because it feels good

# HEDONISM & FULFILLMENT

## Hedonism

the only thing that matters is pleasure (in one form or another)

- Life has meaning insofar as it maximizes feeling fulfilled (a kind of pleasure)



## WHAT'S WRONG WITH HEDONISM?

1. "Sisyphus fulfilled"
2. The experience machine

## SISYPHUS FULFILLED

- Would Sisyphus's life be **more meaningful** if he felt good while rolling the rock?

*Sisyphus's task is no longer boring—no longer boring to Sisyphus, that is. But it remains futile. There is no value to his efforts; nothing ever comes of them. Even if due to divine intervention, Sisyphus comes to enjoy and even to feel fulfilled by his activity, the pointlessness of what he is doing doesn't change. (Wolf, 17)*

## THE EXPERIENCE MACHINE

*Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's experiences? ... What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside? (Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia 43)*

# THE NEED FOR OBJECTIVE VALUE

- If what's wrong with Sisyphus & the participant in the experience machine is something objective then what is it?
  - Pursuit of some end that is worth doing
  - Pursuit of being a certain kind of person

# THE BIPARTITE VIEW

*in order for a life to be meaningful both an objective and a subjective condition must be met: A meaningful life is a life that a.) the subject finds fulfilling, and b.) contributes to or connects positively with something the value of which has its source outside the subject. (Wolf, 20)*

- What is the relation between (a) and (b) ?
  - Accidental?
    - pot-smoker
  - Non-accidental but not "engaged"?
    - conscripted soldier

# THE SOURCE OF MEANING IN LIFE

*the idea is that a person's life can be meaningful only if she cares fairly deeply about some thing or things, only if she is gripped, excited, interested, engaged, or as I earlier put it, if she loves something—as opposed to being bored by or alienated from most or all that she does. Even a person who is so engaged, however, will not live a meaningful life if the objects or activities with which she is so occupied are worthless. (Wolf, 9)*

# THE FITTING FULFILLMENT VIEW

- A life is meaningful to the degree that it
  - (a) is led in pursuit of things, or by engaging in activities, that are worthy
  - (b) it is in virtue of the pursuit of such things, or engagement in worthy activities, that one comes to feel a particular way (i.e. "fulfilled")

*According to the conception of meaningfulness I wish to propose, meaning arises from loving objects worthy of love and engaging with them in a positive way (Wolf, 8)*

