

As I think about it and look back on what I've said, I've sometimes interpreted the existential question as asking about the *worth* of life, and sometimes interpreted it as asking about the *meaning* of life. No doubt, the two terms can be reasonably understood so as to designate one and the same thing. But to judge from what I've actually said in developing and explaining their meaning, they, in fact, designate different, if closely related, things.

"Meaning" I've most commonly used in contexts where I'm talking about authentic self-understanding, on the one hand, and ultimate reality as authorizing such self-understanding, on the other. There are places, to be sure, where I use "meaning" as, in effect, synonymous with "meaningfulness," "significance," "worth," and even "value"—as, for instance, in the phrase "being and meaning." But, for the most part, I use it in the sense it has in the phrase, "the meaning of ultimate reality for us," and thus as referring to ultimate reality as authorizing our authentic self-understanding.

"Worth," by contrast, I most commonly use, as I've indicated, as synonymous with "meaningfulness," or "significance," or "value," and, more specifically, "ultimate meaningfulness," "ultimate significance," or "ultimate value." Thus to ask about the worth of life is to ask what ultimately makes life worthwhile or valuable, whether I clearly and consistently understand it to do so or not.

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