

To live is to have faith in the existence of a reality beyond, but also including, oneself and to make distinctions between what only seems to be, or is said to be, and what really is, what is illusion and what is reality, what is false and what is true. This faith in reality, and in truth, can be made indefinitely more, rather than less, critical, but life cannot be lived without it. No reason can ever replace the faith, although the faith can be made ever more reasonable, in the sense of more and more able to withstand rational criticism. But to give up the faith itself, as distinct from giving up this, that, or the other relatively inadequate understanding of it, is to give up life itself.

In much the same way, to live is to have faith in a value beyond, but also including, one's own value and to make distinctions between what only seems to be valuable and what really is so, what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong. This faith in value, and in goodness and rightness, can be made indefinitely more, rather than less, critical, but life cannot be lived without it. No reason can ever replace the faith, although the faith can be made ever more reasonable, in the sense of more and more able to withstand rational criticism. But to give up the faith itself, as distinct from giving up this, that, or the other relatively inadequate understanding of it, is to give up life itself.

So, too, to live is to have faith in something that makes all lives, including one's own, meaningful, or worth living. So the ultimate question of life is never, Is living meaningful, or worth while? but only, What is it—really and truly—that makes it so? Affirmation of life's worthwhileness is inalienable, even though what makes life worth while can always be misunderstood. And so this faith, also, can always be made more critical, more reasonable, more able to withstand rational criticism. And yet no reason can ever replace it. To give it up, as distinct from giving up any and all relatively inadequate understandings of it, is to give up life itself.

This ultimate question about the meaning, or worthwhileness, of life is rightly thought and spoken of as *the* existential question, and therefore the *religious* question. It does not ask *whether* life is meaningful, or worth while, but

only *what is it* that makes it so: What is the source or ground of life's meaning—and so, in a very broad sense of "God," Who or what is God?

In what I mean by "radical monotheism"—which is only more or less inadequately illustrated by the traditional religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the answer given to this religious question is, "The source or ground of life's meaning, and so 'God,' is the strictly ultimate reality that is *the* necessary condition of the possibility not only of human existence but of all existence." But this answer is relatively more adequate than any other only because, or insofar as, this strictly ultimate reality is understood to be "the universal individual," the one reality that is as individual as it is universal, because it itself is as internally related to all things, actual and possible, as all things are internally related to it. Thus it not only makes all things really possible, both in principle and in fact, but also makes all things really real and everlastingly significant. As such, it is, arguably, the one unsurpassable and therefore all-worshipful reality that alone is deserving of authentic faith, which is to say, of both unreserved trust or confidence and unqualified loyalty or devotion.

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