

A Crisis of Meaning

"Hope is a feeling that life and work have meaning. You either have it or you don't, regardless of the state of the world that surrounds you."

... Vaclav Havel (1936 – 2011) Czech playwright, poet and politician

I recently read an article by Tim Soutphommasane, who is a political philosopher at Monash University, in which he posed the question as to when we started to see ourselves more as consumers than citizens. In it, he bemoaned the current imbalance in the focus on economics compared with having a democratic form of government. To support his view, he quoted a Lowy Institute poll that found only 60 per cent of Australians agreed with the statement that "democracy is preferable to any other kind of government". A mere 39 per cent of Australians aged 18 to 29 hold this view.

Whereas this is not a forum in which we wish to debate the various forms of government, his article does raise a troubling question, what does our life mean in the twenty first century? Have we got to the point, where a rather large proportion of society think the meaning of life is simply to get rich and little else matters?

Not all that long ago, the meaning of life for most people in western society was pretty clear. Live a good life and go to heaven, if not it was off to hell with you. The belief in God as defined by the church was the all-encompassing context for the meaning of life. The enlightenment and the rise of the scientific method has changed all that. This change did not happen overnight and indeed many people still have a firm belief in God, yet as the recent release of the Australian census seems to indicate, this number continues to dwindle.

The problem in this shift in worldview is that science tells about how things are and how they work, it does not tell us what they mean. It is one thing to work out there are nearly as many stars in the visible universe as there are grains of sand on the planet, but it is another to understand what that means for human societies. Indeed, over less than a thousand years, human beings have gone from being the centre of the universe and the pinnacle of God's creation to a life form on a small planet in a backwater of the Milky Way galaxy, which is only one galaxy amongst many billions. Is it any wonder that many people now struggle with the meaning of their life.

The challenge of meaning is compounded by a lack of leadership at all levels. Democratic governments live in a world of short term priorities that can cynically appear designed to simply remain in power. Many

businesses, particularly publicly listed companies, seem to set short term goals that have profit and growth as the only measure of success, despite what they say to the contrary. We are constantly told that our way to a happy life lies in purchasing it. A new car or a new television.

All of this leads many commentators to speak of a crisis of meaning in the modern world. Based on our work, we believe that "things" do not create meaning rather it comes from our communities, our relationships and from within our selves.

To that end, we would like to do our bit to contribute to developing a greater sense of meaning in the world. We will be doing this each by providing a reflective practice each month designed to have you think about your life and what you would like it to mean. We will be including this in our e-zine and also we will invite you to share your thoughts through our LinkedIn and Facebook pages and, should you wish, discuss your ideas with others.

We hope you will join us in the conversations.

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For Reflection

We would like to begin our reflective practices with a famous quote by Indian philosopher Mahatma Gandhi.

"We must be the change we wish to see in the world."

We invite you to spend a couple of minutes thinking about what this means to you and how it applies to your life. Here are a few questions to help you:

1. What is the most important change you would like to see happen in the world today and why is this important to you?
2. How are you contributing to creating that change and what might you do differently to contribute more?
3. How could you do this?

After your reflection, we invite you to visit our LinkedIn or Facebook group depending on your preference and share any insights you may have. You can find us on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3716581>. If Facebook is your cup of tea then you can find us there at <https://www.facebook.com/Talking.About.Pty.Ltd>.

A special invitation for you...

I have recently accepted an invitation from ANZI Coaching to be interviewed as part of their series, "Insights from a Master Coach". If you are interested in hearing more about the world on ontological coaching and where I see it going or how I have developed the ideas you read each month, then please come and listen in. I would love it if you would join me.

The webinar is free and will be held at 10:30 on Tuesday 18th September. You can register at <https://rw952.infusionsoft.com/app/form/webinar--180912>.

"There is a profound difference between information and meaning."

... Warren Bennis (b.1925) US educator, futurologist, and writer

Some puns...

Again, thank you Greg! I love these.

I changed my iPod name to Titanic. It's syncing now...

When chemists die, they barium.

Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.

A soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.

How does Moses make his tea? Hebrews it.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I can't put it down.

I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.

A dyslexic man walks into a bra.

Energizer bunny arrested. Charged with battery.

Did you hear about the cross eyed teacher who lost her job because she couldn't control her pupils?

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

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