

Lesson 2

Study Guide

Vocabulary:

- Absurd
- Altruism
- Contemplation
- Detachment
- Nihilism
- Sisyphus
- Stoicism
- Tantalus
- Utopia
- Wisdom

Philosophers:

- Augustine
- Albert Camus
- Desiderius Erasmus
- Faust
- Sigmund Freud
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- Martin Luther
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- Friedrich von Schelling
- Arthur Schopenhauer
- Seneca
- Leo Tolstoy
- Zarathustra

Questions:

According to Camus, the only serious philosophical question is:

- a. Does God exist?
- b. What is the meaning of life?
- c. Should one commit suicide?
- d. How can we extinguish desire in order to be free of suffering?

One of the main tenets of Buddhism says that

- a. life is happiness.
- b. desire can be eliminated.
- c. one must live free or die.
- d. virtue is knowledge.

The German philosopher Friedrich von Schelling saw the whole of life

- a. as God's work of art, in which humans played no role.
- b. as a comedy of human foolishness.
- c. as God's work of art, with us as God's apprentices.
- d. as tragic, since we all must die.

"Life as tragedy" and "Life as comedy" both share the assumption that

- a. life is an adventure.
- b. neither art nor life can determine the shape of who we are.
- c. art imitates life.
- d. life is some kind of story.

Believing that life's meaning lies in children has the odd consequence

- a. that the meaning of one's life depends on your opinion about abortion.
- b. that one should oppose contraception.
- c. that from this perspective, the meaning of one's children's lives are found not in *their* lives but in their children's lives.
- d. that you never know how many children you might have.

Camus expresses the view that life is a tragedy when one of his characters declares,

- a. "The character Polonius did not consider himself a minor character in *Hamlet*."
- b. "All men are brothers and the same end awaits them all-death."
- c. "Life imitates art."
- d. "Life is suffering."

Children, God, and afterlife

- a. are all forms of meaning created within ourselves, like stories.
- b. are all meaningful because they create happiness.
- c. are all forms of meaning located outside of ourselves, to which our lives refer.
- d. are all forms of meaning equated with "life as an investment."

Concerning relationships, the German philosopher Hegel believed that

- a. we are all already deeply connected in one all-embracing Spirit.
- b. each of us is born alone and dies alone.
- c. the normal human condition is isolation and distance.
- d. only weak people seek connections with others.

If the word *meaning* in the question "What is the meaning of life?" refers to something beyond ourselves, then

- a. our lives, like words, make sense only in a context.
- b. our lives, like words, will have set predetermined meanings found in the dictionary.
- c. our lives will probably be defined by a single goal.
- d. we are probably nihilists.

In Homer's *Iliad*, the ancient Greeks found the meaning of life in honor and

- a. sought to pursue wisdom as the greatest of goods.
- b. sought to free themselves from all desires.
- c. sought to live up to the expectations of the community by proving themselves in battle and not disgracing themselves.
- d. sought to live a life of duty.

The author of Ecclesiastes wrote:

- a. "Live your life as a work of art."
- b. "We are put on this earth to help others, but what the others are here for I cannot say."
- c. "At any street corner, the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face."
- d. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The writer John Barth suggested that

- a. only writers can make sense of their lives as stories.
- b. "life imitates art."
- c. life is a *Bildungsroman*.
- d. each of us is the hero of his or her own story.

To say that "life is a game" is to

- a. put it into a certain perspective, in order to take it very seriously.
- b. say that life is absurd.
- c. put it into a certain perspective, in order not to take it too seriously.
- d. say that life has a plot and characters in a story that unfolds in a certain way.

To say that "life is absurd" is to say

- a. that it has no meaning.
- b. that the meaning of life is found in the context of our lives.
- c. that the meaning of life is like the meaning of a game.
- d. that you have to work to create meaning.

When Nietzsche writes that Socrates and other Western philosophers have turned "reason into a tyrant," he

- a. agrees with the idea that the meaning of life should be based on the pursuit of wisdom.
- b. means that a life single-mindedly devoted to reason is a fanatical life.
- c. shares the author of *Ecclesiastes's* belief that "all is vanity."
- d. agrees with Buddhists, who look to nirvana as the extinction of all desires that lead to suffering.

Which of the following would be an all-important question for someone who sees life as a disease?

- a. "Can desire be extinguished?"
- b. "What would a healthy life look like?"
- c. "What kind of story is being developed?"
- d. "Who on this earth can one help?"