On the Possibility of Extracting a Theory of the Meaning of Life from Wittgenstein's Point of View

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Abstract: In this essay, we intend, in the first place, to seek out a theory of the meaning of life from the view of the first Wittgenstein with a focus on Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. However, exegetical works on Tractatus Logico-philosophicus have culminated in the impossibility of speaking about a theory of the meaning of life from the view of Wittgenstein because all of them, in one way or another, accepted the face value of the article 6.54 and 7, that is, to leave meta-scientific propositions. Hence, the first part of the essay delves into the analysis of this problem and suggests an interpretation of Tractatus which resolves this issue. This is done by adopting a grammatical-transcendental reading. After this, different possible Wittgensteinian answers to the problem of life, Tractatus Logico-philosophicus, are offered and scrutinized. Finally, the best answer is offered based on Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-philosophicus for a theory of the meaning of life. He believes the meaning of life requires a kind of eternity which does not last a very long time but is neither timeless.

Introduction: One of the most important intellectual challenges of the contemporary era, especially from the 20ᵗʰ century onward, is the issue of the meaningfulness of life. It delineates that we should seek whether life has a meaning or not. But, a number of historical-sociological causes have been listed for the question of the meaning of the life to come to the fore:

1. The takeover of the scientific view on life, and then abandoning it as a reliable source of a certain and objective knowledge of the world.

2. The spread of the culture of capitalism and the overwhelming spread of technology.

3. A stumbling market look to development that considers every value to be temporary and accidental.

4. The triumph of the ideology of happiness and ignoring the elevated dimensions of life (Bayat, 1390, 38-39).

However, the main question of this paper does not concern the above-mentioned historical or sociological causes; it focuses on the theories of the meaning of life. Ironically, theories of the meaning of life started to develop in the continental tradition of philosophy (Azadeh, 1390) (Young, 2003). Only then, analytic philosophers like Wittgenstein addressed the question. Hence, we focus on the Logico-philosophicus Tractatus to check his ideas on the point; specifically, we would like to seek if we can extract any consistent theory of the meaning of life from his earlier works or not; and if it is possible, how could we articulate his theory or theories on the point.

Methodology: Our method in this paper is a library method of research in which we delve into a deep scrutiny of the Tractatus and the best and the most known interpretations of the text.

Findings: In this paper, first, we explained the intellectual-philosophical project of

Wittgenstein in Tractatus. We pointed that he intended to determine the transcendental conditions of the meaningfulness of the propositions by means of the picture theory of meaning. However, an inevitable upshot of this transcendental reading beside the contents of article 6.54 and 7 of the Tractatus culminated in the proposition that "philosophical proposition, in principle, cannot be said" while the proposition is a philosophical one itself. Therefore, there is a contradiction here. Thus, one could rightly say that the transcendental reading of the Tractatus culminates in the claim that Tractatus has no answer to the question of the meaning of life, and the only stance it can take is a deep silence. As Wittgenstein wrote in article 7 of Tractatus, there are various things that should be passed in silence, and the meaning of life is one of those very things. This answer was articulated in terms of unanswerability and unquestionability of the meaning of life in Tractatus. Our discriminated stance was that it is possible to extract a theory of the meaning of the life from Tractatus. Hence, by suggesting a grammatical-transcendental reading of the text, we tried to pave the way for making the philosophical propositions of the type of the meaning of life possible. The gist of our point in the grammatical-transcendental reading is that, for Wittgenstein, the nonsensical nature of philosophical propositions does not mean them to be false or empty, but means that they are self-evident or tautological, and that they do not give us any new data of the world. Nonetheless, they do grammatical work of specifying the skeleton of the speech and meaning.

Discussion and Conclusion:

In the end, we wrote that Wittgenstein saw the meaning of life as a value that cannot be found in time and space; it should be beyond them for the very simple fact that whatever which dwells in the world cannot be absolute, and will ultimately and definitely be of an accidental nature. Therefore, He believes that the lives of the human

species gets meaningful only when they can experience eternity in the sense of timelessness, and dwell in it. We warned that this eternity should not be confused with a very very long period of time.

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