

Article 140: What Do You Think? - part 1 of 2

Recently, I was speaking to a friend who declared that he hoped to be convinced about things. "About what things?" I asked curiously.

"Well, ...about anything; ...maybe that anything in life is actually meaningful and important ...or that I can know the truth of anything. Everything seems so meaningless ...and empty. I don't believe that God or immortality exists, ...at least nothing shows that either exists! And if that's true, then it seems that all of this burdensome life is useless. Maybe everything is just an illusion ...or a bad dream, ...how can I ever know? And even if life is not an illusion or a dream, it certainly seems so short and useless. Is there really any purpose to all of this?" he finally asked.

"I hope not!" I replied emphatically.

"You hope not?! What kind of attitude is that?"

"Well, ...if life or the universe has a purpose, then I'm part of that purpose; ...I'm caught up in that purpose ...and I don't have any free will to live as I desire ...'cause I must follow along with the purpose that God or the universe has for me. I must find my place in God's purpose."

"You mean looking for the *meaning of life* destroys my life? That doesn't sound good, ...and it doesn't make a whole lot of sense. I'm not sure you can convince me of that," he said quietly ...and then added, "...though I'm not certain you can even convince me that the external world is actually real ...or that it even exists. I feel like I'm looking for something real and meaningful ...in an unreal world ...or in a world without meaning and purpose.

"Yeah, ...ain't it great!?"

"Ohh, you and your fancy ideas! I'm serious. No matter what I consider to be real or meaningful, my mind is filled with doubts. In fact, I even question whether the question is real or reasonable ...and the gap between wanting to know the reality and meaning of life ...and my doubts as to whether this is even real or meaningful grows wider and wider. It seems that I can't live without believing ...and can't believe without truly living. I have no starting point, ...no place to begin believing ...for every answer I discover seems so unbelievable. So, what do your fancy ideas have to say about that?"

This man had a great regard for "facts", ...in fact, as a doctor, he'd spent his entire professional life searching for and depending upon facts ...or *the causes of illness* ...as he called them, ...now he was doubting everything ...which left him with a meaningless life, ...so he thought. As a diagnostician, this man, with just a look and a word, could get patients to speak openly to him ...which usually revealed "the truth" of or an obscure realization about their illnesses which he was then able to clearly diagnose ...where other doctors and medical tests had failed to reveal the problem or illness, usually because more than one disease was active ...and the

opposing or contradictory symptoms or “facts” concealed the “truth”. He seemed to have an uncanny ability to see through this confusion to a clear understanding of diseases and patients, ...but, in his own life, he couldn't see obscure things clearly, ...in fact, when it came to himself ...and his own life, he couldn't even see obvious things very clearly.

“Have you ever considered,” I began cautiously, “that you want things to be *proved* to you through experiences *before* you are willing to believe them, ...yet the universe reveals that you only experience as you believe? If you doubt everything, you'll only experience your own doubts. What do you really believe?”

“What do I really believe? You people with your new ideas think you have a *special* understanding of life that no one else has ...and you believe that your awarenesses or theories are right ...while the rest of us are wrong; ...what makes you think you're so right?”

It's not a matter of right or wrong, ...it's a matter of what you are willing to believe and live.”

“So what?”

“Well, you've been a doubter and a judger for 50 years ...and you've experienced mostly doubts and judgments, ...why not try believing the very finest that you desire and see if that couldn't, as well, come true? Wouldn't that be a good starting point?”

“Like what? What am I supposed to believe?”

“You could start by accepting that maybe ...just maybe, the universe makes no showing of meaning or purpose so you can establish and live exactly as you desire.”

“Okay, ...I can accept that, ...what's next?”

“Nothing”.

“What'a ya mean, nothin'? I thought you were gonna to tell me what to believe?”

“If I tell you that the universe makes no showing of meaning or purpose so you can choose and live as you desire, ...wouldn't it be foolish of me to tell you what to believe?”

“Yeah, ...I guess so. Sure! But what'a I do now? I'm right back where I started. I don't want to waste my life on something that isn't right or good ...or can't be proved.”

“But that's exactly what you're doing right now!”

We're going to leave this story right here ..with the suggestion, dear reader, that you consider how much of your life has been like this man's life. Have you found little or no meaning in what you have been doing for years? Are your intimate relationships meaningful and satisfying? ...or have you been living with a stranger? Could it be that **you** are the stranger in your life that you have been living with? What self and life do you truly desire? ...and if you want that self and life, why aren't you living them?

Could it be that you've not given these questions any real thought? ...and you're hoping against hope that everything will turn out okay? Are you willing to bet your happiness and enriching fulfillment on *a hope that everything will be as you desire?* ...or have you given up hope? Life is far more than you have ever imagined, ...but promises to live up to whatever you are willing to imagine for yourself and life. We'll finish this conversation next week.