

A World Charged with God's Grandeur: An Apologetic of Meaning

What is the meaning of life? That was all—a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come.

(VIRGINIA WOOLF)

Why Apologetics must take meaning seriously

A. Humans are ravenous meaning seekers

For man's primary concern is not self-fulfillment but fulfillment of meaning

A mind is healthy when it has achieved a sufficient store of 'meaning'.

Man's search for a meaning is not pathological, but rather the surest sign of being truly human. Even if this search is frustrated, it cannot be considered a sign of disease. It is spiritual distress, not mental disease.

Feelings of Meaninglessness (Victor Frankl)

Why Apologetics must take meaning seriously

B. We are presently living in a time when there is a colossal meaning deficit

“(People) are lacking the awareness of a meaning worth living for. They are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called ‘existential vacuum’.

“What I mean thereby is the experience of a total lack, or loss, of an ultimate meaning to one’s existence that would make life worthwhile.”

(Victor Frankl)

Our current miraculous state of relative peace and economic tranquillity should not blind us to the fact that gaping holes remain in our spirits.

Maps of Meaning (Jordan Peterson)

"This research (on meaning) reflects a broader shift in our culture. Across the country—and across the world—educators, business leaders, doctors, politicians, and ordinary people are beginning to turn away from the gospel of happiness and focus on meaning."

The Power of Meaning (Emily Smith)

How to engage meaning

The right hemisphere's world is present – or more precisely ‘presences’ to us, as Heidegger puts it. By contrast the left hemisphere's world takes over once whatever it is is represented – literally ‘re-presented’ after the fact: once it is familiar and known, as an instance of something, a concept.

‘The Divided Brain and the Search for Meaning’ (Iain McGilchrist)

1. Meaning's Object side

Creation is meaning

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Praise the Lord, my soul.

Lord my God, you are very great;

you are clothed with splendor and majesty.

² The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment;

he stretches out the heavens like a tent

³ and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.

He makes the clouds his chariot

and rides on the wings of the wind.

⁴ He makes winds his messengers,

flames of fire his servants. ⁵ He set the earth on its foundations;

it can never be moved.

Current attempts to rehabilitate
meaning in a world 'without God'

Meaning (objective) is a difficult topic to write about. There is a famous remark by the physicist Wolfgang Pauli, dismissing the work of another scientist: “He isn’t right. He isn’t even wrong.” I often think about this line while reading about meaning and purpose. The problem isn’t usually that I disagree with what I read—it’s that it’s too fuzzy and vague and general to take seriously.

The Sweet Spot (Paul Bloom)

“But the “primal matter” of mythology (a more comprehensive ‘substance’ than the matter of the modern world) is much more than mere substance: it is the source of everything, objective and subjective”

Maps of Meaning (Jordan Peterson)

2. Meaning's Subject side

*“Man lives in the meanings he is able to discern.
He extends himself into that which he finds
coherent and is at home there. These meanings
can be of many kinds and sorts. Men believe in the
reality of these meanings whenever they perceive
them”*

Meaning (Michael Polanyi)

Quadrilateral of Meaning

<p>Coherence</p> <p><i>Making sense of it</i></p>	<p>Purpose</p> <p><i>Clarity on what it's for</i></p>
<p>Significance</p> <p><i>Why it matters</i></p>	<p>Belonging</p> <p><i>How I participate</i></p>

*Our apologetic task is to show the
meaning*