

You're alive. That's the whole story.

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We often think of life as a **fixed sequence of events**, such as graduations, career milestones, relationships, and setbacks, strung together like beads on a thread. This gives the impression of stability, as if each bead stays in place forever. However, that impression is an illusion.

The **past does not exist in the way we imagine**. Neuroscience and cognitive psychology both confirm that memory is **reconstructive rather than archival** (Loftus, 2005). Every time you recall an event, you **actively rebuild it in the present moment**, shaped by your current beliefs, emotions, and context. What you remember is not a preserved fact; it is a living interpretation. This means your "life story" is less a fixed record and more an ongoing act of authorship.

Life Needs No Meaning

Life **does not require a cosmic purpose to justify its existence**. It simply is. In the same way that a flower blooms without an agenda beyond being alive, we live because we are alive. This perspective sidesteps the centuries-old philosophical struggle with nihilism by rendering the question of inherent meaning irrelevant.

Philosophers such as Alan Watts have argued that asking about the "meaning of life" is comparable to asking about the "meaning of a piece of **music**." The value of **music** is found in playing and experiencing it, rather than in reaching the final chord (Watts, 1966). In the same way, **the value of life is found in living and engaging with it fully**.

If you're **waiting for it all to make sense**. . . don't.

Change Is the Default

Existence is not a still photograph; it is a **flowing film reel**. Every breath alters your physiology, and every interaction reshapes your understanding. Even apparent stability, such as your job, your home, or your relationships, exists within an environment that is always shifting.



Biology underscores this constant transformation. Your skin replaces itself roughly every month, and most of the atoms in your body are replaced within a decade (Redfield, 2002). Change is not a disruption; it is **the standard condition of life**.

Death, and the state before you were born, are different. They are not forms of change but rather the absence of it. These still states frame life as the unique domain where motion and transformation are possible.

If you're waiting for it all to calm down . . . it won't.

No One Is Coming to Save You

Recognizing life's impermanence invites a certain kind of personal responsibility. While help may come from friends, communities, or institutions, **the fundamental responsibility for the quality of our life rests with us**.

This is not a call to extreme individualism or a denial of our interdependence. It is a reminder that waiting passively for rescue, whether by circumstance, authority, or luck, delays the work we could be doing right now to improve our own lives.

As psychiatrist Viktor Frankl observed in *Man's Search for Meaning*, even in conditions of extreme deprivation, our greatest freedom is the choice of our attitude and our response (Frankl, 1946).

If you're waiting for the cavalry remember . . . you still have to make the call.

The Compass Is Quality

From this baseline, the key question is not, "Does my life have meaning?" but rather, "Does this choice improve or diminish **the quality of life**—for me, and for those I affect?"

This shifts the frame from philosophical abstraction to practical navigation:

- If it improves life, lean in.
- If it diminishes life, reconsider.
- If you are unsure, experiment, observe, and adapt.

By operating from this stance, you are not seeking to fulfill an abstract purpose. Instead, you are shaping the quality of the only life you actually have.

Masonic Work

For Masons, applying this awareness can be guided by the tools and symbols of **the Craft**:

- **The Compasses** ask, "Am I drawing the boundaries of my desires and actions in a way that supports life and its quality?"
- **The 24" Gauge** asks, "Am I apportioning my time wisely between labor, rest, and service so that life remains balanced and sustainable?"

- The Level asks, “Am I remembering that all of us walk the same path of time from birth to death, and acting with humility and respect?”
- **The Rough Ashlar** asks, “What rough edges in my habits, thoughts, or relationships am I willing to work on to improve the quality of life—for myself and others?”

When approached through these tools, the philosophy here moves from abstract understanding to actionable self-work. The symbols give concrete prompts for examining choices and aligning them with the principle that life itself is the baseline, and quality is the compass.

Closing

You are alive. That is the whole story. The choices you make from here determine the nature of every chapter that follows.

References & Bibliography

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