

人生的意义：来自分析哲学家的洞见

基本信息

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周学时：3

授课周次：第 1-8 周

周三晚上（暂定）

课程描述

探求人生的意义，被大众视为哲学的主要任务之一。但在 20 世纪，大多专业哲学家避免讨论人生的意义。最近 20 年情况发生转变，越来越多的专业哲学家重视对人生意义的研究。在这门课中，我们将批判地考察最近 20 年分析哲学界关于人生意义的一些讨论。具体内容见“每周计划”部分。

课程要求

1. 课前阅读完指定文献；2. 每 2-3 人合作做一次课堂报告，报告阅读材料的一个主要观点和论证（不必面面俱到）；3. 写一篇 3000—5000 字的论文，需要到我办公室报告一次，根据我的反馈意见修改。

适合人群

热爱哲学、不惧阅读英文、能按时认真完成学习任务的本科生。限 15 人选修。旁听 5 人。旁听不需要做课堂报告，也不需要写论文。

参考书

1. Wolf, Susan (2010). *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*. Princeton University Press.
 - 作者 Susan Wolf 是著名哲学家，北卡罗来纳大学哲学系杰出教授，曾在哈佛大学、马里兰大学和约翰霍普金斯大学任教，是 American Academy of Arts and Sciences 和 American Philosophical Society（非 American Philosophical Association）这两个具有崇高学术声望之协会的会员（类似国内的院士）。这本书是基于作者 2007 年在普林斯顿大学的讲座文稿，包含了作者对自己立场的阐述以及对四个评论者的回应，已成为研究人生意义问题的经典，也适合本科生阅读。普林斯顿大学曾把此书列为“2018 届本科新生读物”（Princeton Pre-read）。

2. Landau, Iddo (ed.) (forthcoming). *Oxford Handbook on Meaning in Life*. Oxford University Press. (虽然尚未正式出版，但许多章节可以在网上下载)

每周计划

1. 关于人生的意义，最近 20 年（在专业哲学家中）最有影响的哲学理论是什么？它成立吗？

阅读材料：Susan Wolf (2007). “The Meanings of Lives,” in *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, eds. John Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer (New York: Oxford University Press)

作者：美国北卡罗来纳大学哲学系杰出教授

摘要: This essay draws a distinction between the question of the Meaning of Life and the question of what, if anything, makes a life (more or less) meaningful. By looking at paradigms of arguably meaningless lives, the essay builds up a characterization of a meaningful life as a life that is actively and at least somewhat successfully engaged in projects of positive value. The chapter argues that positive value is not restricted to moral value, but that what counts as having positive value is not a wholly subjective matter. Because living a meaningful rather than a meaningless life harmonizes with an acknowledgment that we are specks in a vast value-filled universe, living a meaningful life avoids practical solipsism. Even if human life as such has no meaning, it is argued, that is no bar to people’s ability to live meaningful lives.

2. 虽然我的专业对社会很有价值，但我并不热爱自己的专业，学习这个专业就没有意义吗？

阅读材料：Bramble, Ben (2015). Consequentialism about Meaning in Life. *Utilitas* 27 (4):445–459.

作者：澳大利亚国立大学哲学教授

Abstract: In this paper, I will argue that Wolf’s view is mistaken. On the theory I will defend, Consequentialism about Meaning in Life (or CML for short), (1) one’s life is meaningful at time t just in case one’s surviving at t would be good in some way (either subjectively or objectively), and (2) one’s life was meaningful considered as a whole just in case the world was (or will be) made better in some way for one’s having existed. In Section II, I will argue that passion is not necessary for meaning in life, because an ability to contribute to objectively good things is sufficient for it. In Section III, I will argue that an ability to contribute to subjectively good things (i.e., things whose value depends on one’s own contingent interest in them) is also sufficient for one’s life to be meaningful at a time.

3. 20 岁时许多人会碰到青年危机 (quarter-life crisis) , 40 岁时许多人会碰到中年危机 (midlife crisis) 。这些是关于人生意义的危机。哲学有助于我们处理这些危机吗?

阅读材料: Setiya, Kieran (2014). The Midlife Crisis. *Philosophers' Imprint* 14.

作者: 美国 MIT 哲学教授

摘要: This paper argues that philosophy can solve the midlife crisis, at least in one of its forms. This crisis turns on the exhaustibility of our ends. The solution is to value ends that are 'atelic,' so inexhaustible. Topics include: John Stuart Mill's nervous breakdown; Aristotle on the finality of the highest good; and Schopenhauer on the futility of desire.

4. 生活不在别处, 当下即是全部吗?

阅读材料: Kauppinen, Antti (2021). Against Seizing the Day. *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics* 11:91-111.

作者: 芬兰 Helsinki 大学哲学教授

摘要: On a widely accepted view, what gives meaning to our lives is success in valuable ground projects. However, philosophers like Kieran Setiya have recently challenged the value of such orientation towards the future, and argued that meaningful living is instead a matter of engaging in atelic activities that are complete in themselves at each moment. This chapter argues that insofar as what is at issue is meaningfulness in its primary existential sense, strongly atelic activities do not suffice for meaning. Instead, finding one's life meaningful is warranted both by sustainable success in valuable prospective (future-oriented) projects, and by success in reflexive projects that aim to promote or realize a practice-dependent value that can be realized at each moment, but never for good. The latter kind of activities are only weakly atelic, since their aim remains distinct from the activity, and individual actions gain significance from serving a long-term commitment. Thus, whether our ground projects are prospective or reflexive, what we do at each moment contributes to leading a meaningful life only when it's connected in the right way to what we do at other moments.

5. 死亡的无法避免使得人生没有意义吗? 如果活得更久, 我们人生的意义会更大吗?

阅读材料: Metz, Thaddeus (2020). Meaning in Life in Spite of Death. In Michael Cholbi & Travis Timmerman (eds.), *Exploring the Philosophy of Death and Dying: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Routledge. pp. 253-261.

作者: 南非 Pretoria 大学哲学教授

摘要: In this chapter the author critically explores answers to the question of how immortality would affect the meaningfulness of a person's life, understood roughly as a life that merits esteem, achieves purposes much more valuable than pleasure, or makes for a good life-story. The author expounds three arguments for thinking that life would be meaningless if it were mortal, and provides objections to them. He then offers a reason for thinking that a mortal life could be meaningful, and responds to the position that, even if life could be meaningful to some degree if it were to end, it could be much more meaningful, and to an infinite degree, if it did not.

选读: 胡适《不朽》

6. 少花一点时间工作, 多花一点时间关心家人和朋友, 会使人生更有意义吗?

阅读材料: Levy, Neil (2005). Downshifting and meaning in life. *Ratio* 18 (2):176–189.

作者: 英国牛津大学哲学教授

摘要: So-called downshifters seek more meaningful lives by decreasing the amount of time they devote to work, leaving more time for the valuable goods of friendship, family and personal development. But though these are indeed meaning-conferring activities, they do not have the right structure to count as superlatively meaningful. Only in work — of a certain kind — can superlative meaning be found. It is by active engagements in projects, which are activities of the right structure, dedicated to the achievement of goods beyond ourselves, that we make our lives superlatively meaningful.

7. 人生意义的问题是价值问题。价值问题是不是主观的, 没有客观答案?

阅读材料: Clarke-Doane, Justin (2014). Moral Epistemology: The Mathematics Analogy. *Nous* 48 (2):238–255.

作者: 美国哥伦比亚大学哲学教授

摘要: There is a long tradition comparing moral knowledge to mathematical knowledge. In this paper, I discuss apparent similarities and differences between knowledge in the two areas, realistically conceived. I argue that many of these are only apparent, while others are less philosophically significant than might be thought. The picture that emerges is surprising. There are definitely differences between epistemological arguments in the two areas. However, these differences, if anything, increase the plausibility of moral realism as compared to mathematical realism. It is hard to see how one might argue, on epistemological grounds, for moral

antirealism while maintaining commitment to mathematical realism. But it may be possible to do the opposite.

8. 论文提纲报告