

Philosophy Bakes Bread, Episode 41, Breadcrumb 8, with Dr. Larry A. Hickman

The Meaning of Life? Answered.

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[Intro music]

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Weber: Welcome, everyone, to a special short edition of Philosophy Bakes Bread, which we call a Breadcrumb.

Cashio: Crumble, crumble... Philosophy Bakes Bread is a production of the Society of Philosophers in America, AKA SOPHIA. In our Breadcrumb episodes, we include little snippets from past episodes, or more substantive responses to your feedback that we received on Twitter @PhilosophyBB or on Facebook @PhilosophyBakesBread, or by email at philosophybakesbread@gmail.com.

Weber: That's right. We've got a Breadcrumb episode for you today, and we're going to have it with Dr. Larry Hickman, and this is our great guest whom we had on episode 40 of the show, and we were discussing John Dewey, democracy, and education in America. And for that episode, Larry raised a great question for you all, the listeners, and in the process said that he actually had his own answer for it.

Cashio: I have to hear this. I'm so excited.

Weber: We've got to hear this. That's right. And so I'll go ahead and invite Larry to remind us what the question was that he raised for our segment that we call You Tell Me, and we'll ask him what his answer is, because we really want to hear this. Thanks for joining us again, Larry.

Hickman: Oh, it's great to be here again. So, the question was what is the meaning of life? That's kind of a trite question since it's usually associated with the cartoon of the person who climbs the mountain and encounters someone sitting in a lotus position, and bearded, at the top of the mountain. So, the question that you ask as well, what is the meaning of life? And then in the comics you usually get the question like "47," or something like that.

Weber: 42.

<https://www.philosophersinamerica.com/2017/09/22/045-ep41-bc8-the-meaning-of-life-answered/>

Cashio: 42, I think is ... I'll get angry emails.

Hickman: I think it's a serious question. And to put it in perspective, let me tell you a really quick story. I was giving a lecture at St. Mary's University, which is right across the street from Notre Dame, several years ago, and most of the people ... In fact, I suppose all but one of the people in the class besides the instructor were students, but there was a guy sitting in the back in a suit and tie, and I thought, "Well, that's interesting."

Hickman: And so when I gave my lecture, I finished, and I said, "Are there any questions or comments?" I said, "First of all, can you identify yourself?" when he raised his hand, and he said he was a campus policeman from Notre Dame who had come to the lecture. I thought, well, that's very interesting. I said, "Well, okay, what is your question?" And he said, "What would the Pope have thought about your lecture?" And I paused for a minute and I said, "Well, I think the Pope would agree with John Dewey, that the meaning of life is to create more meanings," and he seemed satisfied with that.

Hickman: Now, that's not my invention-

Cashio: Huh. I like that.

Hickman: -because there are organizations that have that view. I've been working with a lay Buddhist organization for the last 15 years, and translated into English, their name is Value Creating Society. And their view of the meaning of life is to create more value, which is not all that different from creating more meanings.

Hickman: So, I think that, at least, is one good answer among many, and the advantage is it's broad enough that it can take account of lots of different perspectives.

Weber: The meaning of life is to create more meaning.

Hickman: Yeah.

Weber: Very interesting. Is that a little bit like what business does, right? It creates value.

Hickman: Some businesses create value. Some business consume value. There's a big difference.

Weber: Ah, that's true.

Hickman: There are value creators and there are value consumers.

Weber: The Martin Shkrelis of the world aren't maybe adding value?

Hickman: I think that the jury's determined he may not have added value.

Cashio: The jury is not still out on that one. We know exactly ...

Weber: That's right. Well, thank you so much, Larry, for this wonderful, thoughtful answer. And, everybody, remember, we want to hear from you about this You Tell Me question. We had

a burning desire to hear from Larry about this because Larry said that he had his own answer to the question of the meaning of life, and I'm not going to pass that up, and I don't think Anthony would.

Cashio: No, not at all.

Hickman: Actually, it is very similar to what Dewey said. He said, you know, the purpose of education is more education, and the purpose of life is growth. That's a way of paraphrasing what I've just suggested.

Weber: Very nice.

Cashio: Yeah. Well, I hope everyone has enjoyed this little Breadcrumb, and I hope that you all go out and live lives that are creating more life, more growth, and more meaning. I really like that.

Weber: Very nice, indeed. Remember, everyone, that you can call us and leave a short recorded message with a question or a comment that we may be able to play on the show at 859-257-1849. That's 859-257-1849. You can also reach us on Twitter, Facebook, and by email. For that information again, visit philosophybakesbread.com.

Cashio: This has been Anthony Cashio, and Eric Weber, and we were here once again with Dr. Larry Hickman. Thank you again, Larry.

Hickman: Thank you.

Cashio: This is Philosophy Bakes Bread, food for thought about life and leadership.

[Outro Music]