Journal 1

Chapter 1 introduces the book by discussing the big questions that we ask ourselves often – what would we do if we had a few minutes to leave? What are we willing to die for? Would we ever have kids, and for what reason? Why are we here? Is God real? It’s pretty hard to answer these questions without some sort of extended exclamation. The author declares philosophy is “the experience of asking grand questions about life, about what we know, about what we ought to do and believe in” (Solomon and Higgins, p. 28). Referring back to the questions, everyone has a different answer, primarily based on their opinion and if that person believes God is real or if the ever want to have kids. Their answer can be completely different from someone else’s. But philosophy can be seen as “nagging” to many people. Most people who don’t study, and just know the term along with basics will instantly assume philosophy is just asking the same questions over and over again, such as why are we here and what is the meaning of life. Having asked these same questions over can seem nagging because it’s just constant repetition of the same “grand” questions.

Philosophy is just the general category for it all. There are several different kinds of philosophers; determinists and existentialists. Determinist philosophers see that everything happens for a reason due to a “prior set of conditions and influences” (Solomon and Higgins, p. 39). Meanwhile existentialist philosophers see that everything happens because that particular person chose for it to happen and that the individual should be responsible for his/her actions.

Solomon and Higgins ask their students if they have ever made a decision entirely on their own, and to no surprise, many of the students said of course not (p. 38). The students say this because of the word entirely, meaning that they had influences, even if it was in small doses. I can even say for myself that many of my decisions were influenced by family, friends, and even my peers. Whether I asked my friends for advice if I should text the boy/girl or not, or if I ask my roommates what should I do for dinner. The only decisions I say I can make entirely for myself are those that are usually a daily essential, should I brush my teeth before I shower or should I do my homework the day it was assigned or push it off until the day before it’s due? Those are the kinds of questions I can handle myself but even then those aren’t the majority of questions I ask.

Towards the end of the chapter, the authors recommend some books for the readers to get another general introduction about philosophy. However, they claim that some of the readings can be biased but will give another insight on philosophy. For the readers who are interested in philosophy, this little section helps because it gives them a list of other readings to help further their studies, and not to just study The Big Questions.

Reference

Solomon, R.C., Higgins, K. (2009) [Chegg E-Reader]. Retrieved from <http://1111781303.reader.chegg.com/reader/book.php?id=d6b179710707dafaf3b3a826e2390363>

Journal 2

Chapter 2 is primarily about one of the major questions we ask ourselves; what is the meaning of life? This question is one that remains unanswered, but philosophers do what they can to find an answer that has enough reason behind it, but until then, the answers they find are just mere opinions. However, the chapter goes into full detail about the several meanings people believe in. This infamous question usually comes during times of uncertainty and moments of despair, where the individual could be seen asking questions such as “why me?” and “what did I do to deserve this?”

Solomon and Higgins claimed that “there are four such answers worth mentioning: thinking of one’s children as the meaning of one’s life, thinking of God as the meaning of one’s life, thinking of an afterlife as the meaning of one’s life, and, in despair, concluding too quickly that life has no meaning” (p. 46). Having your child as the meaning of life is important because your child carries on your name but this can cause problems. If you see your child is the “meaning of life” how do you know what your life actually means? Other people see God as the meaning of their life. They would be asking questions such as “why has God created us? For what reason?” but just like every response in regards to the meaning of life, they have a flaw. Say if a person believed God is the meaning of life, that person would actually have to believe in God completely. If another person said that God is the meaning of life, but didn’t actually believe in Him, how would that person feel if their meaning of life is based off of something they doubt even exists? Another meaning is that people see the afterlife as the meaning to life. However, this reply has many flaws. If people are going to rely on how they will live in the afterlife, how would they act in this one? What the chapter doesn’t mention is that these people are going by how they will live in their next life, but what about the life after that and the one after that? People would be too worried trying to figure out how to better their next life instead of living their current one to the fullest. Also, how would people know if there is an afterlife? What happens if there isn’t one? Wouldn’t they just put this life to “waste” in a way? The final meaning that seems to be more widely accepted by people from all different religious groups is that there is no meaning. Maybe we are just here in existence by luck. This is the meaning I can comfortably agree with because I, as well as everyone else, know that we aren’t going to exist forever as individuals. So for the average 70-80 years someone might live for, might as well make the most of it. Who knows why we are here? But we might as well just enjoy life and live it accordingly.

Reference

Solomon, R.C., Higgins, K. (2009) [Chegg E-Reader]. Retrieved from <http://1111781303.reader.chegg.com/reader/book.php?id=d6b179710707dafaf3b3a826e2390363>