

Reason, Luck, and Meaning

A Critique of the Moralistic View of Meaning in Life

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Abstract

Since the 20th century, many philosophy papers have been written about the concept of meaning in life. One notable question in the field is whether there is a necessary connection between morality and meaning. This paper's objective is to tackle this question and bring out two points that favor the view that there is no necessary connection between morality and meaning. I attempt to support the anti-moralistic view that morality is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition for a meaningful life. To do so, I articulate and defend two arguments suggested by Bernard Williams: one argument from the perspective of categorical desire and another from the perspective of luck. The first contrasts morality's impartiality with meaning as personal, and the second contrasts morality's immunity to luck with meaning's vulnerability to luck.

1. Introduction

Since the late 20th century, many philosophy papers have been written about the concept of meaning in life. Philosophers, largely those in Anglo-American countries, have attempted to analyze the concept as many ambiguities are involved in the common-sense conceptions of meaning. Among these, a notable ambiguity is the relationship between meaning and morality; namely, the question is whether there is a necessary connection between morality and meaning. This seems to be an important question for multiple reasons. First, philosophers' opinions are radically diverse on this question. Some say there is no connection, some argue moral lives are sufficiently meaningful, and some assert that highly immoral lives cannot have meaning. Second, the question concerns the nature of morality, which is the core problem of moral philosophy. If immoral lives can be meaningful, what is the point of morality? Does one have a necessary reason to observe morality by sacrificing one's immoral but meaningful life? As noted by some philosophers,¹ such questions have been the subjects of moral philosophy

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¹ e.g., Kekes (2000).

since Plato. Indeed, questions about meaning and morality have also been intensely argued by some of the earliest figures in contemporary discussions.² Thus, it seems important to scrutinize the relationship between the moral and the meaningful.

This paper's objective is to tackle this question and bring out two points favoring the view that there is no necessary connection between morality and meaning. To do so, I take up the arguments proposed by Bernard Williams, one of the leading figures in 20th-century moral philosophy. Although Williams has significantly contributed to moral philosophy, it seems that there are no corresponding treatments of his arguments in the contemporary discussion of the meaning in life. An important exception to this negligence is Susan Wolf, as her seminal paper on the relationship between meaning and morality is based on Williams's argument against the view that there is a necessary connection between them.³ I attempt to extract Williams's thoughts on the matter more thoroughly than Wolf does.

In what follows, my basic point is that Williams suggests two arguments that support the view that there is no necessary connection between meaning and morality. In the paper's second section, I more precisely outline the problem regarding the connection and formulate the views I criticize. I focus on moralist views such that morality is either a necessary or sufficient condition for a life to be meaningful. In the third section, I propose an argument against the moralist views: an argument from the perspective of *categorical desire*. In the fourth section, I extract an argument by Williams that is rather more neglected in the field than the former: an argument from the perspective of *luck*.

2. Views on Meaning and Morality

Three views on the relationship between meaning and morality

In this paper, I presuppose two points on meaning and morality. First, I suppose that meaning in life is something that makes one's life meaningful and is *variable*; there are degrees of meaningfulness in life. One's life can be meaningful to a degree but can also be, in a severe case, meaningless. This conception of

² e.g., Singer (1997), Wolf (1997), Kekes (2000).

³ Wolf (1997).

meaning is very broadly shared in the literature.⁴ Second, I suppose that a moral life is one generally lived according to moral codes that are morally approved by others. A moral life includes observing moral obligations, executing supererogatory actions, or helping others with good intentions. Here, being moral is also *variable*; there are very moral people, such as Mother Theresa; modestly moral people; and extremely immoral people, such as Hitler.

As for the relationship between life being moral and being meaningful, there are broadly three popular views in the literature.⁵ The first view is that being moral is neither necessary nor sufficient for being meaningful, which I refer to as the *anti-moralist* view. This view is asserted both by *subjectivists*, who hold that the meaningfulness of one's life is wholly dependent on one's subjective conditions, and by *objectivists*, who hold that meaningfulness needs more than subjective conditions.⁶ As subjectivists assert that one's life is meaningful as far as one is in a subjectively proper state, they may naturally argue that one's life can be meaningful regardless of how moral it is.⁷ Objectivists such as Kekes and Wolf also endorse the view that morality is neither necessary nor sufficient for a meaningful life. Kekes, by quoting John Stuart Mill's depression about his moral life, stresses that a morally good life can lose meaning and asserts that one's highly immoral life can be meaningful if one is genuinely identified with it.⁸ Wolf, being rather more cautious than Kekes, also argues that moral life can be meaningless if one has subjectively lost interest in it and one's committed immoral life can be meaningful if it is still worthwhile.⁹ The second view is that morality is a sufficient element for a meaningful life. For instance, Metz suggests that a highly moral life is meaningful even if one is completely depressed in it, as a morally great life is of great use for many people.¹⁰ In this view, Mother Theresa's life is meaningful regardless of her psychological state. The third view is that morality is a necessary element of a meaningful life. Numerous philosophers agree that one's highly immoral life cannot be a meaningful life even

⁴ There might be skepticism about meaning in this sense by arguing that we cannot compare meaningfulness across people's lives as argued in Kukita (2015), p.212. Also, there is a sense in which everyone's life is equivalently meaningful, no less or no more. However, I do not take these views in this paper.

⁵ A helpful survey on this topic is Kipke and R  ther (2019).

⁶ Metz (2013) pp.19-20.

⁷ e.g., Edwards (2018), p.119.

⁸ Kekes (2000). p.30.

⁹ Wolf (1997), p.313, Wolf (2010), pp.58-60.

¹⁰ Metz (2013). p.135, p.227, Kipke and R  ther (2019), p.235.

if one is passionately committed to it.¹¹

Assessment: anti-moralist vs two moralist views

To summarize, opinions can be broadly divided into two conflicting positions: the *anti-moralist* view that morality is neither sufficient nor necessary for meaning in life and the *moralist* view that morality is a sufficient or necessary element of meaning in life. The moralist view is divided into two views: the *necessity-moralist* view that morality is a necessary condition for a meaningful life and the *sufficiency-moralist* view that morality is a sufficient condition for a meaningful life. To make these moralist views ideally persuasive, let us suppose that both are weak statements. That is, the former merely asserts that *highly* immoral lives such as Hitler's cannot be meaningful, and the latter asserts that *highly* moral lives such as Mother Theresa's are sufficiently meaningful. This clarification is needed because the moral views will be singularly unpersuasive if the morality at issue is of a small degree.¹² For instance, it is rather absurd to suppose that the life of a great artist who has had an affair and is therefore deemed to be a bit immoral is meaningless. After the clarification, the two views can be formulated as follows:

The *necessity-moralist* view (hereafter "N-moralist")

If one's life is, to a certain considerable extent, immoral, it cannot be meaningful.

The *sufficiency-moralist* view (hereafter "S-moralist")

If one's life is, to a certain considerable extent, moral, it must be meaningful.

There are two points to note about the moralist views. First, these two views can coexist: one can be both N-moralist and S-moralist, and, indeed, philosophers such as Metz seem to hold both views.¹³ According to them, a substantially moral life must be meaningful, and an extremely immoral life cannot be meaningful. Second, only some *objectivists* hold the moralist views. It is difficult for

¹¹ Landau (2011), p.314, Louden (2013), p.40, Metz (2013), p.235, Kipke and R  ther (2019), pp.231-4. It is possible to read Wolf as a theorist on this view. She argues that an objectively worthless life is meaningless anyway (Wolf (1997), p.306), and, if she thinks that a highly immoral life is necessarily worthless, she supports this view.

¹² Landau (2011), p.314, Louden (2013), p.40.

¹³ Kipke and R  ther (2019), p.236.

subjectivists, who hold that subjective states are crucial for meaningfulness, to assert that morality is either necessary or sufficient for meaningfulness as there is no necessary connection between morality and one's subjective states. On the other hand, some objectivists who still emphasize the role of the subjective state hold the *anti-moralist* view.

The question is: what is the nature of the conflict between the *anti-moralist* and *moralist* views? The most obvious difference is that anti-moralists believe that life's partial aspects, such as joy, are crucially important, while moralists believe life can be meaningful or meaningless irrespective of the partial aspects. Thus, anti-moralists think that a depressed Mother Theresa's life can be meaningless, and a devoted Nazi officer's life can be meaningful, while moralists think otherwise. Having said that, it is unclear which position to favor if the difference is just based on intuition. Is there a philosophical reason to favor one of them?

The anti-moralist position can become, I think, more attractive by achieving two tasks. First, anti-moralists should clarify why the partial aspect ought to be emphasized without presupposing a robust subjectivist view. If they want to persuade objectivists, they need an argument that is logically neutral to the subjectivist/objectivist debate. Second, anti-moralists should show the reason why morality *specifically*, unlike other objective properties, is in doubt. If there is a counterargument specifically directed toward morality, it might be a special reason for us to be cautious against the moralist views of meaningfulness. I attempt to achieve these two tasks by analyzing the concept of morality in more detail than in previous articles;¹⁴ in what follows, I focus on morality being *impartial* and *immune to luck*.

3. Argument from the Perspective of Categorical Desire

The first argument from categorical desire

Can anti-moralists base their emphasis on the partial aspect of meaningfulness? One leading anti-moralist, Susan Wolf, extracts such an

¹⁴ One such attempt in the literature is Loudon (2013), pp. 39-40. While Loudon asserts that a minimum morality is required for all human cognitive activities and a rational conversation, his assertion seems to be false as an extremely immoral figure like Hitler can just speak rationally.

argument from Bernard Williams.¹⁵ This argument, which I refer to as “an argument from categorical desire,” is based on the fact that one’s meaning in life gives one a reason to stay alive. Let us look carefully at this argument.

Wolf and Williams suppose that a salient fact about meaning in life is that “what gives one’s life meaning gives one a reason to live.”¹⁶ If a person sincerely believes that their life is crucially about creating art, creating artwork makes their life meaningful and gives them reason to live. If they are deprived of the means to create art by, say, a war, they might think that they have no reason to live. They may take no interest in their life or the world at all. Williams calls this meaning in the sense that it gives one a reason to stay alive “categorical desire,” as this is a desire that is not conditional on the assumption that one will survive.¹⁷ While my desire to watch a boxing match tomorrow is conditional on my survival, my categorical desire to live with my partner is not, as this desire constitutes the condition for my survival.

Given this thought on categorical desires, the argument against the moralist views goes as follows:

The first argument from categorical desire

While what makes one’s life meaningful necessarily produces a categorical desire, that is, one’s reason to stay alive, morality does not necessarily give one a reason to stay alive. Therefore, moral life is not necessarily meaningful.

If this argument is sound, it negates at least the S-moralist view, in which a highly moral life is sufficiently meaningful. It is possible that a moral life does not give one a reason to stay alive. For example, a depressed Mother Theresa does not have

¹⁵ Wolf (1997).

¹⁶ See Wolf (1997), p.303. An objection can be made to this point that one can consider that one’s life is meaningful while simultaneously seeing no reason to live anymore. We can suppose, for instance, an old philosopher who thinks that philosophical contemplation makes life meaningful but has no desire to live anymore. To this objection, I can reply that this philosopher either still has categorical desire or philosophy has lost all meaning to him or her. If the philosopher is not depressed but just pessimistic about life, s/he still has reason to lead a philosophical life and write pessimistically. If s/he is so depressed that s/he genuinely believes that s/he has no reason to live at all, the meaning which s/he used to identify with the life is lost. For the depressed philosopher, philosophy does not add any meaning to life at all. One can be pessimistic and sometimes mistaken about one’s reason to live, but I think there is a sense in which what makes one’s life meaningful necessarily provides one’s reason to live. I appreciate the anonymous reviewer for raising this objection.

¹⁷ Williams (1973), pp.85-6, Williams (1981), p.11, Williams (1995), pp.245-6.

reason to stay alive; in this case, she loses meaning in her life. In contrast, the N-moralist view, in which a highly immoral life is meaningless, is not critically damaged by this argument, as the argument only negates morality's power to necessarily provide a reason to stay alive. It remains neutral to the possibility that there exists a highly immoral reason to stay alive. Thus, the target of this argument is the S-moralist view.

Moralists might reply: how can you say that morality does not necessarily give one a reason to stay alive? To this, anti-moralists can respond: one's reason to stay alive is *personal*, while morality is *impartial*. That is, morality can, at best, give one a *general* reason to stay alive, but that is not enough to give *one* a *specific* reason to stay alive. Let us suppose a person who sees no reason to live. Here, it seems absurd to say that this person has a reason to go out and maximize the world's utility even if that is morally desirable. As Wolf points out, the person can ask "Why should *I* do this? Why am *I* responsible for the world?"¹⁸ While it might be possible to suppose that morality impartially gives *one* a reason to act morally, it is hard to believe that it *specifically* gives *that* person a reason to act morally¹⁹. Morality can at best provide a reason that anyone can equally have.²⁰ However, what concerns us in virtue of the meaning in life is essentially a *personal* reason to act, since this personal reason enables *that person* to stay alive. Therefore, impartial morality cannot necessarily provide meaning in life.

The second argument from categorical desire

The fact that one has categorical desires can be used in a different way to argue against the moralist views. That is, one's categorical desires, which enable one's meaning in life, can be exhausted, while morality is not exhaustible. A person may feel that they have achieved their life's goal of being a teacher. One may find that one's reason for staying alive—living for their partner—is radically mistaken

¹⁸ Wolf (1997), p.307.

¹⁹ Contrary to this point, Kantian theorists tend to argue that one has reason to observe moral duty regardless of one's subjective motivations. Following Williams (Williams (1995), p.37), I believe that the burden of proof is on the theorists. They need to demonstrate the existence of such reason notwithstanding the intuitive fact that it seems absurd to argue that a depressed person has a reason to be committed to famine relief. I owe this point to the reviewer's comment.

²⁰ This is related to the debate between *reason-internalism* and *reason-externalism*, in which internalists, including, most famously, Williams, argue that one's reason to act is enabled by their subjective motivations (Williams (1981), pp.111-2). If moralists insist that morality necessarily gives one reason to act, they are committed to either reason-externalism or reason-internalism, in which morality is necessarily connected to one's subjective motivations.

when they discover their partner is a cheater and a manipulator. As these cases show, categorical desires can be exhausted or extinguished in various ways. However, being moral cannot be exhausted in those ways. For example, suppose a person who used to be identified with their categorical desire to make the world better by donation to poor people. Even though this person is alienated from their categorical desire now, a forgotten regular donation automatically withdrawn from their bank account as a donation makes their life moral. Hence, it is possible for one's life to be moral while at the same time its meaning is exhausted. This can be formulated as follows:

The second argument from categorical desires

One's categorical desires can be exhausted in various ways. However, the morality of one's life cannot be exhausted in those ways. Therefore, there are many cases in which a life lacking in categorical desires is meaningless but moral.

This argument negates at least S-moralists again, as it shows that moral life is not always meaningful. Indeed, it seems that one's categorical desires can be lost or worn out while one's life remains moral. In the case of depression, one is devoid of categorical desires or a reason to stay alive, which, in an extreme case, leads one to commit suicide, although from the moral point of view, nothing is lost. A depressed Mother Theresa may produce as many goods or utilities as a normal Mother Theresa does, but she really loses her categorical desires. Another important case for exhaustion is *tedium*, as Williams famously argued.²¹ Categorical desires can be worn out when one is completely bored by them. Williams invites us to think of immortal life and argues that, in an infinite amount of time, there will come a point when one is completely bored by one's life and loses a reason to survive. While the S-moralists would argue that one cannot lose one's meaning in an infinite time, as far as one is moral,²² it is powerfully tempting to deem one's life meaningless if the life is so tedious that one is in extreme pain, hates their life, or all they want is to commit suicide. In short, in an extremely tedious life, one finds no *personal* reason to live.

The thought that is the basis of this second categorical desires argument, I think, is that varieties of human emotions such as a sense of identity,

²¹ Williams (1973), p.100.

²² Metz (2013), p.135.

purposiveness, depression, or tedium are so closely connected to the concept of meaning in life that moralists need a powerfully intuitive argument to claim that one's life is meaningful even if one loses proper emotions. When a person is conscious of their categorical desires or has a sense of destiny, it is natural for them to say that "I *find* meaning in my life," which means one finds a *personal* reason to live. On the contrary, when one is extremely bored with their life or finds that one's sense of identity is radically mistaken, one would naturally say that "I *have lost* meaning in my life," which means one has lost their *personal* reason to live. When one is extremely bored or depressed, one will seek meaning in their life or just cease to exist. In those extreme cases, a person is *really seeking* meaning, as they have *no* meaning. Thus, it is the variety of human emotions, such as the sense of identity and tedium, that enables the dynamics of personal reasons to live and, therefore, meaning in life.

4. Argument from the Perspective of Luck

Argument from luck

Though Wolf only emphasized Williams's argument from categorical desires, it is notable for the philosophy of meaning in life that Williams suggests another argument for the anti-moralist view. This is an argument that I refer to as an "argument from luck." This argument rests on the point that meaningfulness in life is vulnerable to luck, although morality is not.

In many places, Williams keeps claiming that the core driver of modern morality is an ideal that transcends luck: it is morality's ideal that moral value is not vulnerable to luck.²³ Indeed, moral evaluation seems to be luck-proof; whether one is moral is a matter of voluntary intention, not a contingent effect of one's actions. A man who tries to save a drowning child with good intentions is morally good whether he succeeds or fails. He might be unlucky if he fails to save the child, but he is still moral. As this case shows, whether one is moral is a matter of intention or goodwill, that is, a matter of voluntary control, and therefore not a matter of luck. Consequently, it seems morality is essentially immune to luck.

Meaning in life, however, seems to be largely vulnerable to luck, which is a deep problem for certain objectivists and moralists.²⁴ Let us consider again the

²³ Williams (1981), pp.20-1, Williams (1985), p.217.

²⁴ Brogaard and Smith (2005), pp.453-4.

man who tries to save a child but fails. Let us suppose that he feels that he is unjustified, and in his life after the incident, he keeps blaming himself. His guilt is so deep that he never enjoys the activities he used to enjoy, and he never talks to other people. He may think that his life is worthless and may even want to commit suicide. It seems clear that he is a deeply moral man; his intention and action were completely moral, and his sense of guilt is moral. The problem for moralists is that his life turns out to be *unluckily* meaningless after the tragic incident, although he remains moral. In the real world, one can witness many kinds of tragic cases in which a highly moral person's life is crushed by an unlucky incident or factors they cannot control. Susan Wolf suggests that a woman who "has dedicated her life to the care and comfort of a man whom she now finds has been using her" loses meaning in her life.²⁵ It is hard to deny that her life has been highly moral, as she genuinely cares about a person she has loved with good intentions. Yet, her life is *unluckily* meaningless regardless of how moral she is. Given the reflection on these cases, the argument can be formulated as follows:

Argument from luck

Meaning in life is vulnerable to luck in a way that morality is not. Therefore, one's life being meaningful can be isolated from one's life being moral because of luck.

It should be noted that the role of luck is so essential to meaning in life that luck is woven into not only unlucky tragic cases but almost all kinds of life. Consider the famous case of Gauguin proposed by Williams.²⁶ Gauguin, trying to cultivate his creativity, moves to Tahiti even though it involves abandoning his family. Williams's point is that whether his life is meaningful is crucially a matter of luck, in other words, not a matter of voluntary control. If he is unluckily untalented or if he unluckily fails to flourish his creativity because of an accident, his life will be meaningless. If, on the contrary, he luckily succeeds in becoming a great artist, his life will be meaningful. Here, while Gauguin's life is immoral either way, his life can be meaningful or meaningless depending on luck. Many human projects are vulnerable to luck in a similar way; one's life being successful cannot be free of luck. Generally, the success and failure of a project that is central to the

²⁵ Wolf (1997), p.305.

²⁶ Williams (1981), pp.22-4.

meaningfulness of one's life is largely a matter of luck, whereas the morality of one's project is not a matter of luck.

From this argument, it follows, first, that the S-moralist view is doubtful²⁷. A highly moral life can be meaningless because of bad luck. We have seen a morally strict man who leads a life of solitary guilt after a tragic incident. We can also conceive of a woman who is born in a very androcentric society and has been dedicated to its sexist morality and her sexist husband but later feels that her life is empty after reading a book on feminism. Alternatively, we can consider "a very unfortunate person who has all the right dispositions and makes all the right decisions, but whose plans are repeatedly thwarted by a series of equal and opposite unlucky accidents."²⁸ These cases all suggest that although one can voluntarily control having a moral life, one cannot control having a meaningful life.

It follows, second, that the N-moralist view is also arguable. Even if one's life is highly immoral, it can be meaningful because of good luck. Gauguin's life might be such a case but, as the meaningfulness of his life is controversial,²⁹ let us also consider another example partly inspired by the film *Taxi Driver*.³⁰ Travis is a depressed veteran. Suffering from a horrific war memory, he becomes mentally ill and decides to randomly kill people. He has killed four men in a gunfight, which renders him unconscious for a while. When he wakes up, he finds that the media is treating him as a hero because the dead men were evil gangsters from a teenage prostitution ring. Being treated as a hero cures his mental illness. He becomes very happy and energetic and dates his ex-girlfriend again. Thus, because of the murders, he passionately identifies with his life again. It seems that Travis's life is deeply immoral since he killed people with bad intentions, but, *luckily*, his life becomes meaningful. As this case shows, even a highly immoral life can be meaningful because of luck. Again, one can control having an *immoral* life, but one cannot control having a meaningful life.

²⁷ It seems this objection puts Thaddeus Metz's theory of meaning in life in jeopardy as Metz does not consider cases where one's life is unluckily meaningless even though one employs one's reason and rationality (Metz (2013), p.222). I owe this point to the reviewer's comment.

²⁸ Brogaard and Smith (2005), p.454.

²⁹ e.g., Wolf (1997), pp.306-7.

³⁰ The imaginary person I introduce is different from Travis in the original film in various ways. There is a sense in which the original Travis acts with good intention whereas my Travis does not.

Objections answered

The first possible objection from moralists is that the moral value of one's life is, in some cases, decisive of meaningfulness regardless of luck. They might argue that a Mother Theresa who is fully committed to and enjoys being moral has a meaningful life regardless of any bad luck that crushes her feelings. Her life is meaningful by virtue of being helpful to others even though she is *unluckily* in extreme grief. Indeed, it might be conceded to moralists that a moral life usually secures meaningfulness. Peter Singer has even claimed that a moral life "is the best way open to us of making our lives meaningful."³¹

Although morality is *empirically* a secure way to have a meaningful life, it is, however, not safe enough to *necessarily* confer meaning on moral saints or to *necessarily* deprive immoral devils of meaning. We can conceive of a very unlucky person who is, in terms of good intentions, as moral as Mother Theresa, but always fails to help people. We can also imagine an unfortunate billionaire whose huge donation is mistakenly transferred to a terrorist group's bank account due to a technical accident. Immoral variations of these cases are also easily conceivable. In short, it is always possible that, due to luck, moral saints lose meaning and immoral devils acquire meaning.

Another possible objection from moralists is that the morality of one's life must consider the life's actual effect. According to this objection, in deciding the morality of one's life, we should take seriously not only one's intention but its actual effect. Thus, a man who is depressed due to guilt is not that moral, and Travis is not that immoral. This objection is based on a kind of consequentialism according to which moral evaluation should be based on the actual consequences of actions. This objection, however, will make the moralist views too narrow. According to this model, one's life is not substantially moral if it does not actually produce a substantial amount of goods. Let us suppose a woman who has been deeply committed to helping neighbors and developing the community's economy. However, she does not know that by developing the community, she indirectly allows the people in underdeveloped countries to suffer from famine.³² It is very arguable that she is not moral enough. At the least, this model will unfairly exclude

³¹ Singer (1997), p.259.

³² I think, in capitalism, the status of moral people in advanced countries is somewhat like this. Even if they live substantially moral lives, their moral life is often based on the suffering of others because of a system they cannot control.

many innocent people who are fully committed to morality from substantially moral lives.³³

Moralists might continue to argue that this model is only applicable to the N-moralist view: a highly immoral life is a life in which one acts with bad intentions and causes bad consequences. In this view, while Hitler's life is highly immoral, Travis's life is not so immoral and, therefore, it can be luckily meaningful. Again, it seems to me that this makes immorality too narrow. Let us suppose an evil cult leader filled with horrible hate who shoots random people but miraculously kills ten terrorists who would otherwise take 10,000 lives. I think that this person is highly immoral. In general, lucky immoralists are as much *immoral* as unlucky immoralists.

Given that the reasons to take the anti-moralist view of meaning have been confirmed, I have a final remark on the topic. Central to these reasons is an idea that there is no general and infallible answer to the question of what a meaningful life is, as Wolf rightly stressed.³⁴ Even though morality is, generally, a good answer to this question, it is always possible to ask "why should I be moral?" Moreover, it is always possible for luck to crush a moral life. This idea, in turn, encourages another idea—that it is not true that we ought to follow someone's meaningful life. Even if Travis's lucky immoral life may be meaningful, it is not true that we should be like him. First, his life is not *mine*; it does not follow that his reason to live constitutes my reason to live. Second, luck is everywhere; my life cannot be exactly like his.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I attempted to support the anti-moralist view of meaning by articulating and defending two types of arguments suggested by Bernard Williams. In the second section, I reviewed the literature on the relationship between meaning and morality and extracted three views on this relationship: the *anti-moralist* view that morality is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition for meaning, the *S-moralist* view that a highly moral life is sufficiently meaningful, and the *N-moralist* view that a highly immoral life cannot be meaningful. In the

³³ A further comment on this objection is that, as the consequence of one's life can change as time goes by, we cannot be completely sure how much good is achieved by one's life. The life of an ancient-Greek moral citizen might look immoral to modern people as it is based on slavery.

³⁴ Wolf (1997), p.312.

third section, I proposed an argument from the perspective of categorical desires. According to this argument, given that meaning in life is necessarily connected to categorical desires, that is, one's reason to stay alive, I develop two thoughts against the *S-moralist* view. The first is that impartial morality does not necessarily provide such a reason as that provided by the idea that morality is at best *general*. The second is that one's reason to stay alive can be exhausted in depression or boredom while one's life remains moral. In the fourth section, I proposed an argument from the perspective of luck: the meaningfulness of life can change depending on luck while the morality of one's life is unchanged. Both the *S-moralists* and the *N-moralists* are in trouble with this argument: a highly moral life can lose meaning, and a highly immoral life can obtain meaning. Later in the section, I addressed two possible objections to the argument from the perspective of luck.

As noted at the end of the second section, I tackled the issue of meaning and morality by emphasizing the contrast between them; *impartial* morality against *personal* categorical desires and *luck-immune* morality against *luck-vulnerable* meaningfulness. Whether my argument that rests on the Williams's analysis of morality has been successful or not, I firmly believe that more critical analyses of the concept of morality are needed for fruitful philosophizing on the meaningfulness of morality.

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