

Reading Questions for October 4

These questions cover excerpts from two different sources. The first is by Lois Hope Walker and is called “Religion Gives Meaning to Life.” The second is a lecture by Jean-Paul Sartre called “Existentialism is a Humanism.” The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

This week, we’re going to look at 4 different views regarding the meaning of life. Today we’ll start by looking at an article in which Lois Hope Walker defends the idea that religious views of meaning and purpose are compatible with autonomy and freedom. Next, we’ll look at a lecture by Jean-Paul Sartre, in which he offers a defense of a view called existentialism. In the course of doing so, he offers some statements about the purpose of life.

*Questions:*

1. On pages 552 Walker introduces two theses. Then on pages 552-3 she criticizes the first thesis. How does she do so? What do you think; who is right and why?
2. On pages 553-4 Walker criticizes the second thesis. How does she do so? What do you think; who is right and why?
3. On pages 2-3, Sartre explains what he means by “existentialism” in general and “atheistic existentialism” in particular. What does he mean by these expressions? Then, starting on the bottom of page 3, with “If, however, it is true” and continuing on to “... in fashioning myself I fashion man” Sartre makes a point about responsibility. What is his point? What do you think about Sartre’s views?
4. On pages 5-7, starting with “As an example by which ...” Sartre tells a story. What is the story and what is the point he is making with it? What do you think about what he says?