

Fall 2011

Meaning in the Modern World

Second paper

1. Explain in detail Susan Wolf's conception of what makes a life meaningful. How does she think her view is an improvement on what she calls the "fulfillment view"? Does she succeed in justifying the claim that her view is superior?
2. Susan Wolf says: "Our interest in living a meaningful life is not an interest in a life *feeling* a certain way, but rather an interest that it *be* a certain way." (*Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*, p. 32) Is she right about this? If so, what underlies this interest in something other than the way we subjectively experience things?
3. Jonathan Haidt claims that Susan Wolf's notion of objective value is problematic and that his account of "vital engagement" and "hive psychology" are better able to solve the problem of determining the objective worth of our activities. Explain Haidt's arguments and Wolf's responses. Who, in the end, do you think has the stronger position?
4. Does Susan Wolf's conception of what makes a life meaningful provide any sort of answer to the problem of nihilism that Kelly and Dreyfus see as characteristic of modernity?

Length: approx 2000 words

Due: Nov. 15th