

K — A (fictive) Dialogue About the Meaning of Life

Abstract

K has a prepaid appointment with J. She wants to talk about philosophy even though the appointment is for psychotherapy. It seems she really just wants to leave and eventually she does. When she returns the subject is the meaning of life in a world without a God. Together they manage to sort some things out.

Session 1

K. I don't want this. ... I don't want this.

J. So. You don't want this. Why are you here then?

K. You ... you I don't know.

J. Maybe it's because you want something?

K. Yes. I want confirmation. But not of you.

J. Yes. So why are you here then?

K. I don't know. I want to get out.

J. The door is open. Just go?

K. I hate you. I don't know why I said that. Can I go? Can I leave? Now?

J. Please. Shall I open the door for you?

K. No. I can do it myself. See you later, then. No. I mean goodbye.

J. Goodbye.

K. This really feels good. To walk out of here.

J. So. We have finished here. Goodbye.

K. Can I stay just for a while? There is something lingering.

J. Lingering?

K. I can go right away if you want me to.

J. Please. You decide. It is your time. We have plenty of time left.

K. Okay. Bye then. I'll just pick up my things.

J. ...

K. Can I just ask you something?

J. By all means.

K. Are you really a psychologist?

J. Do you really want to talk about that?

K. Why do you ask?

J. Where are we?

K. Now you are making me scared. We are here?

J. Yes. Of course. I felt a bit wobbly.

K. Yes. We are here. Perhaps you aren't a psychologist? That would explain that you felt wobbly.

J. But why are you here? I simply don't understand it.

K. You're right. Where are we?

J. ...

K. I mean. What is this?

J. Okay. Let's figure this out. We're talking. That's something. We're wondering. That's also something?

K. I don't trust you. It's simply a fact. Can I go now?

J. I'll call you a cab.

K. *Endlich.*

J.
It's here in five.

K. That's so fine. Why cannot you answer my question? Are you a psychologist?

J. Shall I cancel it?

K. Okay. I'll go then. Bye.

J. ...

K. You are disgusting.

J. ...

K. Why don't you say anything?

J. ...

K. Can I use your bathroom? I need to throw up.

J. ...

K. I won't give you the satisfaction. I won't throw up here. I'll use your bathroom.

J. ...

K. What do you want?

J. ...

K. So. You are ghosting me?

J. ...

K. You are. *Verdammt!*

J. I'll call off the cab.

K. What do I have to do to get out of here?

J. We still have some time left. How do you want to use it?

K. What if you just go? So I have the space to leave this place.

J. This is my practice. I'm afraid we'll have to do it the other way around.

K. How much do I owe you?

J. You paid in advance via the app. You don't owe me anything.

K. What a relief. Is this the way you work.

J. ...

K. It's like air. You live on thin air. On nothing. You do nothing to earn your living.

J. ...

K. Aren't you ashamed? I would be.

J. Can I ask you? Have you been in therapy before?

K. No. I don't believe in it.

J. Yes. So why are you here then?

K. I'll be gone. Soon enough. Don't you think I know I can leave when I want to?

J. So. What do you want to do with the rest of the time we have left? It's about thirty minutes.

K. Something substantial. Talk about important stuff.

J. Yes. Like what?

K. What do you think is important? To talk about?

J. How are you?

K. That is beside the point.

J. How do you figure?

K. We are here to talk about philosophy.

J. How do you figure?

K. Important stuff is philosophical stuff.

J. Okay. You mentioned earlier that you wanted to leave. You are still here. Is that philosophical?

K. You mean free will? Is that a philosophical question?

J. No. I mean. Why don't you just go. You can. And you want to.

K. I have paid for my time.

J. You have. There are some minutes left. What do you want to do with that time?

K. I think I'll just leave.

J. In that case you know what to do. You go out the first door and close it behind you. Then you go out the second door and close it behind you.

K. Can we talk about it? I really would need some more time.

J. No. The next patient is here and you need to leave now.

K. Okay. Thanks for nothing then. Is this malpractice?

J. You have to leave now.

K. Or?

J. Do I know you? You seem familiar.

K. See you then! Nice working with you. Bye. [Leaving as instructed.]

Session 2

[K has prepaid for another session.]

K. I guess you wonder why I'm back.

J. Perhaps to consult me regarding philosophical matters?

K. Yes. That's why I'm here. Is there order in your philosophical "cosmos"?

J. What do you want to consult me about?

K. Didn't you hear me?

J. I did. What do you want to consult me about?

K. Are you a psychologist now or a philosopher?

J. What do you want to consult me about?

K. I don't remember right now. Give me a minute. I've read all your stuff that is out there. What's your point?

J. What do you want to consult me about?

K. I want to know what your point is.

J. What do you want to consult me about?

K. Do you think I'm wrong?

J. What do you want to consult me about?

K. This isn't "mirroring". What are you doing?

J. I'm asking you to tell me what you want to consult me about.

K. This isn't anything like my last therapy.

J. This isn't therapy. It's you consulting me regarding a philosophical matter. Could you let me in on it?

K. Why are we here?

J. You and me here and now or humans in the universe?

K. What are we doing in the universe? Is there a purpose?

J. You don't mean religiously?

K. No. I'm an atheist. I don't believe in God.

J. So who can tell us about the purpose of our lives?

K. Yes. That's philosophy.

J. So. Again. What you want to consult me about?

K. ...

J. Okay. I'll help you. What philosophical issue(s) are you struggling with that you think I can help you with?

K. "None", is what pops up first. But why would I be here then? I actually have some philosophical issues that troubles me. Perhaps I could start there?

J. Yes. Tell me about a philosophical issue that troubles you.

K. It feels so personal. But why shouldn't it? ...

It's an old one. What about the meaning of life if there is no God? I would like to believe but I don't. What do you think?

J. Yes. That's an old question. If there is only matter, why are we here? As an opinion, since the question is personal for me too, I think it's a difference between being a lump of matter with consciousness and a lump of matter without consciousness. What do you think?

K. It's so obvious. Is it even a philosophical opinion?

J. Yes. It's a bit primitive. I haven't done it but I think it is possible to extract important philosophical lessons from it.

K. Do you? So what's the meaning of life then?

J. Based on the difference between two lumps?

K. Yes.

J. Am I getting this right? You want some external source for the meaning of your life?

K. I didn't say that.

J. Do you or not?

K. Are you trying to trick me? If it's external it's not about me. If it's internal I could figure it out for myself.

J. But can you?

K. So. If it's external I can ask anyone with that kind of knowledge. If it's internal and I cannot reach it, I could ask for help from a consultant.

J. I thought that was why you were here.

K. Can you help me?

J. I did.

K.

J.

K. How?

J. Do you think the meaning of life has to do with the difference I mentioned?

K. There is no meaning of life without God.

J. Is there anything without God?

K. We are here so God exists?

J. I think so, yes.

K. What's the meaning, then? To just exist?

J. It's not that easy.

K. But if God exists, doesn't God have a purpose for us?

J. God may have a purpose for us but now we are back to an external source of your meaning with your life. If one lump of matter doesn't have consciousness and another lump of matter — you — do have consciousness, could you not build upon that?

K. I'd love to. But how?

J. No matter how you became conscious, you did. Doesn't that matter — enough. It's like the difference between life and death, it means everything.

K. Have you read Hegel? I just came to think of him.

J. Not really. Why?

K. Perhaps my meaning neither comes from the outside, nor from the inside. Perhaps it is both? You like that, don't you? That's all you're writing about.

J. Yes. It is. I think I have an idea of what you are getting at.

K. Yes. If God is part of our self consciousness, there are two sides of that coin. As you have suggested, on the one side, God then would know what we know about ourselves. On the other side, what if the accumulation of self aware creatures' self conscious contents somehow would build up a "super subject", a subject consisting of "the sum" of a set of the set of all dead, living and yet to be born subjects? According to that account the meaning of my life could be external to me, although I would be a part of it, to make it short.

J. Exactly! Then God would *become* conscious via the self conscious creatures God has enabled as the first cause.

K. I have read that and the conclusion *ist jenseits dieser Welt*. Have you seen anything like it?

J. Doesn't it resemble the atman-Brahman pair in Hinduism?

K. I don't believe in God but now this? *Wir sind klein und unwissend. Wir brauchen Wissen, das von außen kommt. Wie finde ich nun den Weg zurück?*

J. We have done a good job. I'm a strong believer in non subjective knowledge. Perhaps you have seen my attempt to use the hypothetical-deductive method? It's neither empirical, nor intuitive. It's really trial and error. It's a long time since the axioms had to be "self evident". As long as you "believe" in Karl Popper.

K. I don't care about such matters. I prefer to keep the boundaries between separate disciplines. I'm a scientist. End of story. [Leaves.]