WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 168
Our Soul and How it Operates
by Ernest O'Neill

We are talking on this program about our personalities and how they are really meant to operate and we are discussing the various levels at which we human beings exist. We have come to this through our discussion of the general topic that we've been discussing over the past eight or nine months: "What is the meaning of life? What's the point of it? Why are you here? What's the purpose in your being here? Where is it all going to lead to?"

We've come through long discussions, as you can guess, with all kinds of intellectual undergirding that we've undertaken. We've come to the point where we are now discussing the personality itself and how it is meant to fulfill the plan that was created by the Maker of the world for you and for me. You remember we've said that He is an intelligent, personal Being who wants other people to be His family, to love Him and to be His friends. That's why we are created. That's why you are created. That's why you exist.

He wants you personally to be related to Him in love. He wants you to love Him. To that end, He has made us with the same capacities as He Himself possesses. Obviously in a finite way, but still with those capacities. He has given us the ability to have a body that can be perceived, a physical body, just as He is able to create material things. He has given us a soul, which is the psychological part of us, just as He has one and He has given us a spirit that is able to relate to Him.

We've been discussing what the spirit does, how it really is the part of us, the very essence of ourselves that enables us to

communicate with the Creator of the universe. It has that ability of communion. It has also the ability to know what we ought to do through intuition. It has also the ability through conscience to judge us and constrain us to live up to the best that we have perceived.

What we are talking about now is the psychological part of us or the soul part of us. We get this from the Greek word "psuche", which becomes in our English, "psyche" and psychological and psychiatric and all those other compounds. The soul is the part of us that makes us particularly human. We've been discussing how the soul has the ability to judge and evaluate things through the mind or the intellect.

It is the part of us that enables us to perceive relations and correlates, similarities between things and differences between things. It enables us to reason about things and to argue about things. Many of us think the mind is the part of us that can discover truth, absolute truth. Actually, it can only examine what truth is presented to it, or what facts are presented to it. So, if certain truths aren't presented to it, it can't examine them.

The mind is limited by its own finite ability to know all truth. Therefore, it's invalid to expect the mind to lead us to truth. The mind actually supports what you want it to support. That's why barristers are able to defend people whom they don't really think are innocent. They can direct their minds to filter out and select the evidence that will prove the person innocent, or select the evidence that will prove them guilty. So, the mind can evaluate and select and isn't itself an absolutely reliable means of discovering truth. Nor are the emotions.

We've started to talk about another function of the soul which is the emotions. That is mentioned often in that old book called the

Bible, and wherever you find the word "soul", you can find that at times it means the mind, at times it means emotions.

Here's a piece in the book called Samuel. I don't know if you've ever heard of it, but I Samuel 18:1 runs like this, "When he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Obviously, the whole ability to have affection is found in the soul. The soul has, through emotions, the ability to feel affection for other people. So, the emotion of affection and of love is experienced in the soul.

So, also, is the emotion of feeling; that is where you feel certain things within yourself. I don't know if you've read much of the Psalms. It was the old hymn book of the Jewish church in the Old Testament times. In Psalm 42:5, it runs like this, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God." Psalm 42:5, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?"

Well, in the soul, you have the ability to feel feelings, to feel anxiety like this or depression, to feel anger, to feel elation or happiness. It's through your emotions you feel those feelings. It's through your emotions you can have strong desire for either things or for people or for situations. You can have strong feelings of desire. Now, many of us, of course, have found the emotional life so strong within us that we tend to think that's where all truth is found.

What we shared yesterday and the day before was that the emotions are tied very closely to the body. When you blush, your emotions send signals to your blood vessels and they release more blood into your cheeks. When you're nervous, your emotions of anxiety, worry and nervousness send signals to the

glands that secret fluids in your mouth and it dries up. So, just as your emotions affect your body very directly, so your body has a very direct relationship to your emotions.

That's why people try to find happiness and elation through influencing the body, either in the orgasm of sexual intercourse, or through pumping the old cocaine in, or sniffing the drugs, or pumping the old heroin in. Wherever you can influence your body, you are able to influence your emotions. Many people think absolute truth and happiness and satisfaction can be found in the emotions through our simply pumping stuff into our bodies.

Of course, that's the utter invalidity and foolishness of the whole drug scene, because it isn't finding truth at all. We come into great moments where we seem to fly above the earth and above all its troubles and worries either through alcohol or through drugs and we think, "Ah! This is wonderful!" Well, it's just a chemical fantasy that bears no relationship to either present or future reality.

It is just an absolute game we are playing with our bodies and in fact, we are actually messing up our emotions because we are making them more and more dependent on the body and less and less dependent on the part that they need to be dependent on, the part of us alone which can find truth, which is, our spirits. The emotions are part of our souls.

Then, another vital part of our souls is the will. It is in the soul that we exercise our wills. The will has the power to choose. It is the instrument for our decisions. It is the part of us that can decide what we are going to do and can make our mind, our body, and actually, our emotions do it. So, the will, in a sense, is the kingpin of our souls. Of course, we don't treat it as such at all. Most of us have wills that are nonexistent, except those of us who are very strong willed and even we are strong willed

because our wills are enslaved by another part of us. We are about the weakest willed creatures that probably ever walked the earth, the present generation.

Most of us are just like jellyfish who wander and bounce this way and that according to the pressure of the circumstance or the influence of the person we are talking to, or the example of the TV program we are watching. The will is virtually non-existent in most human beings today. Instead of being the king of the soul and directing the mind and directing the emotions, and therefore the body, what to do, often the will is totally and utterly enslaved by these other things.

So, those are parts of our body and parts of our personality: the spirit with its ability to commune with God and to know what He wants us to do through intuition and to have that judged through our conscience; and the soul which has the ability to feel emotions, to think thoughts through our mind and to exercise decisions and choice through our wills. Let's talk a little more about how they operate together tomorrow.