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The Meaning of Life

By S. L. Frank



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The Meaning of Life By S. L. Frank

The Meaning of Life (published in Russian in 1925) is a distillation of S. L. Frank's bitter experience of the years of Revolution and post-Revolution exile. It is, quite simply, a book about the search for meaning in suffering. Translator Boris Jakim calls it "the closest thing we have in the twenty-first century to the book of Job."

Frank begins with the understanding that, if we do not possess the meaning of life, we are like drowning men who have no way to get to shore. Only by understanding that meaning can we save ourselves and get to solid ground. But what is the meaning of life? How does one define it and how does one find it? Frank here considers the question both socio-politically and metaphysically. He immerses himself deeper and deeper into spiritual being before finally finding the answer: it is the place where man's soul touches Divinity, and it is Divinity that illuminates life with meaning. For Frank, the meaning of life is the indissoluble unity of perfect fulfillment and perfect clarity, the unity of light and Truth.

This book displays an extraordinary spiritual profundity rooted in personal experience and suffering. Boris Jakim's masterful translation into English brings Frank's remarkably powerful thought to a world still ? and always ? searching for meaning.



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Editorial Review

Review

“Boris Jakim has done us a great service in making available one of Semyon Frank’s most accessible writings. One of Russia’s greatest philosophers, Frank wrote *The Meaning of Life* shortly after his exile from Russia in 1922, when Lenin forced many of Russia’s leading thinkers to leave the country. An appealing mix of reflection and argument, a meditation on the deepest questions of life.”

? Philip Boobyer

“This soulful essay is the perfect introduction to the philosophical and religious thought of S. L. Frank. . . . Here Frank calls us to a sense of the whole of things, an intuition of Eternal Being, to what Vladimir Solovyov called ‘a wholly joyous secret ? God is with us.’ ”

? Paul Valliere

“S. L. Frank is the most important Russian philosopher of the twentieth century, a pure and penetrating thinker, and a limpid prose stylist. Despite his passionate involvement in the debates of his time, his thought is not period-bound; it speaks to us now as urgently as ever.”

? Richard Pevear

“Reminiscent of the Confession of Leo Tolstoy, Frank’s bold essay *The Meaning of Life* is an indispensable contribution to the Russian tradition of confronting the big, accursed questions. Frank’s treatise is expertly translated and annotated by Boris Jakim, who continues his heroic labor of making available for English-language readers the most important works of Russian philosophy.”

? Robert Bird

About the Author

S. L. Frank (1877–1950) was one of the most outstanding Russian philosophers of the modern era. An early theoretical opponent of Marxism and Soviet communism, he was a leading figure of the Russian religious renaissance in the early twentieth century.

Boris Jakim is the foremost translator of Russian religious thought into English. His published translations include works by S.L. Frank, Pavel Florensky, Vladimir Solovyov, and Sergius Bulgakov.

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