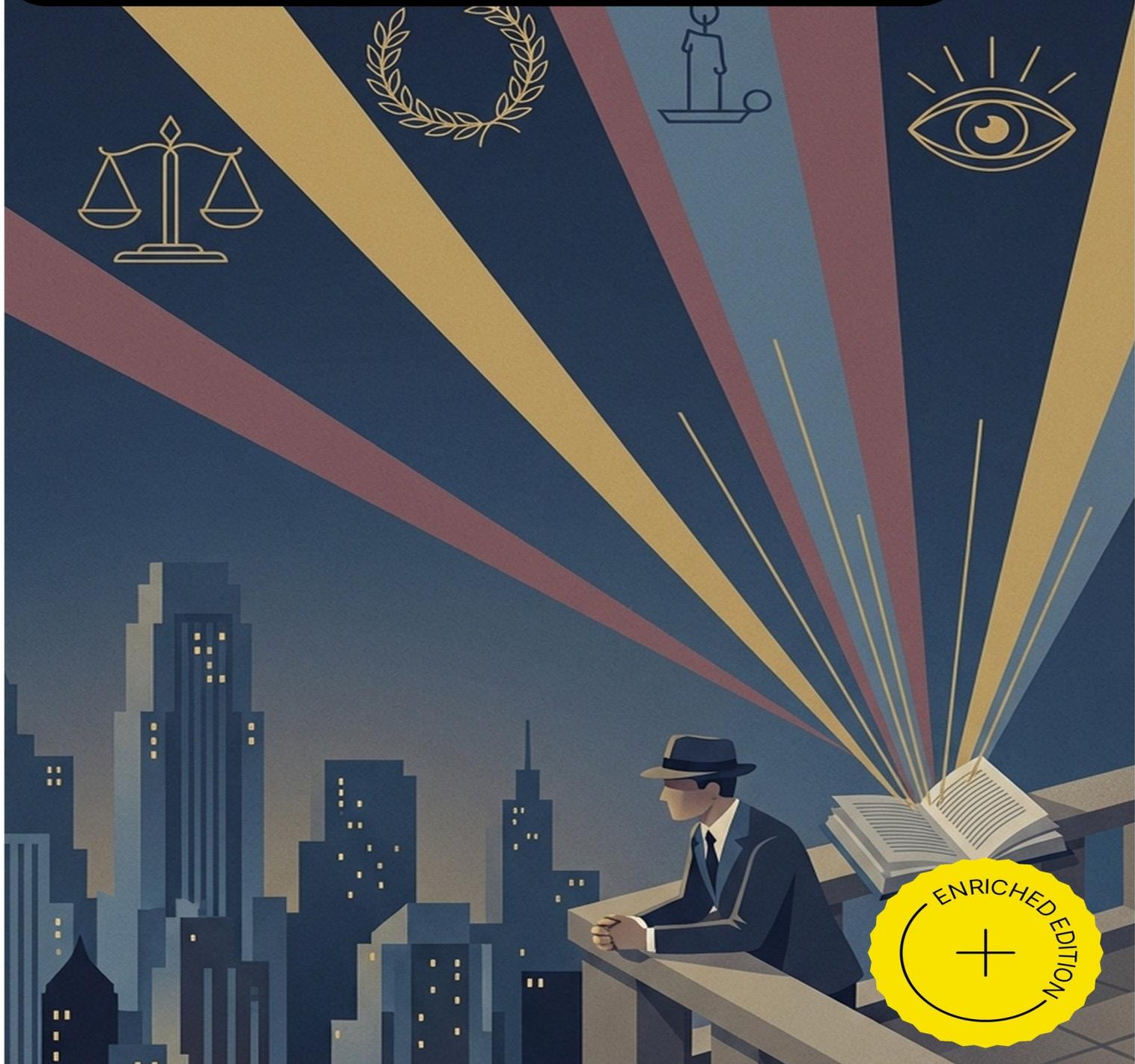


**M. M. MANGASARIAN**



***IS LIFE WORTH  
LIVING WITHOUT  
IMMORTALITY?***

**M. M. Mangasarian**

# **Is Life Worth Living Without Immortality?**

**Enriched edition. A Lecture Delivered Before the Independent Religious Society, Chicago**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Adrian Foxley*

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# Introduction

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Framed by the unsettling possibility that death is final, *Is Life Worth Living Without Immortality?* poses the stark question of whether meaning, morality, and hope can be sustained without the promise of an afterlife, pressing readers to weigh the consolations of faith against the liberating rigor of reason, to examine whether love, duty, and joy depend on eternity or can thrive within human finitude, and to consider how the acceptance of limits might deepen rather than diminish the seriousness of life, turning mortality from a threat into a lens that concentrates purpose, responsibility, and tenderness.

As a work of secular philosophy and freethought, Mangasarian's essay belongs to the early twentieth century, when debates about religion, science, and ethics were increasingly conducted in public forums and accessible print. Dispensing with fictional settings, it unfolds in the arena of ideas, addressing a general audience rather than a specialist circle. The piece emerged in an era marked by confident rational inquiry and lively challenges to inherited doctrine, and it reflects that climate in its clarity, brevity, and argumentative poise. Readers encounter a concise tract that stands at the crossroads of moral reflection and social discourse, inviting civic as well as personal reconsideration.

The premise is disarmingly direct: does human life require belief in immortality to be meaningful and good. Mangasarian approaches the question as a dialectician and

a popular educator, advancing claims, anticipating objections, and returning to everyday experience as a test of plausibility. The voice is lucid, confident, and courteous, with a plain style sharpened by pointed analogies and a willingness to follow an argument to its implications. The tone is earnest rather than theatrical, more invitational than coercive, and the pacing is brisk. Without revealing the trajectory of his conclusions, the essay leads readers through a sequence of focused reflections that steadily widen perspective.

Across its pages, the essay treats mortality not as a negation but as a horizon that can concentrate value. It asks whether duties to others lose force without eternity, and whether hope must be anchored in survival to be genuine. It considers the dignity of finite projects, the independence of ethical obligation from reward and punishment beyond the grave, and the possibility that gratitude, love, and courage draw strength from limits. The underlying theme is a humanism rooted in accountability and compassion, proposing that a life is measured by depth of engagement rather than duration, and that meaning may arise from responsibility assumed here and now.

Methodologically, Mangasarian proceeds by clarifying terms, disentangling sentiment from argument, and asking what follows if common assumptions are granted or denied. He treats religious claims with respect while testing their logical force, and he addresses the fear that without immortality life collapses into nihilism. The essay neither caricatures belief nor romanticizes unbelief; it examines how motives operate in actual conduct and how communities

sustain moral norms. He also notes the psychological attractiveness of consolations and the ethical risks of deferring meaning to a remote future. Throughout, the emphasis falls on intellectual honesty joined to practical sympathy, a combination that keeps the discourse grounded.

For contemporary readers, the book matters because the question it raises persists wherever traditional certainties wane and plural worldviews share the same civic space. It speaks to students encountering secular ethics, to people navigating grief without theological assurances, and to communities seeking common moral ground across deep differences. In an age of scientific medicine, demographic change, and public conversation about longevity, the essay's exploration of meaning without metaphysical guarantees remains strikingly pertinent. Its disciplined reasoning models how to deliberate across disagreement without contempt, and its humane aims encourage readers to cultivate sources of purpose that can withstand change, doubt, and loss.

Approached as a conversation rather than a verdict, *Is Life Worth Living Without Immortality?* offers an intellectual exercise and a moral invitation: to think carefully, feel honestly, and act responsibly under the sign of finitude. The prose is accessible enough for general readers and precise enough to reward repeated study, making it suitable for classrooms, reading groups, and solitary reflection. Without disclosing the argumentative destination, this introduction prepares you to engage a compact classic of freethought that challenges complacency on all sides. The reward is not