

## **Existentialist Philosophy Explores the Mutual Influence and Dialogue Between Eastern and Western Literature**

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**Abstract:** Constant pressure on managers, their efficiency and the need to find new solutions to problems can lead to psychological conditions. In an effort to understand the main barriers to work and effective management of work-related processes, and in the need to achieve personal development, new approaches based on existential philosophies emerge. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the ways in which existential approaches have been used or discussed in management and to show that existential themes and their application to management can also be found in the Eastern intellectual tradition. This article presents six case illustrations of management practice that use Western and Eastern existential insights and offers recommendations for managers' self-development. This paper concludes that although it is difficult or impossible to create a unified framework of the existential philosophy of management due to the diversity of existential approaches and due to the problematic nature of comparing Eastern and Western philosophies, it is possible to work towards gathering practical insights and values.

**Keywords:** Eastern philosophy, Existential Management, Existential Philosophy, Management, Self-Improvement

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Existential thoughts are inspiring even beyond the realm of philosophy. The existential themes discussed in this article are not only related to a philosophical movement that we can call existentialism but more generally to a variety of existential approaches. There are several reasons for this. First, existential themes appear in various Western philosophies, from motivations in Søren Kierkegaard's works, through phenomenology, to various philosophies of existence. In addition, the origin of existentialist ideas can be traced back to the very beginning of philosophy. Second, the term existentialism has become too broad and problematic, so we prefer to talk about different types of existentialism. For this reason, some writers do not want to be associated with existentialism at all. The term became more popular during the 20th century and has since lost its more precise meaning. Thirdly, in Eastern philosophies that relate to different cultural and historical contexts, we talk more about thematic similarities and

fundamental problems related to people and their existence. In this article, we use two terms for the practical implications of these existential themes and motivations that are reflected in the management literature. In the framework of self-development, we can talk about values or insights that affect managerial self-development and, as a result, managerial performance. It should be noted that these values and insights are related. In common usage in existentially oriented texts, words such as authenticity, consciousness, or freedom are labeled as values. It is easier to imagine the practical implications of these values without deep reflection. The term existential insights, which we use throughout this article, applies to situations and topics that require additional insights to predict their application. This can either lead to the creation of specific values or actions. We define existential insights in this paper as contributions from various approaches to existential philosophy that may be applied to management and business. These existential insights are based on themes that are common to different existential approaches and thus represent a link between these movements. The relationships between these existential insights and values can be illustrated in the following example. Some managers can be authentic. It can be said that it is an existential value. These managers are aware of the important context of their work, can reflect on important facts, and do not live in a mechanical state that prevents any innovative vision or problem-solving. Other managers, as well as those who live authentically, may fall into an inauthentic, mechanistic way of acting (see Heidegger's approach to management). But when faced with various experiences such as uncertainty or anxiety, they get out of this state.

Here we come to the knowledge that certain experiences and motivations affect us, and during our reflection (or in dialogic learning, see the existential hermeneutic phenomenology section in management) this can serve as an existential insight for self-construction. Self-management development can be defined as “the process of developing self-directed and self-directed skills and knowledge to enhance managerial performance” which can be divided into two stages – self-understanding and self-change. While the first phase is related to understanding the performance gap, the second phase is related to the ability to create self-directed change. Furthermore, It is pointed out that there are three skills associated with the managerial self-development process – self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-regulation. As this article will discuss, development in all of these skills can be enhanced through the use of existential insight.

In addition to linking existential approaches with self-development and practical concepts for management, this article aims to examine how existential issues emerge in Western and Eastern management approaches and show similarities in these two sets of approaches. Unlike research that looks for differences in cultures, this article focuses on similarities. Speaking of existential issues - and the question of what it means to be a manager and to become a manager - we come to the basic features of human life.

Discovering similarities between Western and Eastern approaches, which enables a better understanding of both perspectives, is an opportunity to apply existential insights and values internationally. Within the organization, as well as in teamwork, a common mindset is essential to ensure a common direction toward achieving business goals. Linking Eastern and Western concepts in existential management is also important when developing this approach as a management philosophy, as both cultural perspectives can provide mutual enrichment. In a globalized world, it is especially important to point out that, despite the differences and uniqueness of individual nations, ethnicities, and cultures, there are certain values related to common humanity that should be further developed in international dialogue. It should be an existential management ambition that represents a promising platform to face the challenges of the 21st century. This article provides an initial opening for this dialogue and fills the gap in the missing link between Eastern and Western existential management philosophies. This first step is related to the fact that existential issues are not merely a purely Western concept developed within the framework of Western continental philosophy. The comparison of Western and Eastern philosophies, as well as the comparison of different existential philosophies, includes many problems that have been discussed in the first part of the article.

The following two sections will outline the existential insights and values that appear in Western and Eastern management. This overview provides a basis for the further development of existential management as a perspective on the management philosophy that provides a future framework for practical and theoretical research. Existential management is currently a relatively fragmented field that is developing in several streams related to the works of different scientists. In the last part of the article, six case illustrations of management practice are presented that use Western and Eastern existential insights and offer recommendations for managers' self-development.

## 2. EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY OF MANAGEMENT

Existential management can be described as an approach that emphasizes the value of the individual, which provides a framework for examining organizational behavior and ethical issues, as well as helping to understand the meaning of work (MacMillan et al., 2012). It is also closely related to how we perceive the value of interpersonal relationships and the fact that other people are important in our structure (Müller, 2020). MacMillan et al. (MacMillan et al., 2012) showed in their study how existentialism relates to management but did not provide an overview of the application of these ideas. The authors conclude their paper by stating that "it is still early days and our understanding of existentialism in a work and management context is like that of all philosophies: it raises more questions than answers, which should continue to be explored". This article builds on these efforts and addresses the question of how existential ideas have been applied to management and the benefits they have for managers' self-development. This section deals with two basic issues. The first concerns the development of an integrated framework of existential management philosophy. As suggested in the introduction, it will be shown that the diversity of existential approaches does not allow the development of a single philosophy, however, it will be argued that this is not an obstacle to the application of existential ideas. Furthermore, within existential self-construction, a critical inquiry approach is important, which should always leave room for questioning previous assumptions and concepts. The next part of this section examines the problems involved in comparing Western and Eastern intellectual traditions.

## 3. THE PROBLEM OF SYNTHESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE MANAGEMENT UNIT

It seems that the combination of various existential approaches and their application in management is not in the sense of creating a single model or framework but in the sense of bringing together a set of existential approaches, tools, and applications in practice. As is clear from the dynamics of the existential approach, which always affects lived action, the goal is not to create a new unambiguous rule of games. As Jankelson (Jankelson, 1968) show, the philosophical approach—and the existential approach in particular—is an activity in which we question the rules of the

game and arrive at a question of them that relates not only to principles but also to the foundations of our own identity and how we ascribe meaning to our world. Different writers who can be classified as thinkers of existential approaches reach different concepts and even if they use similar concepts, their perceptions are different. It is worth noting that even individual existential insights and values can be understood by different authors. The variety of approaches of existentialist writers can be well illustrated by one of the key ideas of existentialism that are often considered defining. As MacMillan et al. (MacMillan et al., 2012) point out, "Existentialism is based on the premise that 'existence precedes essence'—that people are thrown into the world and simply exist, and that their essence is created through the lives they choose to live. However, this idea of Sartre's (Sartre, 1948) rejection of human nature altogether may not be consistent with the concepts of other authors for example (Camus, 2012), the concept of human nature plays a central role in his political philosophy (Müller, 2021). Although we see that there is an absolute disagreement between Sartre and Camus about the nature of man, it will be seen in the following sections that existential ideas are used in management without the need to fully combine all approaches. In examining the process of becoming a manager, it is possible to consider both the assumption that the manager is formed through the necessary experience of practice and the natural characteristics and determinants related to humanity. Differences in understanding between existential approaches also apply to individual concepts. An example is the concept of authenticity. In his analysis of authenticity in existential writers, (Golomb, 2012) shows that while earlier thinkers, such as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, reveal authenticity in the spirit of pathos, other thinkers, such as Heidegger or Sartre, approach authenticity through a systematic ontological concept. Writers like Camus have returned to an earlier and more intuitive approach. All approaches, though different, have something in common. They touch on the human condition, and the way humans exist in the world, and point to the fact that in the management function, our real being is somehow reduced and diminished. Then it depends on the specific situation and the person in question, which existential approach best defines his existential situation and can be a basis for self-reflection and subsequent self-improvement. In the case studies, we will see that while Paul (CS2, CS3) reaches authentic experience through the individual experience of anxiety, finitude, and guilt, which is consistent with Heidegger's existential rhetoric, Kim (CS6) seeks to return to authentic work. is through going out. Anonymity by joining a community comes with political participation.

Kim's case is more in line with Patuchka's approach, who, like Heidegger, sees awareness of one's finitude as the only way to be truly authentic, but unlike Heidegger, Patuchka does not reserve this authenticity for an isolated existence. Entering the Polis While for Heidegger the multitude of unknown people are "being with" and are a necessary and constant part of our existence, other people do not determine our nature, they do not determine whether we are authentic or not (Jedličková, 2020). These examples show that although there are many varieties of existentialism and the views of the authors often differ, we can find specific areas of management practice where a variety of ideas can be applied. In the context of comparing Western and Eastern philosophy, many issues related to the comparability of these intellectual traditions are discussed in the literature, especially methodological, metaphysical, epistemological, and moral issues. Among the researchers who are interested in comparing Eastern and Western approaches, we find both proponents of radical comparability or incomparability and authors who are in favor of a cautious position that seeks compromise by pointing to similarities while acknowledging the many problems and challenges of comparison. We find many differences between the two intellectual traditions (Moore, 1951). For example, there are often contrasts such as intuition vs. rationality, practical vs. theoretical, etc. However, for example (Das, 1952), argues that pointing out these differences is often due to Western writers' lack of knowledge of Eastern philosophy and that we can find different concepts in the two traditions. Das concludes that traditions cannot be compared as a whole, but individual movements can be compared. A synthesis is not necessary, and even if achieved, it would be an entirely new philosophy (Das, 1952). Similarly, Wong (Wong, 2001) notes the existence of more nuanced views on the possibility of comparability. Another argument for incommensurability is based on emphasizing the frequent presence of key terms in one philosophical tradition for which there are no suitable equivalent terms in another tradition. However, as (Wong, 2001) points out, a more plausible strategy than general acceptance of this argument is to examine incomparability on a case-by-case basis. Other arguments for comparability are based on the idea that the people whose concepts we want to interpret live in the same world as ours. Again, however, caution is needed, as similar values may be emphasized as intellectual traditions, and Western readings of Eastern traditions are often—if not always—an Orientalist reading. Furthermore, (Wong, 2001) points out that, especially when a writer disagrees with his intellectual tradition, he may be led to find an approach in another tradition that, from his perspective and style of

argument, "makes it right." In our comparison, we acknowledge all these problems. Our goal is to open up the possibility of exploring existential ideas to Eastern writers and thus expand the research agenda of the existential philosophy of management with new perspectives. It will be very beneficial for future research if managers and management theorists influenced by the Eastern thought tradition discuss the existential philosophy of management. However, as complex as the comparison is, we agree with Fleming's observations (Fleming, 2003). Fleming points out that this comparison of differences and similarities between the two traditions helps us identify what assumptions we use in our thinking without being aware of them (Fleming, 2003). Therefore, it is a kind of metaphilosophy that helps us to critically reflect on our assumptions and understandings of philosophy in general. Examining the presuppositions of thought is what many existential approaches in management, especially existential hermeneutic phenomenology, pay attention to. Even in the field of management, we find several studies that point to differences in intellectual traditions. In addition to the differences between eastern and Western management and leadership that are often described and analyzed in management and cross-cultural studies, we can talk about the compatibility of certain concepts or at least basic ideas (Lui, 1996) and we can witness attempts to link these traditions to develop new directions for management education (Li-Hua & Lu, 2014). Both similarities and differences can provide a basis for the mutual enrichment of both traditions. Western management is currently looking for new approaches that are useful for managers in the context of the many challenges of the 21st century. It is this philosophy that inspires critical debate with traditional approaches that are wholly inadequate to meet modern challenges. As comparative studies have shown, it is possible to recognize common signs in the thinking of writers of Eastern philosophies and Western existentialist approaches. Scholars discuss the main links between these traditions, point out differences, and try to bridge the gap between these philosophies to find ways of mutual enrichment. For example, we can relate the analysis of similarities and differences between Buddhism and Zen Buddhism with the works of Kierkegaard (Jacobson, 1952), Heidegger. Ponty, Camus, as well as, for example, the relationship between Eastern approaches and existential psychology (Martz, 2002). Also discussed is the context of Buddhism and phenomenology (Lau, 2016), which is important for recording lived experiences. These trends have also influenced new disciplines in the field of first-person neuroscience, such as neurophenomenology (Varela, 1996).

## 4. LOST ORIENTAL MOTIFS AND THE PROBLEM OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON

### 4.1 Western Existential Vision

In Western philosophy and intellectual circles of the West, a movement known as existentialism has been influential in the development of existentialist ideas. This direction was not a single philosophy, but rather, (Kaufmann, 2016) points out, more indicative of different levels of opposition to traditional philosophy. Influences from both the philosophy of existence and the terrible war experiences of the 20th century led to an emphasis on the subjective existence of man, and existentialist ideas became very popular. Despite the diversity of these approaches, various commonalities can be observed in themes (Giles, 2008), even in the works of writers who explicitly rejected their inclusion under existentialism, or who identified themselves as critics of the movement (Camus, 1979). Some of these common themes, which we call existential insights in this article, will be discussed in the context of management.

### 4.2 Existential Manager

Before analyzing the new approaches that seek to apply existential insight in managerial practice, respectively in the development of managers, it will be useful to mention the article of George O'Diorn which correctly describes the link between existential insight and management (Odiorne, 1966). As Müller shows, it is O'Diorn's paper that provides an important outline of the assumptions of existential approaches to management (Müller, 2021). This text, which can be understood in the context of a critical debate with logical positivism, its lack of understanding of managerial work and the manager's place in the world, is still relevant today because there is a growing interest in alternative approaches that can return to the individual who cannot be reduced to performance indicators. These approaches are then discussed. O'Diorn begins his thoughts by noting the disorganization of management theories and their multiplicity associated with unsuccessful attempts at synthesis (Odiorne, 1966). In his approach, he returns to the inevitable complexity of actions and choices associated with the manager's position. This is the situation of an existential manager not associated with a lack of empirical data – but rather a situation where there is a lot of data. This ontology, the science of being, is, according to O'Diorn, the best framework for organizing data about the status of an existential manager. Although this existential approach may not be



recognized in managerial practice—it is often unconscious—it represents the philosophy around which "the successful manager organizes his life and work" (Odiorne, 1966). A manager must exist, make decisions, and act when faced with the uncertainty of the world. Uncertainty is a key and necessary feature of the world when we talk about entrepreneurship, for example, Ludwig von Mises showed in his work (Mises, 1998). However, management theory is not suitable for dealing with uncertainty. In this regard, O'Diorn draws attention to some of the situational limitations of management theory. The importance of O'Diorn's idea, which is also reflected by Vandyshchev in describing existential problems related to management, is related to the fact that management theories are oriented towards the largest companies and the principles related to their success (Vandyshchev, 2015). Odiorne discusses the state of management in the 1960s, noting that no one considered smaller companies that were unstable and short-lived. The managers of these companies are far from these theories because the economic world itself is far from these theoretical approaches. This fact is relevant to the process of becoming a manager, which we discuss later. In this sense, Odiorne takes up Sartre's male or female condition, which becomes a key feature of his form of existentialism: "The manager first exists, then makes himself" or himself (Sartre, 1948). Moreover, not only the managers, but the whole organization is evolving and its existence leads to its purpose. As (Collins et al., 2005) point out, we can talk about corporate existentialism concerning the philosophical reasons for the existence of a company. Important in the context of our analysis of existential insights are O'Diorn's existential issues, what he sees as the situational constraints on management theory. These existential drives are related to situation, chance, struggle and conflict, inevitable sin, and death. The manager's situation refers to when a manager is caught in an endless cycle from which he cannot escape. According to Odiorne, the manager is always in a dynamic case study that requires a new solution in search of another solution (Odiorne, 1966). For a detailed analysis of this existential category in the context of similarity with Camus' metaphor of Sisyphus (Müller, 2020). Moreover, as Müller shows, the work of Albert Camus is one of the most inspiring sources of existential management, especially now in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in general in the context of analyzing the absurd nature of an organization and its consequences. The chance situation refers to the fact that the manager faces the threat that all plans can be thwarted by circumstances beyond his control. It is this situation that reminds us that the uncertainty we face in complex systems,

such as the global economy, is often artificially reduced by reformulating it as a measurable risk that we believe can be managed. The third situation is related to the struggle and conflict caused by the impossibility of complete consensus among people. Human behavior always involves trying to reach a compromise between competing parties. In this regard, Odiorn notes that one of the starting points for economic reasoning is the difference between unlimited demands and scarce resources (Odiorne, 1966). In more dramatic terms, "miracle is born of this opposition between human need and the irrational silence of the world" (Camus, 2012). This fact is related to another state of being, in which sin is inevitable. The manager wishes for success, but failure is part of his Sisyphean journey. This leads to the feeling that it is within the manager's power to do something different (Odiorne, 1966). A high level of responsibility is associated with these considerations. The last condition that is not captured in classical management is death. This period is not only a human life but also the life of a company (Odiorne, 1966).

#### 4.3 Existential-Systemic Approach to Management

Kelly propose an approach that reflects management needs in the context of dramatic changes and their human consequences (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). Their approach is based on a combination of scientific studies on organizational behavior related to systems, structures, and processes with existential and traditional values rooted in ethics and philosophy. It represents a useful set of beliefs in the organization's efforts to achieve the goal. In exploring existential insights, we will focus on those features of the approach that touch on existential motivations. Existential managers cannot begin life with an organization without accepting a complexity that cannot be understood by a simple plan. They face the constant need to fight the system and find themselves in a constant crisis (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). In addition, there are other crises. These crises are related to the final awareness that will come one day and point to our mortality. In addition, in the working life of managers, there are crises such as identity. Every career change is associated with a new beginning, but also with changes - disruptions - that can lead to self-doubt (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). The prerequisite for understanding organizational behavior is to focus on personality traits within the organization's people. Kelly suggest that combining systems theory and existentialism provides a very useful approach to personality theory (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). In describing existential personality, the authors rely on the findings of existential

psychologists Rogers and Maslow. According to these authors, the existential man or woman understands himself in the process of becoming a manager—his life is a process, not a desire to reach an end state. This existential manager strives for self-understanding because he is “searching for an image of [himself] that is accurate enough to be applicable and yet acceptable to him [or her], and to allow him to live his life with joy and enthusiasm (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). An important existential insight about personality can be recognized in the possibility of encouraging participants in communication processes to increase awareness and authenticity. This type of dialogue is about "the establishment of ideas that lead to a good society in which people can regain dignity" (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). Communication, communication, and relationships are very important for management performance. Management is also related to leadership issues. As López points out, "separating leadership and management makes the manager a mediocre bureaucrat and the leader an untouchable (Lopez, 2014)".

Even leadership can find inspiration in existential approaches. Knowledge related to leadership comes from both the experience of successful leaders and our own experience. Reflecting on our own experience is indeed an existential exercise. Kelly describe three principles of existential leadership (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). The first principle relates to the fact that existential leaders are seen as charismatic visionaries who see themselves as the embodiment of the institution of which they are a part. Existential leaders can respond to crises from their position and have a sense of their history and destiny within the organization. The second principle is that existential leadership does not work with the simplistic picture of reality that tends to be part of traditional management textbook designs. This approach is related to a certain lifestyle. We need to confront dilemmas such as “quality versus quantity, equality versus individuality, success versus human satisfaction, and ecology versus economics” (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). The ability to master a set of conflicting objectives requires a specific skill set. In the framework of this principle, it may be appropriate to mention Camus's way of thinking, which is in opposition to traditional existentialism (Sartre). Camus seeks a way to live in this conflict – in the absurd – without philosophical suicide, a situation in which we overcome the absurd with an idealistic structure. Simply put, we will not be tempted to see the world in black and white (Camus, 2012). The third principle mentioned by Kelly lies in the ability of executives to tolerate ambiguity (Kelly & Kelly, 1998). They also have to work with team members who

have different roles, which necessitates building different relationships.

#### 4.4 Heidegger's Approach to Management

Martin Heidegger, a follower of Edmund Husserl, did not consider himself an existentialist, but his philosophy became very influential and undoubtedly influenced later existentialist approaches. More importantly, his ideas address existential themes as a form of existential phenomenology. In his work, as well as in the approach that we will discuss in the next section, existential insight is mixed with phenomenology and hermeneutics. As is often the case with great thinkers, their work transcends the boundaries of philosophy and inspires many disciplines. Management is no exception to this rule. As Bull points out, management today has become the need to develop a vision of leadership that raises questions about sensemaking, sensemaking related to job satisfaction, and organizational mission. These tendencies lead to new demands from managers who must have important social skills. In the context of these new requirements, philosophy can be considered as a way of "self-management, or self-regulation, or self-control as well as self-insight", Martin Heidegger's philosophy can be important for training the personal qualities of managers (Heidegger, 2001). In his fundamental ontology, Heidegger distinguishes between the being of beings and the being itself. This ontological difference leads to the questioning of Being, which concerns questions in which Being takes precedence in this process of asking – in which the meaning of Being can be discerned. Our existence is the best for this search. In this context, Heidegger talks about Dasein - being there. We are the locus of being and the task of analyzing this Dasein – the states of being and the situations in which this being is manifested. We can approach the existence of Dasein through important states, and existential categories, such as anxiety or being toward death. These thoughts became a very inspiring part of Heidegger's work and have been influential for many disciplines. The most discussed area of Heidegger's work is project management. Van der Hoorn attempt to cite debate that "focuses on specific components of Heidegger's work (Van Der Hoorn & Whitty, 2015)" for a more comprehensive use of Heidegger's concepts. Therefore, they identify more insights that can be used in project management, especially in the analysis of a "lived experience". The main insights related to project management are based on the key themes of Heidegger's work, such as states of being, being-in-the-world, care and temporality, encounter, them and inauthenticity, authenticity, and fear

(Cicmil, 2006). Each of these categories provides a framework for analyzing a particular aspect of project work, and for analyzing what it means to be a project manager – the project manager's lived experience. The states of being related to the analysis of the project members about their attitudes, their care towards each other, and the equipment needed in the project. Being in the world is related to the fact that the manager is involved in project work and relationships with people and equipment. Knowing this fact and analyzing it helps to reveal the phenomena related to project management and the process of becoming a manager. Care and transience are related to the existence of Dasein - we have to care about our existence, we are not only found in time and space, but we have to care about something, plan and manage something. This is realized in time; in the, in anticipation of the future, and in the present. The concept of temporality is important for the awareness of the project in its temporal structure, which is defined by the beginning and end, which can affect the presence of the people involved in the project. Dealing is associated with visualizing the presence of project members in action and not recognition. This encounter through action reveals the meaning of the project and is important, especially because it goes beyond the set of rules, procedures, and definitions of the standard project framework. In addition, some standards and laws, although very important in certain situations, can be very restrictive and hinder innovation. According to Heidegger, it can be described as things that require limited adaptation. Falling into conformity and routine leads to inauthentic behavior. We solve situations and problems mechanically, without interest, we do not see new and original possibilities. In this sense, the experience of anxiety related to the possibility of non-existence or failure of the project is important to return to an authentic existence in the present (Van Der Hoorn & Whitty, 2015).

#### 4.5 Eastern Existential Insight

In our analysis of existential insight related to management, we will focus on Eastern philosophical approaches that seem to be closest to Western existential philosophies. These are mainly Zen Buddhism and important currents that influenced its formation, such as Taoism. According to Watts, when Buddhism came to China (Watts, 2000), it was within the framework of Taoist philosophy that the main issues were discussed, moreover, some authors point to significant similarities between Taoism and Zen (Grigg, 2012). This Zen approach, along with the Taoist sages Laozi and Zhuangzi, is analyzed in the context of existential psychology (Yang, 2017). We will focus on several existential motivations that are discussed in the field of

management for their practical application and show the existential connection with the approaches described in the previous section.

#### 4.6 Uncertainty, Anxiety and Change

Other existential drives we find in Eastern management are uncertainty, anxiety, and constant change. Although it is clear that these phenomena have negative consequences for managerial performance, we can point to their positive aspects. But it should be emphasized that this does not mean betting everything on uncertainty and abandoning management methods. Pascal, in an article based on an extensive comparison of American and Japanese companies, points out several important insights related to successful managers and places these insights within the framework of Zen philosophy (Pascalle, 1978). The situation in American and Japanese companies was similar, and Pascal listed only two major differences, but the important finding is that successful managers - regardless of nationality - have common characteristics related to communication processes, and it is the Zen approach that provides a suitable framework for expressing these characteristics. Here we will mention the existential dimensions of these Zen-friendly recommendations for managers. This existential characteristic of Eastern thoughts is usually not emphasized explicitly in Eastern philosophies. However, we will mention this relationship.

In general, the Buddhist approach to the world is associated with the idea that everything, whether physical or mental, tangible or intangible, cannot exist without change. The Zen approach to life is characterized by working with ambiguity and uncertainty as something that can have a positive character. In this context, the Japanese use the difficult-to-translate term *ma*- which refers to the unknown about themselves. In this context, Poropat, in their analysis of the similarities between TQM and Zen Buddhism (Poropat & Kellett, 2006), point out that although TQM speaks to the concept of diversity, for Zen Buddhism this is transitory. Purupat and Colt recall a quote from the Buddhist mystic Kenko, who said that "the most precious thing in life is its uncertainty" (Heine, 1991). Here we come into contact with the existential dimension of uncertainty. As concluded by Poropat and Kellettm, both diversity and transience represent important insights for managerial work – belief in the unpredictability of existence and respect for this fact (Poropat & Kellett, 2006). As Heine shows, when analyzing the rhetoric of uncertainty in Zen texts, uncertainty (Heine, 2018), in the context of trying to understand Zen texts about life's journey to self-realization, can be described on three levels. The first level is related to the negative aspects of uncertainty, which is related to the feeling of

uncertainty and disturbance associated with unchallenged assumptions. However, “the sense of instability and instability persists, but serves to point beyond ordinary barriers to the possibility of achieving transcendence” (Heine, 2018). The second level is based on positive aspects related to post-awakening experiences (satori) and is associated with uncertainty regarding training and leading a group of followers. The third level is related to hermeneutic reflection – it is our uncertainty that arises from the complexity of Zen texts (Heine, 2018). The Zen concept of uncertainty may be useful in managerial practice. Pascal points out that we can distinguish between situations where clarity and ambiguity are more appropriate frameworks for reasoning and decision-making. While the transparency framework refers to situations in which there are data to work with to simplify the decision problem, and thus the anxiety of uncertainty, the second framework relates to qualitatively different situations. These are complex tasks, such as merging parts, that evoke emotional reactions in everyone involved. Thus, the uncertainty framework may provide a “temporary stage of deciding how to proceed” rather than an initial decision (Pascale, 1978). Working with uncertainty is the art of how to move forward in complex situations without making a final decision, giving time to gather other important data and information necessary to successfully resolve the situation. As Pascal points out, this work on uncertainty also affects communication, especially change communication. In some situations, it is better to report a change only when it becomes a reality through successive changes that have occurred during the conscious treatment of uncertainty. This approach does not mean surrendering to management methods. However, even current research in cognitive science suggests that in uncertain environments, more information and computation are not always better, and a “less-can-be-more” approach may be more appropriate. Philosophical approaches can be considered “an exercise in gaining perspective in the face of existential change and uncertainty”. It is the recognition that these conditions, such as ambiguity, uncertainty, and imperfection—conditions that we might call “existential”, lead to conscious awareness of the real properties of the world—its constant variability. As Pascal points out, this approach teaches us to “accept the inevitability of obstacles” and “does not convey acceptance of fatalistic resignation, as Tao suggests” (Pascale, 1978). Conditions such as ambiguity, uncertainty, and imperfection are, in the Zen view, “the immutable foundations of life, what philosophers in the West call ‘existential data’”. As Dogen Zenji’s teachings suggest, we can say “yes” and “no” together and find a middle way, “there will always be reasons for

anxiety," and "it is important to proceed with a mind that neither understands nor rejects" (Roshi & Appels, 2014). Moreover, as the above-mentioned schematic division of uncertainty in the literary analysis of Zen texts shows, we can experience uncertainty expressed through Zen disease motives—which, according to Heine (Heine, 2018), "Comparable. to Kierkegaard's 'illness unto death' as a cause of anxiety and fear"—a disorder necessary to open up new possibilities. Lowe and Presser show that these Zen insights can be applied to management (Low & Purser, 2012), that “Zen koan practice can train managers to perceive dilemmas as creative and dialogic confrontations rather than provoking the tensions of zero-sum conflicts.” Furthermore, Zen practice offers a unique opportunity to train the mind to endure. It presents the ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions inherent in organizational dilemmas, especially in situations characterized by uncertainty and change. This understanding of Zen practice reminds us of the phenomenological approach of existential hermeneutics. Existential hermeneutic phenomenology—as a way of capturing lived experience and as a method of dialogic learning—meets Zen, which can be described as "a way of rediscovering the experience of being" (Watts, 2000). Zen leads to the experience of life through transformations of consciousness and awakening from the thoughts that affect us. Furthermore, Zen cannot be considered a classical teaching method. Zen wisdom is transmitted through contemplation and meditation, or the dialogical process of interaction between teacher and student (Watts, 2000).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article builds on previous theoretical efforts to depict the intersections between existentialist and management philosophies and presents approaches that use existential insights and values in management practice. In addition, this article proposes a supplement to the existential philosophy of management based on the Eastern perspective. Although previous studies have provided various comparisons of Eastern and Western approaches, a definition of common existential motivations and their application in management has not yet been provided. Existential management has so far been an exclusively Western discipline based on some representatives of continental philosophy. Despite the many problems of comparative philosophy that have been mentioned, an initial attempt has been made to develop the existential philosophy of



management as a cross-cultural research program. Focusing on these similarities enables the formation of a common existential mindset in international organizations and teams. Existential management can be understood as a shared platform for shaping dialogue for a shared existential humanity to develop management skills. In the introductory section, we mentioned three important skills for self-improvement – awareness, self-reflection, and self-regulation. We have shown in many places in this article that existential knowledge has a direct relationship with self-awareness. For example, the relationship of the authentic experience of presence is accompanied by a greater awareness of certain facts. From a management point of view, existential emphasis on communication and interpersonal relationships is very important. This self-awareness is also related to the concept of temporality. Time planning is very important for management and a proper definition of time structure is necessary because it affects the presence of people involved in the activities of an organization. Approaches inspired by existential motivations also emphasize awareness of real-world conditions that are associated with complexity, uncertainty, and dynamic change. Self-reflection is an important part of existentially inspired approaches as well as Eastern approaches where existential motivations are also visible. Managers think about the feedback provided by a complex world. These managers are constantly faced with new critical moments and reflect on their abilities to face them. Existential insight teaches that experiencing crisis, uncertainty, and anxiety does not mean an absolute failure in their skills. This self-awareness and identification of the performance gap—clearing up barriers to facing real-world conditions—strengthens managers and motivates them to think in new ways that are not constrained by any old thought patterns. This constant learning process leads to self-regulation – changing our ways of working to achieve organizational goals despite challenging circumstances. But it is important to mention that the application of the existential insights of Western and Eastern philosophy cannot be based solely on the study of these observations, which, moreover, are not easily recorded in management manuals, but require a long-term and systematic approach. -Development - Seeking access to the world and training the individual to face uncertainty, avoid extremes, manage tensions and stress, or develop wisdom through dialogue. Existentially specific lessons and opportunities for self-realization are presented in six case summaries that illustrate how key existential insights and values can be put into practice. We believe that these examples will inspire further development of the existential philosophy of management.

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