Meaning and Purpose in an Existentialist Philosophical Perspective: A Philosophical Search for the Formation of Life and Values

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Abstract: The processes of developing a sense of self and discovering purpose in life seem to be closely related at first glance. The philosophical investigation explores the complex relationship between character and the changing meanings of life. This research explores the complex nature of life by applying a range of philosophical stances to analyze how conceptions that define a person's identity and character change throughout time. To understand the parallel but distinct histories of identity and meaning, it's helpful to consider how each was introduced to the field as well as the philosophical tenets that differ between them in addition to examining their unique definitions. In my opinion, more successful coordination and integration can be accomplished by gaining a deeper comprehension of the characteristics and backgrounds of the two theories.

Keywords: Psychological Theory; Philosophical Underpinnings; Independent Histories

1. INTRODUCTION

Existentialism is a kind of philosophy in existence, while classical philosophy consisted primarily of a philosophy in things, a philosophy even man was viewed as something. Everything in existence is an object. Like empiricism and rationalism, the word existentialism has its roots in intellectual history (Torrès et al., 2022). The 18th and 19th centuries can be regarded as the beginning of the period in which the adoption of these philosophies, when philosophers began to pay attention to their concerns about humanity and tense situations and their ideals, such as experiencing discrimination, want for eternal life, optimism, devotion, affection gloom, the futility of humanity, independence, and other problems related to human being developed and they desired a type of proximity and link with their lives (Westin, 2020). Existentialism is not an established way of thinking, and it cannot be reduced to a collection of illogical assumptions. Existentialism emphasizes the uniqueness of the concrete individual living with all of his or her limitations, and to some degree, it matters because in Jaspers' words, man is everything. Although the existentialist philosopher precious stones opposes abstraction and ultimate notions and is opposed

to the abstracted soul, existentialism is a doctrine that places a strong emphasis on existence (Cooper, 2021). The psychological and existential well-being of an individual can be affected by the physical and social losses that accompany aging. Seniors should talk about issues related to their past, present, and future lives, as well as existential worries about mortality. Palliative home care patients hoped that their existential concerns would be addressed by medical professionals. They stated that patients' existential loneliness may worsen if medical professionals ignore their needs (Sundström et al., 2019). Existential therapy and Jungian analysis are extremely similar. The early Jung saw himself as a kind of phenomenologist, using an ambiguous philosophical approach in his self-described scientific investigations and empirical portrayal of the human mind grounded in factual observations (Diamond, 2021). The issue is dual in nature. One is whether there is any intrinsic value to sports. The other discusses how a fulfilling life can include sports. While the first issue will be addressed, the second will be the main topic of discussion. There hasn't been much written about sport and purpose or sport as a part of a meaningful existence from the perspective of sports philosophy (Breivik, 2022). Existentialism gives the individual and the existential self which is always developing in the workplace primacy. Existentialism provides for an in-depth investigation of ethics and decision-making at both the individual and organizational levels. Existentialism is fundamentally applicable and process-oriented since it enables comprehension of the significance of activity. The first death is crucial to understanding the purpose of life. Another is individuals are born into the world, as they exist before there is spirit, they are forced to create or manufacture spirit and meaning (Whitehead & Senecal, 2020). Living real lives in the monotony of daily life is one of the problems that people must overcome. In more exact terms, work is a place where decisions are made and carried out, where interactions with people are from the physical location of the workplace, and work is a part of daily life (d'Angelo et al., 2021). According to the philosophical principle of existence prior to basic terms, they are first and foremost active, aware individuals, regardless of any titles, duties, or prejudices that may be applied. According to atheistic interpretations such as Sartre's, one of the major tenets of existentialist philosophy is that we are cursed with limitless freedom and, thus, responsible for our actions. They behave badly if they fail to fulfill this obligation (Skjaerven et al., 2020). Being a scientist is a decision we make, and it comes with the sacrifice of certain freedoms. The philosophy of existence is viewed as one that sets legitimate standards by which people make decisions, which

mitigates the probability of mistakes and serves as standards and guidelines for behavior. In the majority of its articulations, existentialist philosophy does not avoid confrontational stance. Its attention has shifted to the dark side of human potential and characteristics (Webb & Rosenbaum, 2021). The study (Ahmadi et al., 2022) aimed to examine how existentialist philosophy gets used to explain the nature of entrepreneurial thought. This study has a qualitative angle. Careful observation thorough note-taking were used as information collection techniques, while reduction of data, visualization, and inference were used as analytical techniques. The findings demonstrated that existentialist approaches to entrepreneurship could significantly advance the philosophy and practice of sustainable and socially conscious companies. The study (Churchill & Fisher-Smith, 2021) explained a real-world application of philosophy in terms of the basis of reasoning, commercial judgments, and thinking existentialistically, a businessman takes risks in his business dealings. The study (Zen et al., 2023) examined the interaction between existentialist and phenomenology concepts among Marxist philosophers in the vicinity of the Yugoslavia philosophical magazine Praxis. The research provided the first substantial criticisms of existentialism in Yugoslavia and looked at how the Marxist philosophers of the nation understood and incorporated the categories employed by the movement's propagandists in the 1960s. The study (Ausat et al., 2023) examined the goal of education, evaluated the concept of self-reliance critically, examined the existentialists' axiological, philosophical, and spiritual ideas, and then incorporated the importance of existentialism into Kenyan education and self-reliance training. According to the report, the empowerment process involves both state and individual student growth. Individual growth has prioritized skill development above economic and ethical considerations. The study (Blagojević, 2023) reflected the conceptual effects of Jaspers' existentialist education and provided a fresh analytical perspective on the development of knowledge. It has particular relevance for contemporary higher education in terms of the spiritual formation of individuals and the creation of a feasible path for the full development of college students. The study (Simiyu & Werunga, 2021) aimed to define and elucidate the problem with freedom of speech as it is presented in the society of dead poets' film using existentialist theory as the theoretical foundation. The results of this study demonstrate that this film portrays freedom of speech that is inferred by the film's aspects. The study (Shuhan, 2022) identified five components of post-traumatic development as well as the interconnected traumatic episodes that lead to existential distress in tourists. Additionally, a theoretical framework that elaborates on

the effect route of important elements, including support from others, thinking, and ways to cope with post-traumatic development is offered. The research demonstrates a high correlation between post-traumatic development and transformational travel experiences. The study (Anam & Thoyibi, 2023) suggested that the idea of sincerity from existentialist philosophy might help scientists avoid problems with replication, manipulation of data, deception, and guidance. They point out several important limitations and demand regulations to stop them. The study (Liu et al., 2023) investigated how existentialism affects these core facets of human life. An analysis of Nietzsche's works, a well-known existentialist philosopher, was part of the study process. The results of this study show how existentialism emphasizes the subjective and individual experiences of people, challenging the conventional idea of objective reality and knowledge. The study (Tan & Lim, 2021) observed the philosophical ideas of unneeded delineated theist and nonbeliever existentialists' misunderstandings of the human being and then proposed, there is no practical difference between their viewpoints since the human being is designed to generate chances or possibilities. The pragmatic abilities of the human being as a proactive agent of growth are shown in this research using the phenomenological technique of analysis. The study (Sasan, 2023) examined that Wittgenstein and Jaspers' views on existentialist and phenomenological theories by Husserl interact. Husserl recognizes reality, uncertainty, and the distinctive features of individual fashion. The study (Isanbor, 2022) investigated and gave examples in which existential philosophy is able to assist people in a care setting to get a greater grasp of existential difficulties. Existential philosophy, which includes life world theory, is used in caring science research as a source of motivation for analysis and debates as well as an epistemology for the creation of research methodologies. The study (Moran, 2022) aimed at describing the psychological and existential circumstances that people face during a pandemic. With the use of a literature review and observational field research, this study used a qualitative philosophical methodology. The existential separation that developed a direct result of people's attempts to transcend via the development of altruistic ethics. The study (Palmér et al., 2022) described as a return to German philosopher Martin Heidegger's existential tradition, which examined the significance of work and employment as opposed to them being as distinct entities. The study (Gultom et al., 2022) established a novel connection that exists between the growth of social entrepreneurship and a profound philosophical understanding of human life. Beyond conventional leadership concepts,

the author's entrepreneurship as a strategy to solve the fundamental social and environmental problems that underlie inequality by demonstrating some existential beliefs and other philosophical precepts serve as effective guiding principles. The study (Larivière & Quintin, 2023) faced the difficult duty of revealing mankind as a sovereign ethical who bears several responsibilities, including commitment, responsibility, authenticity, anxiety, freedom, choice, and worth, as well as phenomenology and existential implications for the political climate in neighborhood. Given that freedom and escape are the ideas associated with the basis or distinguishing characteristic of existentialism, these freedoms are defined rather than in terms of rational behavior. The study (Müller et al., 2024) proposed a view of happiness in educational institutions that draws inspiration from existentialist thought, psychological theory, and significant ideas from Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. In higher education, students' self-discovery influences how they approach information and learning, how they acquire a sense of equity and respect for the rights of others in the context of education. The study (Chukwuokolo & Jeko, 2020) examinedthe emergence and evolution of the philosophical categories of purpose and life purpose at various phases of philosophical thought. The paper provides a comparative review of the methodologies and viewpoints of philosophers from different times on the natural world, framework, operation, and importance of life goals in human activity. The study (Sherman, 2024) evaluated the connections between existentialism and realism, two philosophical traditions, and education. Realists believe that things are apart from our brains and ideas. Realists accept things as they are and avoid interpreting the world around them in light of their own experiences (Poppelaars et al., 2020).

The rest of the paper is arranged as follows: In Part 2, the methods are described in further detail, and the conclusion is provided with future scope in Part 3.

2. MEANING AND PURPOSE IN AN EXISTENTIALIST PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

In philosophy, existentialism is currently very fashionable. It highlights the value of human life. By rejecting both overestimations and underestimations of personality, it seeks to create a conception of man. The central idea of existentialists is existence comes beforethe essence. It holds that the existence of people is the greatest truth. It holds that since

we cannot tell the difference between uniqueness and essence, existence is more important than essence. A particular guy who is morally upright but opposed to life shouldn't be the center of attention in one's life. According to Sartre,

"Man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and only afterward defines himself. Clarify it another way: man first exists, and only then does he look at, think about, and act as an individual in the world".

Sartre thinks that fate or accident brought forth human existence. Because his independence is the only thing that gives his life significance or meaning, they must rely on him. Table 1 depicts the difference between life skills and existential learning.

Table 1: Difference Between Life Skills and Existential Learning

Life Skills	Existential Learning
Competencies and Abilities	Existence in the Entire World
Positive People, Things, or Experience	A Combination of Positive as Well as Negative Occurrences
Occupational Skills	Recognizing and Sensitivity
Active Parameters	Active as Well as Passive Dimensions
Mostly Teaching	Primarily Captured
Continuous and Linear Processes	Processes that are Discontinuous and Nonlinear
Practice in the Strictest Sense	Practice with the Goal of Changing Oneself
Productivity and Employability	Authentic Life
Socialization to the Norms of Power	Critical Thinking
Adjustment	Accuracy

2.1 Philosophy as a Way of Life

Philosophy cannot be seen as a specialized field that only matters to a small number of people, nor as an attempt to understand and learn about oneself or the universe as a whole. One must consider philosophy to be fully integrated into daily life. Professional philosophers who develop intricate systems of theories and concepts may be necessary, but one can lead a philosophical life even without having a deep understanding of philosophy. Existentialist philosophers tended to link this idea to two historical precedents. The ancient Greeks come first, especially the character of Socrates, who along with the Stoics and Epicureans. Socrates remain unemployed; in addition to searching for a happy life, he also preferred to avoid creating a framework or philosophy, and often gave lectures in open areas. The existentialists were scarcely out of the ordinary in this.

2.2 Conceptual Interpretations of Meaning and Identity

2.2.1 Meaning

The definition of meaning has been given more elliptical definitions than identity. According to Frankl

"Man is oriented towards the outside world, and within it, he seeks out meanings to be fulfilled as well as other people. He is aware that he is actualizing himself to the extent that he forgets himself, whether by loving someone other than himself or by dedicating his life to a cause greater than himself due to what I would term the pre-reflective ontological self-understanding. It is true that the core of human existence is self-transcendence". (Coatsworth et al., 2013)

The following are the five most significant and timeless queries concerning the purpose of human existence: (i) who am I? (ii) What brings me here? (iii)Where am I heading? (iv) What do death and suffering signify? (v) How can I find meaning and happiness? Meaning has characterized the search for answers to those questions in a variety of ways, with a focus on issues such as ultimate concerns, perspectives on order and coherence in one's existence, significance or a higher calling, and purpose. According to Steger *(Frankl, 1985).*

"Meaning is the complex web of relationships, insights, and interpretations that enable us to make sense of our experiences and create strategies for focusing our efforts on achieving our goals for the future. They get a sense of purpose, meaning, and being more than the sum of our seconds, days, and years when we have meaning in our lives."

The questions, the mattering sense, the self-transcendence emphasis, and the meaning content all refer to a range of general, cross-domain philosophical problems. However, the answers to these questions might come from one or more of the areas that have been found to be important for the development of an identity, like "*living according to God's will*" or "*finding a way to make a difference in the lives of others.*"

2.2.2 Identity

"Identity is a person's definition of themselves in terms of the objectives, principles, and convictions that they have a firm commitment to, whether they are acquired through identifications, chosen, or assigned. This gives their life direction, meaning, and purpose".

There are three components to this definition. (i) The reference to "what," or the categories of content that comprise an individual's identity, is related to the objectives, values, and beliefs. These objectives, principles, and convictions are particular to a particular field, such as career decisions or viewpoints on religion, spirituality, or gender roles. (ii) The question of "how" an individual forms their identity, or, conversely, whether eschewing the identity-forming process has any bearing on whether these objectives,

principles, and convictions are selected, developed through identification, or assigned. iii) The discussion of the role identity plays in giving a person direction, meaning, and purpose in life revolves around the "why" identity contents are important to an individual or the purposes that identity fulfills. The fact that specific identity concern domains are always used to discuss an individual's identity content is noteworthy. Researchers have broadened the scope of domains considered relevant to identity formation in empirical research on identity formation (Steger et al., 2013).

Three were listed in the definition with regard to the purposes identity fulfills. Reviewing the works of identity theorists like Erikson, however, reveals a much wider range of functions, such as individual distinctiveness, interpersonal self-presentation, social comparisons, and coherence across domains, and subjective continuity over time.

2.3 Three Questions about Choosing Your Identity and Discovering Life's Purpose

While the majority of theoretical and empirical research has concentrated on the processes involved in identity formation, work has focused on the quality of decisions made about one's identity, independent of the process. Three inquiries need to be taken into consideration when discussing the calibre of identity decisions. To start, are there some identity selections that have "better" options than equally viable ones? They sincerely believe that the answer to that query is "yes."

The second query is: What criteria are applied to identify "better" choices, and how are they defined? The final question is: "How can someone who is trying to find their identity decide which of the possibilities that are accessible is best to choose?" Given the linkages between identity and meaning, the answers to these three questions also reinforce the notions of identity and significance in relation to discovering a purpose in life (Schippers & Ziegler, 2019).

2.4 Philosophical Views Underpinning Identity and Meaning Concepts

The preceding pair of inquiries pertains to the existence of "better" options for identity and meaning, as well as the standards for ascertaining what makes for a superior decision. Establishing identity and meaning are portrayed in these metaphors as either creative or exploratory acts. Making something that has never existed before is a part of the creation/construction process. It comprises making a choice among nearly infinite options and creating something that is judged to have value out of

the selected components. Artists, architects, and engineers are creators. An existential philosophical viewpoint is associated with this metaphor. When they describe something as a discovery, it indicates that they have learned something about the nature of the universe. It's acknowledged and understood. Making the unknown known is the process of discovery. The path of scientists and explorers is discovery. Essentialist philosophy is the source of this metaphor (Zwitter et al., 2020).

2.5 Meaning and Identity as Existential Ideas

Two quotations from Erich, from capture the creation metaphor and its existential foundations in the context of human identity and meaning. According to Fromm

"The only other animal whose very existence presents a challenge that it is impossible for it to overcome is man. Man will realize that the only purpose in life is the one he gives it by developing his abilities and leading a useful life if they confront the truth without fear."

The idea that each of us has the freedom to choose who we want to be and therefore, ultimately responsible for our decisions is a major theme in existentialist philosophy. Our destiny is not predetermined by anything inherent in our nature as humans. They shouldn't ask family members or other authority figures for advice on what to do. This is to become lost in they, to borrow another phrase from Sartre, or, to borrow a quote about authenticity from Heidegger, to live in bad faith; this concept is also fundamental to Fromm's theory of freedom escape. If this viewpoint is correct, then identity choices are ultimately subjective.

Existentialists believe that nothingness gives rise to being. It is our responsibility to make decisions about our beliefs, values, and aspirations. Our options are not limited. There are practically endless options available to us after that. Our decisions help to define who we are. There are better decisions to be made regarding identity and meaning, according to existential philosophy. The qualities of better decisions are determined by factors such as authenticity, accountability, and freedom. They make better decisions for themselves based on the person they aspire to be. The decisions that a sense of identity and personal significance serve are the better ones.

2.6 Meaning and Identity as Essentialist Ideas

The viewpoint of essentialism has been applied to the study of biology, psychology, and philosophy. According to essentialism, form, and

existence develop simultaneously and are necessary for existence to exist. For Aristotle,

"The majority, the vulgar, seem to view happiness and the good life as pleasure, which is why they also enjoy living a life of fulfillment. Given that they choose a lifestyle appropriate for grazing animals, they come across as utterly slavish in this instance."

Eudaimonia was regarded as the ideal state of being, a way of life, and the appropriate objective in life. According to Aristotle, it should represent an action that brings forth best qualities and expresses virtue or excellence. However, a cursory look up of the English word "eudaimonia's" etymology shows that it can be understood in an objective and subjective sense. There are three parts to the word:

(a) Eu: This in the case of an idealized society known as utopia, indicates what is good or desirable.

(b). ia: This syllable usually describes emotions, such as happiness (euphoria), sadness (melancholia), or incapacity to feel happy. It is implied here that experiences of the good, true self are linked to specific emotions.

(c) Daimon: This phrase originally referred to a tutelary god or guiding spirit that was bestowed upon a person at birth to help them find the right path. The concept of the daimon was internalized, as Heraclitus claimed, stating that "man's character is his daimon." The daimon might be thought of as a person's "true self," representing their greatest potential, untapped skills, core beliefs, and genuine lifestyles. The essentialist nature of eudaimonism stems from the notion of the daimon.

2.7 Identity and Significance: Combining Existential and Fundamental Philosophical Ideas

Considering the dialectical polar perspectives of essentialism and existentialism, creating an integrative synthesis while thinking about the tasks of meaning-making and identity formation seems like a difficult undertaking. According to Rollo May,

"Man's ability to create himself is what makes him unique. To address the additional question of how such a power could exist and how it should be organized, they would need a thoroughly developed essentialist doctrine; in other words, we would need to understand the subject's body and mind—that is, the subject that essentialists have debated for millennia."

Considering the religious nature of humanity, it felt that essentialism was necessary for existentialism to exist. These possibilities will always create a special pattern for this individual, even though they will be partially shared with other people. Generic human nature and individual human nature both restrict, but do not completely eradicate, our freedom of choice,

which is consistent with an existential viewpoint.

2.8 Studies on Identity and Meaning Interactions

A sizable body of research has shown an empirical relationship between indices of meaning in life and different identity functioning measures. High meaning and purpose in life scores are positively correlated with identity commitments, according to consistent findings in samples of college and high school students. Less is known about the correlation between identity variables and the pursuit of meaning. There is a strong correlation between the pursuit of meaning and identity exploration. Overall, the study's findings indicate that while the relationships between the identity and meaning in life constructs were mainly validated, the strength of these relationships suggests that the constructs being studied are actually separate from one another (Brown et al., 2019).

2.9 Eudaimonic Viewpoint on the Formation of Meaning and Identity

After outlining the eudaimonic perspective's desired outcome for identity and meaning, the next matter to take into consideration is how this outcome can be attained. "What is the methodology for forming an authentic and meaningful identity through the process of identity formation?" "How are they going to recognize and respond to our better choices?" I break down the procedure into four steps: The first step is to determine our potential and what we can accomplish in life that is superior to other equally viable options. What makes up our higher potentials is not something they know from birth. We need to unlock those potentials. Remember that when we act according to our potential or when we can express ourselves personally, we experience a unique subjective state. "Where has this been all my life?" is a common reaction when someone attempts something for the first time. Why hadn't I discovered this sooner? That's the type of thing that makes you say, "This is fun!"

The second phase is putting in a lot of effort and hard work to develop those skills. A large portion of that practice is not enjoyable in the traditional sense. Personal expressiveness feelings, which are far more nuanced than the initial responses discussed, support and maintain behavior during the inevitable pauses and even failures that occur during the talent development process.

The third step in the process is answering this question, which usually happens with skill development. A person is likely to resonate more with some goals and values than others from a eudaimonic perspective due to

temperamental and other important aspects of personality, they are likely to resonate more with certain activities due to their potential (Karagöz & Kama, 2023).

The process of discovering one's identity and purpose in life is not finished by deciding which goals in life to pursue. Finding opportunities to put one's identity choices into practice within one's social context is necessary. This is the fourth step in the process that I have outlined. Depending on the abilities being developed and the objectives selected, one's social circumstances offer numerous or few opportunities to follow through on the decisions made.

2.10 A Schedule for Upcoming Empirical Concurrent Studies on Meaning and Identity

Less thorough and inconsistent research has been done on the potential connection between identity exploration and the pursuit of meaning. One issue here is that many identity instruments differentiate between past and present search activities, but many existing instruments measure only ongoing or current searches. This makes it difficult to assess the search for meaning. Tools for evaluating three types of searches should be developed: (i) the one being conducted right now; (ii) prior searches that were abandoned when their significance was discovered; and (iii) prior searches that ended without a clear meaning established rather than being definitively resolved.

A large number of studies employing narrative and discursive methodologies interpret the data in terms of identity and meaning constructs, or both, without methodically taking into any potential distinctions between the two. It would be especially beneficial to concentrate on the differences in the methods by successfully established. Additionally, it would be beneficial to find out more about the identity and meaning formation strategies that are ineffective in this context.

2.11 Identity and Meaning: Commonalities and Disparities

Identity and meaning have different conceptual roots, but they are conceptually closely related. In addition to providing a sense of continuity between the past, present, and future, this also lays the foundation for coherence across personally significant domains of life and acts as a guide for decision-making regarding what to do and how to do it. These constructs serve a multitude of common purposes. The sense of direction that identity and meaning together provide is arguably the most significant of these because it enables one to look forward and know who they are and

who they want to become. There exist similarities between the constructs in regard to the methods through which identity and meaning are established. Personally significant commitments may be present for the two constructs, or they may not be. Additionally, it is possible to view the processes by which commitments are formed as parallel; that is commitments can emerge through active exploration and the search for answers, or they can arise through identification with parents or other authority figures in a person's life. The conceptualization level at which identity and meaning constructs function is one of their most significant distinctions. Making decisions about one's identity involves a certain amount of practical pragmatism (Belz, 2020).

3. CONCLUSION

Theoretical and empirical research on these ideas largely developed independently. However, it is debatable whether concepts are inherently a theoretic, and this is particularly true of operational definitions of concepts. Though conceptual definitions of identity and meaning seem to overlap, few studies empirically investigate the connections between the two. The majority of these studies have been published in the last five years. These concepts appear to be a part of a common nomological web about the nature of well-being based on the findings of those studies. Because the philosophical underpinnings of the original theories of many philosophers differ, theoretical comprehension of the relationships between them has not kept up with the advancements in empirical investigation.

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