



**THE CONCEPT OF THE MEANING OF LIFE AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY
IN EXISTENTIALIST PHILOSOPHY**

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Abstract: The question of the meaning of life occupies a central place in existentialist philosophy, which emerged as a response to the crises of modernity, alienation, and loss of traditional values. Existentialist thinkers argue that life has no predetermined meaning and that individuals are responsible for creating meaning through their choices and actions. This article analyzes the existentialist understanding of the meaning of life and explores the concept of human responsibility as a fundamental ethical principle. By examining the ideas of key existentialist philosophers, the study highlights the significance of freedom, choice, and responsibility in shaping human existence.

Keywords: Existentialism, meaning of life, human responsibility, freedom, choice, authenticity

Introduction

The search for the meaning of life has been one of the most enduring questions in philosophy. Traditional philosophical and religious systems often viewed life's meaning as predetermined by divine will, natural order, or universal moral laws. In contrast, existentialist philosophy challenges these assumptions by emphasizing the absence of inherent meaning and the individual's role in creating purpose.

Existentialism developed primarily in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reflecting the social, political, and cultural crises of the modern world. Wars, technological change, and the decline of traditional belief systems contributed to a sense of uncertainty and alienation. Existentialist philosophers responded to this condition by focusing on human freedom, individuality, and responsibility.

The aim of this article is to analyze how existentialist philosophy interprets the meaning of life and to examine the role of human responsibility in the process of meaning-making.

Existentialist Understanding of the Meaning of Life

According to existentialist philosophy, life does not possess an inherent or universal meaning. Thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre famously asserted that "existence precedes essence," meaning that human beings exist first and define themselves through their actions. From this perspective, meaning is not discovered but created.

Albert Camus approached the question of meaning through the concept of the absurd, describing the conflict between the human desire for meaning and the indifferent nature of the universe. Although life may appear meaningless, Camus argued that individuals must confront this condition honestly and continue to live authentically without resorting to false consolation.



Existentialist philosophy thus views the search for meaning as an ongoing and personal process. Meaning arises from commitment, creativity, relationships, and engagement with the world, rather than from external authorities or predetermined values.

Freedom and Choice as the Basis of Responsibility

Freedom is a central concept in existentialist thought. Existentialist philosophers argue that human beings are fundamentally free and therefore responsible for their choices. Sartre emphasized that individuals cannot escape responsibility by blaming circumstances, social norms, or external forces.

This radical freedom entails profound responsibility. Every choice contributes to the formation of one's identity and reflects a personal vision of values. Responsibility, in this sense, is not limited to individual consequences but extends to humanity as a whole, since personal choices implicitly affirm certain values as desirable.

Existentialist responsibility is closely linked to authenticity. To live authentically means to acknowledge one's freedom and take responsibility for one's actions, rather than conforming blindly to social expectations or denying one's agency.

Ethical Implications of Existentialist Responsibility

Existentialist philosophy presents a unique ethical perspective grounded in personal responsibility rather than universal moral rules. Moral values are not imposed externally but emerge from individual commitment and conscious choice. This approach emphasizes sincerity, honesty, and accountability.

However, critics argue that existentialism risks moral relativism by rejecting universal ethical standards. Existentialist thinkers respond by emphasizing that responsibility requires consideration of others and awareness of the broader consequences of one's actions. Authentic choice involves respect for human freedom and dignity.

In this sense, existentialist ethics promotes a deeply personal yet socially aware understanding of moral responsibility.

Contemporary Relevance of Existentialist Thought

The existentialist emphasis on meaning and responsibility remains highly relevant in contemporary society. In an era characterized by uncertainty, technological change, and cultural pluralism, individuals often face questions about identity, purpose, and moral direction.

Existentialist philosophy offers a framework for navigating these challenges by encouraging self-reflection, active engagement, and ethical responsibility. It reminds individuals that meaning is not passively received but actively constructed through lived experience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, existentialist philosophy provides a powerful interpretation of the meaning of life centered on human freedom and responsibility. By rejecting predetermined meanings, existentialism places the responsibility for creating purpose squarely on the individual.



The concept of responsibility is inseparable from freedom and choice, forming the ethical core of existentialist thought. Through authentic engagement with life and conscious decision-making, individuals can create meaningful existence even in the absence of absolute certainty. Existentialist philosophy thus continues to offer valuable insights into the human condition and the enduring quest for meaning.

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