

DOI 10.26886/2414-634X.4(40)2020.5

UDC 141.319.8+101.1:316"312"

**THE MEANING OF LIFE AS A PHILOSOPHICAL AND
ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF AXIOLOGICAL
EXPLICATION**

Igor Sukhina, PhD, Associate Professor

e-mail: suhina_igor@mail.ru

Mikhael Tugan-Baranovsky National University Economics and Trade,
Ukraine, Kramatorsk

A conceptualized axiological expression of the meaning of life as an essential characteristic of human being is presented. Accordingly, the actual value and content of the matter is emphasized. The primacy of the problem of understood self-determination for human existence is shown. Classification of basic meaning values is considered, and their axiological analysis is carried out. The idea of a well-understood determination of human existence in its personified certainty, viability and performance, which is up-to-date by the highest values, is carried out.

Keywords: Person, Personality, Human Being, Value, Sense, Meaning, Importance, Meaning of Life, Values of Meaning of Life.

The problem of lifelong certainty and self-determination is of paramount importance for human existence, and can be considered constituting its foundation and beginning. By virtue of this a philosophical comprehension of the essence and specificity of man and his being cannot do without a proper understanding of the meaning of life issues which in turn brings to the subject of values that certify the semantic determinations of human existence, actualize, integrate and sublimate their meanings. As such, values are the semantic constants of a truly human being realized in all the

diversity of its subjective world relation. The values that form the content of the meaning of life-long self-determination of a person which are its meaning-meaningful landmarks reveal and certify the humanistic nature in a human being. Everything that is connected with human existence is directly related to the values indicated by them. And therefore, the study of the value-rich content of the meaning of life issues of human existence will not lose its relevance.

The purpose of the article is the conceptual and axiological analysis and explication of the value content of the meaning of life's self-determination of a person.

Views and ideas about values in accordance with the definition of the meaning of human life as well as the principles and priorities of human activity and world relations in general in philosophy have always been present. They received their conceptual design in connection with the formation and development in the 20th century of axiology as a philosophical theory of values. At the same time the unconditional meaning-life significance of values is emphasized in the works of representatives of the so-called objectivist approach to values, treating them as ontologically objective meanings with imperative significance: H. Rickert, V. Windelband, M. Scheler, N. Hartmann, F.-I. von Rintelen, G. Munsterberg and others.

The objective life-meaning significance of values is usually emphasized in the works of religiously oriented philosophers of an axiological stream, for example: J. Mariten, L. de Reimeker, E. Gilsson (neotomism), G. Marcel, C. Jaspers (religious existentialism), V. Soloviyov and other representatives of Russian religious metaphysics, etc. On the whole, the axiological theme of values is especially close to the tradition of Ukrainian philosophical thought the worldview specificity of which is largely determined by the moral and ethical dominant, dating back to the archetypes of Christian spirituality.

“We can never stop asking about the ‘meaning’ of our life, but this meaning can be revealed only on the basis of values that have significance” (Heinrich Rickert [3, p. 324]).

It is on the basis of values that a person acquires and realizes the meaning of his life as the main factor in his own, consistent with the meaning, existence self-determination. According to the Austrian psychologist and philosopher V. Frankl, “a person as such seeks to find meaning in his life and realize it” [10, p. 27]. We can say that the problem of acquiring and realizing the meaning of life especially in its axiological authenticity (from Greek “*axia*” – value) is connected with the “Kantian” question: “What is a man?” In anthropological terms the meaning of life can be represented as “... the main meta-need of man distinguishing his being from the instinctive-naturalistic animal existence ...” [5, p. 91]. V. Frankl qualified this need as a “search for meaning” [10].

A human unlike an animal is not born with a ready-made hereditary program of behavior. A man himself chooses behaviors in each situation chooses why and how to act and, finally, seeks the meaning of his life. In a general definition “the meaning of life is a person’s comprehension of his existential destiny, his place and role in the world, his attitude to him, and in extreme terms is a person’s self-justification of his being in the world” [4, p. 85]. This is the main value and worldview of a person, integrating his being in its significance, and determining its attitude to the world / reality.

Russian philosopher Ye. Trubetskoy emphasized the axiological nature of the meaning of life. According to his statement “the word ‘sense’ has a specific meaning of positive and universally significant value, and it is in this meaning that it is understood when the question of the sense (meaning) of life is posed” [6, p. 16]. Moreover the relevance of the crucial issue for human life about the meaning of life in its ultimate – final expression in his words, is “... is it worth living at all” [8, p. 16]; which implies the presence of

positive value in life (“over-thinking” it), moreover, “... the value of universal and unconditional, binding on everyone” [8, p. 16].

In general the whole history of the formation and development of the species Homo sapiens can be represented by the history of the search and acquiring the meaning of life. The Russian philosopher S. Frank believed that “the only human thing is that in order to search for and find the meaning of life outside of any private affairs” [9, p. 44].

The acquisition of the meaning of life in each specific situation does not limit, but on the contrary expands the space of the meaning-of-life search, transferring this search to the future, to other life situations, creating new opportunities for acquiring the meaning of life, i.e. a person enriched with new opportunities to search for and gain the meaning of life” [4, p. 111]. We can say that “... there are basically no meaningless situations in life, although there may be situations of the not yet acquired meaning of life” [6, p. 86]. A person (as far as he is a person, or rather a personality) seeks the meaning of life, realizing that it has its own mission, and that not a single drama in its life is absurd, but has a super sense, and its being in the world has some purpose. The search for the meaning of life and carried out on the basis of values, their actualization, meaning-life choice should be considered genuine – a spiritual-existential self-manifestation of human freedom, integrating human being. As the Ukrainian philosopher V. Tabachkovsky has noted, “the meaning-life choice is made both at the macro level of human being and at its micro level... and it always gains personal significance... The meaning-life choice is always purely personal – and at the same time universally significant. Perhaps this is the key to saving mankind in the face of those prospects that ‘gap’ in front of it today” [7, p. 6].

The meaning of life is an actual expression for a man of the unconditional significance of himself, his activity and his being in general,

manifested in the motives, goals, situations, conditions and results of his behavior and activity. It focuses on the activation and implementation of the maximum of its potential capabilities. The meaning of life is based on extremely relevant values. Without realizing the value of his being without penetrating, without feeling and experiencing it with his whole being, a man has practically no sense of life. So, according to G. Rickert, “only values give meaning to life and philosophy which seeks to give an outlook on life, therefore, should be a theory of value” [3, p. 260].

The meaning of life is the main stimulus of human activity. A man who knows why he lives is purposeful, active and able to withstand many trials, because the meaning of life is a way and level of development of specific life situations, a way of personal development of his life. Russian anthropologists V.D. Stolyarenko and L.D. Stolyarenko noted that “the very nature of man, having awarded him with unlimited plasticity and compensatory possibilities, extraordinarily strengthened by culture, allows him to make sense in almost any life situation. The search for the meaning of life should not stop even if under certain conditions and circumstances it was not possible to find it in this case. There will be other conditions and circumstances in life, other possibilities for acquiring the meaning of life” [4, p. 123]. Aware of the finiteness, ‘temporality’ (M. Heidegger) of his earthly existence, a person should not miss a single chance through his own fault to fill with meaning those life situations from the sequence, the sequence of which is his life path, his being in the world. Human being from the point of view of the meaning of life should be evaluated not just by its duration, but by its meaningful meaningfulness.

With all that every man can and must find for himself the meaning of his life. Many people who are in similar situations of life have a certain common thing – the universalized content of the meaning of their life. The presence of relevant meanings inherent in people as representatives of a

certain culture, social community or society as well as meanings shared by people throughout history, i.e. relating not to unique situations, but to the “human situation in general” (V. Frankl), and claiming the status of universal human. These universally significant meanings provide an example of what, first of all, should be understood as values.

V. Frankl defines values as “universals of meaning that crystallize in typical situations faced by a person, society, or even all of humanity” [10, p. 288]. Accordingly with this idea Frankl builds a classification of values [10, p. 172–174] which underlie the reflexive search and the acquisition by a man of the meaning of his life among which he identified the following four main groups of values:

1. “Values of creativity” or values embodied in productive creative acts of human subjectivity: hard work, the transformation of existing in the processes of initiative innovative activity.

2. “Values of experience” or values realized in emotionally-existential experiences of the beauty of nature, the beauty of the world of culture (art, for example), the beauty of a human.

3. “Relationship values” or values carried out in a person-to-person relationship: friendship, love, compassion (they can also be called values of communication).

4. “Values of self-overcoming” or overcoming by a human in a situation when he cannot influence its change – humility, repentance, faith, courage, dignity.

The allocation of these groups of values indicates that while a man is alive and consciousness has not left him, he has the ability to implement certain values bearing responsibility to himself and his environment for acquiring the meaning of his life. V. Frankl believes that “life never ceases to make sense, because even a person who is deprived of the values of creativity and experience still has the meaning of his life..., – the meaning

contained in the right to go through suffering without bending” [10, p. 300].

To the considered groups of life-meaning values one should also add the “values of service” meaning under them sacred value absolutes, for example, God sacred or duty in its highest religious and ethical understanding which are the ideals of the life service of the human person with which she connects the meaning of your being in the world.

Life meaning is the defining characteristic of a human being implying the implementation of life values. As the Russian philosopher P. Gurevich notes that “human existence can never become truly meaningless. The obligation to realize values does not leave a person until the very last moment of his existence” [2, p. 49–50]. Even suicide can be considered a transcendental “gives” of the existing radical action motivated by life-meaning choice and implementation of values.

The desire to find the meaning of life is exacerbated in tragic situations while in the comfortable conditions of everyday life its meaning is often replaced by hedonistic feelings of pleasure or illusions and false ideas about it. The search for the meaning of life and the desire of a person for happiness or pleasure are not at all equivalent processes, because happiness and pleasure are the results of the search for the meaning of life in his personified acquisition. “The values of self-overcoming” (V. Frankl) are not associated only with the tragic situations of life although in these conditions their relevance is exacerbated. A purposeful person should strive to “overcome itself”, i.e. to “grow above oneself” or to improve oneself and one’s activity in the usual conditions of one’s life. This desire can be called self-transcendence, i.e. the desire for familiarization with the highest values, the highest semantic order of being revealing the creative potential of human nature.

A meaningful life-long search transcends the potential of the essential forces of human nature makes its being truly meaningful, i.e. authentic. It is

not by chance that in Russian religious philosophy, for example, transcendence appears to be the same attributive characteristic of a person as consciousness, language, sociality, creativity, labor, etc. The (axiological) ideal and idea of God are associated with transcendence which are present in the cultures of almost all peoples of the world. Through the search (and acquisition) of the meaning of life, a person and its being is transformed. With the acquisition of the meaning of life human being comes to its true optimized state.

The meaning of life involves the identification and sublimation of all the most important, the most essential in human existence, the identification of its fundamental values. The fact that values are “the result of meaningful searches, thanks to which existence is filled with significance...”, indicates the Russian philosopher L. Bayev [1, p. 12]. At the same time, despite the fact that the meaning of life was not “given” to a person from the beginning in its finished form, and its attainment and approval requires extraordinary efforts, the meaning of life as such has validity in the presence of an objective semantic order of being, suggests it and is based on it. The meaning of life as well as its values is inscribed in the ontological order of the universe.

According to this presumption the meaning of life is universal and retains its objective significance even regardless of its understanding and acceptance by man. It should also be allowed the existence of universally valid meaning-life universals associated with universal values.

Everything in the world is ultimately meaningful and valuable. Only in this case a person as an integral element of the world order – the *microcosm* can have the meaning of life, its value absolutes.

Ye. Trubetskoy noted that “asking about meaning means asking oneself about the unconditional meaning of something, that is, about such a meaning, which does not depend on one’s subjective discretion, on the

arbitrariness of any individual thought ... – that it should mean to everyone... Meaning is a universally conceivable conceivable content...” [8, p. 14]. To “recognize” as Trubetskoy writes means to find a universally significant mental content... to recognize in the proper sense is not to guess the meaning of the perceived but to possess it” [8, p. 23].

Therefore, to find and find the meaning of life means that a person’s consciousness doesn’t just “guess” about him but “possesses” him in his attainment. The considered groups of meaning-life values are examples of higher values-goals. They open before man the horizons of those ultimate semantic meanings that motivate him both to acquire the innermost meaning of his being and to make it productive, which is accompanied by the transcendence of the potential of human nature in its personified expression, as well as the attainment of a state of genuine happiness and satisfaction.

Higher (meaning-based) values ensure the integrity of the manifestations of human nature and are personifying in nature but at the same time, while motivating the subjective activity of a person, they also retain their unconditional sociocultural significance. Acting as guidelines for the search acquisition and implementation of the meaning of life they act as its guides into the significant world of human life.

The worldview significance and substantiality of values certifies a person as a subject of self-awareness and meaning-based life activity, purpose-oriented towards acquiring and realizing the unconditionally significant meaning of one’s being in the world.

Based on the foregoing, human being can be understood as the meaning of life-long self-determination of a human subject whose viability is determined by those values that he chooses and affirms.

References:

1. Bayeva L.V. (2003) *Value foundations of individual being: Experience of existential axiology*. M., Prometheus; Moscow State Pedagogical University, 240. [in Russian].
2. Gurevich P.S. (2007) Transformation of values as an emergency. M., *Moscow Psychological and Social Institute*, 120. [in Russian].
3. Rickert G. (1998) *Philosophy of life. Presentation and criticism of the fashion trends of the philosophy of our time, Nature Sciences and the science of culture*. M., Republic, 205-362. [in Russian].
4. Stolyarenko V.E., Stolyarenko L.D. (2004) *Anthropology – a systemic science of man: a textbook for university students*. Rostov-na-Donu, Phoenix. 384. [in Russian].
5. Sukhina I.G. (2011) *Axiology of Culture: Philosophical and Anthropological Foundations*. Donetsk: Donbass. 560. [in Russian].
6. Sukhina I.G. (2016) Values and human being in the chronotope of culture, I.G. Sukhina. Donetsk, GO VPO DonNUET. 444. [in Russian].
7. Tabachkovsky V.G. (1993) *Human attitude: given or problem?* K., Naukova Dumka. 173. [in Russian].
8. Trubetskoy E.N. (2011) *The meaning of life*. M., Institute of Russian Civilization. 656 p. [in Russian].
9. Frank S.L. (2003) *The meaning of life*, Frank S.L. Works. M., AST Publishing House LLC. 19–135. [in Russian].
10. Frankl V.E. (1990) *A man in search of meaning: a collection*. M., Progress. 368. [in Russian].

Citation: Igor Sukhina (2020). THE MEANING OF LIFE AS A PHILOSOPHICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF AXIOLOGICAL EXPLICATION. *Innovative Solutions in Modern Science*. 4(40). doi: 10.26886/2414-634X.4(40)2020.5

Copyright: Igor Sukhina ©. 2020. This is an openaccess article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) or licensor are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.