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**Consciousness and Significance: Innate and Acquired Meaning of Life**

*When God touched Adam,*

*And bestowed consciousness upon him,*

*And infused his life with meaning,*

*Man left the Garden of Eden,*

*And since leaving, his life has been all vanities.*

Sesher, in a cynical mood

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**Preface**

In this preface, I summarize the purpose of the book and the basic ideas covered and the structure of each chapter. The main purpose of the book is to develop the consciousness-meaning (CM) model. One of the primary goals of this model is to explain why most humans are able to lead a meaningful life without undergoing a life crisis in the sense that is expressed in existentialist literature.

The CM model is based on three types of meanings: innate meaning, ordinary-acquired meaning, and extreme-acquired meaning. Consciousness is a prerequisite for all three. That is, for a normal person, consciousness designates life-meaning to mental states (MSs), which represent one’s external or inner world. In essence, the CM model is based on the scientific approach, and the philosophy of science and consciousness (the mind). This model offers explanations for daily observations and solutions to a number of important philosophical questions discussed in the professional literature and addressed by the philosophical approaches of existentialism and life-meaning.

The preface is divided into two sections. The first section summarizes the main purpose of the book. The second section describes the topics of discussion covered in each chapter. The preface ends with some comments on the process of writing this book and its bibliography.

**Purpose of the Book**

The purpose of the book is to introduce a life-meaning model, called the CM model. It is intended to (a) explain why the majority of normal human beings lead a meaningful life and do not find life futile or absurd, despite the severe crises they may undergo; and (b) examine the crises that can undermine life-meaning, the life paths individuals choose, and how they cope with these crises and, in most cases, manage to overcome them.

The purpose of this book is to build a theoretical model that explains individuals’ behavior and the questions they face pertaining to their very existence, and their place in the world and society; that is, questions related to the meanings they attribute to their life. The purpose of the book is not to advocate a particular way of life or to persuade people this is the correct and most desirable lifestyle. Nor is it intended to offer an answer to the existential cosmological question: Why does the world exist? (Holt, 2012).

There are two reasons for this. First, the purpose of the book is to try to explain human behavior and how it is interwoven with life-meanings. It is not meant to deal with cosmological questions, although physio-cosmological knowledge is relevant to questions related to life-meaning. Second, I do not think it is possible to explain why the world exists or how the universe was created, because logic and explanations are also parts of the universe. Any explanation for the creation requires a reason that is independent and separate from the universe itself. What can be explained is how parts of this vast universe came into being (such as types of radiation, stars, black holes, galaxies), but answers to these questions are not within my professional knowledge (I am a professional experimental psychologist with a broad background in philosophy and basic physics). These answers lie in the realm of professional physicists and cosmologists.

My proposed solution to these questions is based on two main types of life-meaning: innate and acquired. Meaning 1: Innate Meaning is a natural phenomenon that may be assumed to have evolved. It is essentially a sense of being alive, of life, and how wonderful it is. There is no teleological explanation for why a person has cognitive / neurophysiological processes whose purpose is to derive innate meaning. Since Meaning 1 is the product of evolutionary processes, it is possible to assume that the supreme animals also have this sense to some extent. Animals’ will to live is expressed in their unceasing survival behaviors (see discussion of this issue below).

Meaning 2: Acquired Life-Meaning (differentiated into normal and extreme) is a systematic collection of behaviors, norms, values, social knowledge, and scientific information that society transmits to individuals beginning at birth, with the help of its educators. Individuals assimilate these according to their personal tendencies and skills. The purpose is to help individuals integrate into society, and convince them to take on the burden of being part of a social organization. In other words, society provides individuals with a set of rules of conduct, with reasons and explanations for how and why they should behave according to the goals of the society to which they belong.

This solution came to fruition in the development of the CM model. I will elaborate on its structure (with more extensive details below). This model is based on three types of life-meanings, the first being innate and the other two being acquired. All meanings are the fruits of consciousness, which gives meaning to the MS in individuals’ consciousness and represent their outer and inner world. Consciousness is as essential a condition for meaning as it is a necessary condition for understanding. The first and most basic type is Meaning 1: Innate. Consciousness gives meaning to the perceptions of sensory stimuli (vision, hearing, pain, pleasure, etc.) absorbed by the brain during every waking moment. This type of meaning is derived from sensory feelings and the awareness and experience of being alive. This strong, innate and primal meaning is shared by the supreme animals such as monkeys, dogs, cats, and dolphins.

Additionally, there are two types of Meaning 2: Acquired Ordinary Meaning and Acquired Extreme Meaning. These are transmitted to individuals, beginning at birth, by the society to which they belong, with the help of various learning agents such as parents, teachers, educators, leaders, as well as university lecturers. Meaning 2: Acquired Ordinary includes all the information individuals acquire throughout their life, so that they can adapt to the society in which they live. In contrast, Meaning 2: Acquired Extreme requires the individual to have a full and personal commitment to a particular belief or ideology. This type of meaning is imparted to individuals via various indoctrination techniques that prepare them for situations in which they are willing to make sacrifices, even sacrificing themselves, for the religious or political ideals of the society in which they live. Drawing on these three types of meaning, the CM model explains various types of behaviors. Its effectiveness in explaining the coping mechanisms of people facing times of extreme difficulty and crisis is demonstrated.

**Topics of Discussion and Comments on the Writing of this Book**

**Chapter 1** discusses the interplay between worldview and the designation of boundaries surrounding and the content of life-meaning. For example, secular or atheist people cannot anchor their life meaning in a belief in God and observance of religious rituals.

**Chapter 2** discusses the implications of the view that the universe is infinite and indifferent to humans and their actions. This perception can bring one to the point of despair. The chapter raises arguments against this perception, based on the fact that human life is interwoven with various types of life meanings that enable people to deal with major, painful life crises.

**Chapter 3** develops the conceptual infrastructure of the consciousness-meaning (CM) model, and presents the three types of life-meaning: Meaning 1: Innate; Meaning 2: Ordinary Acquired and Meaning 2: Extreme Acquired.

**Chapter 4** addresses the argument that there has not yet been developed a mechanistic explanation for consciousness (in the form of explanations that are prevalent in the natural sciences) that adequately describes this phenomenon and the connection between consciousness and the neurophysiology of the brain.

**Chapter 5** describes how the CM model explains the basic concepts in the existentialist approach such as life-meaning, absurdity, and suicide, as well as concepts that describe certain types of behavior.

**Chapter 6** deals with the three concepts of life-meaning, absurdity, and suicide from a philosophical and methodological point of view. It addresses the questions of how these concepts can be justified, and the relationships between life-meaning, free will, and moral relativism.

**Chapter 7** examines the central concept of this book, life-meaning, from two points of view: how to explain this concept, and how to use this concept to explain individuals’ behavior.

**Chapter 8** extensively discusses and compares the proposed CM model with the various other approaches presented in the professional literature, such as whether a satisfactory explanation can be offered for a concept of life-meaning from the point of view of evolution and based on scientific knowledge obtained in the natural sciences.

To conclude this preface, I feel compelled to say something that seems essential regarding the bibliography. As the ideas written occurred to me and I organized them into this meditative work, I began to systematically read relevant literature, especially two major cogitative approaches relevant to the present essay: existentialism and life-meaning. The literature on each of these two subjects is massive! This literature touches on the deep connections among multiple philosophers and their discussions on relevant issues. I read a vast amount of literature on the relevant topics, but would not dare to suggest that I read it all. Nevertheless, I have read enough that I can say that I achieved an adequate level of understanding regarding these philosophical approaches. I know which aspects I agree with and those from which my opinion differs and diverges. On the basis of my reading, I decided to focus primarily on Camus (1971, 1985, 1992, 2001) because I was inspired by his enchanting work (Sagi, 2000, describes Camus as a “personal thinker”), as well as, to a large extent, on Sartre (2014). I include reference to extensive literature related to these two thinkers (for example, Crowell, 2017; Golomb, 1990; Lurie, 2002; Sagi, 2000; Sigged, 1975).

From this, a problem emerged in the writing of this academic work. I am an experimental and theoretical psychologist specializing in recognizing and identifying facial expressions, and an expert in the philosophy of science and psychology. I have written several books and dozens of academic articles, and I am well acquainted with the process of writing academic texts. I know that I must extensively cite relevant literature (especially current literature), to show that I am well-versed in the field and familiar with what has been published previously, and then to present, against this background, my proposed innovation. However, since this book on the CM model is built on thoughts I have been pondering for many years, and some of these are personal, this book is not based solely on arguments with the existing philosophical and theoretical traditions. The book did not emerge out of a struggle with previous ideas that I deemed incorrect. My goal is not to support one certain idea, or to refute another. My aim is to formulate a theoretical worldview, as summarized in the CM model. Occasionally, I compare the CM model with other approaches to the subject of life-meaning. Such comparisons cannot entirely be avoided.

For all these reasons, I decided to deviate somewhat from the standard format of academic writing, and instead chose a somewhat more free and personal style. I do not refer to everything I read on the subject or fill each page with references, quotes, and footnotes, as usual. I do so only when I come to the conclusion that this is the best way to emphasize and highlight my approach. This may be because the habit of writing in an academic style overcomes me and I cannot resist the temptation to quote, or because the pleasure of arguing with other opinions is too strong. In short, I am not going to completely suppress the academic practices that have been rooted in me for many years.

**Chapter 1: On the Relationship between Worldview and Life-meaning**

Because this book on life-meaning of life is influenced by my own worldview, and because my worldview is based on emotional and rational processes, in this first chapter I describe my emotional and intellectual infrastructure. I am an atheist. I am also an experimental psychologist with extensive and deep background in the philosophy of science and consciousness, and in basic physics.

In light of these approaches and ideas, various philosophical approaches to the topic of life-meaning can be differentiated by two factors: (a) the subject of the problem: personal, philosophical, or theoretical (i.e., science-based); and (b) the method of dealing with the problem in question: personal, philosophical, or theoretical. For example, Camus’ approach can be categorized as personal and philosophical in terms of both (a) and (b). In contrast, the current book focuses primarily on the theoretical (scientific) component, with additional attention given to personal and philosophical elements.

The general questions underlying this book pertain to life-meaning. Does the existence of living beings have a cause and a purpose? In particular, what is the meaning of the life of humans? What is the best path in life to choose? Negative answers assert that human life has no meaning, there is no reason or purpose affirming existence and what occurs in the world in general and among humans in specific, that everything is accidental, chaotic, and absurd. Such answers correspond to a pessimistic, nihilistic worldview. To me, these are unacceptable. My worldview is fundamentally optimistic, although it does include a certain pessimistic tone, as will be seen.

What follows from this is that an optimistic approach has a different impact on life-meaning than a pessimistic approach does. The impact of a positive versus a negative worldview on the meaning one attributes to life and how one lives seems intuitive. Of course, it is also possible to perceive the impact as working in the opposite direction, from life-meaning to worldview. There is even the possibility that both worldview and life-meaning are grounded in another, deeper, internal process. (I will not discuss either this opposite approach, or the possibility of a third factor responsible for both approaches.)

However, to reinforce the notion that worldview influences life-meaning, I will consider whether a religious or secular worldview influences life-meaning. For example, Carroll (2016), a physicist and an atheist, states that there is no inherent meaning to the world, and that individuals determine the meaning of their life according to their own perspective. He offers a scientific explanation for all the events in the world, such as the creation of the world, the evolution of living creatures, and the consciousness of humans. In contrast, another physicist Hartnett (2017a, b) is a devout Christian who states that the world has a meaning imparted by God and Jesus; he completely rejects the view expressed by Carroll.

A person’s worldview is not developed on the basis of a rationality common to all people or an education based on the rules of logic and the scientific method. A worldview is an emotional and personal matter. That is, worldview is not only related to one’s rational cognitive abilities, but is determined, to a large extent, by one’s personal and emotional history. Therefore, I will begin by describing a number of my own personal traits that are relevant to the writing of this book about life-meaning. I draw upon a few essential points in my emotional background, and then a number of points based on a rational and scientific view. I will begin with the emotional elements that I found to be a deciding factor in my worldview.

**The Emotional Infrastructure**

Although neither I nor my parents are survivors of Nazi concentration camps or refugees of World War II, the Holocaust has had a tremendous influence on my worldview. I was born in Israel. My parents immigrated to Israel before the war began. They met in Tel Aviv (a small city at the time) where they married and gave birth to me. Nevertheless, I have a direct and strong emotional connection to what happened during the Holocaust. My father’s entire family was killed in the Warsaw Ghetto. Much of my mother’s family was murdered by the Nazis. The feelings of anger and hatred I feel towards the Nazis were intensified by reading books and seeing theater productions that dealt with the systematic extermination of my people in Europe.

The undeniable imprint that Holocaust had on me is expressed in two inescapable thoughts, engraved on the cornerstone of the structure that is me. The first is my lack of faith in the goodness of humanity. I think people are evil and enjoy inflicting anguish, especially on their own kind. This pessimistic belief runs counter to Camus’ trajectory (according to Sagi, 2000) from the absurdity of life to one of human solidarity. I only found such solidarity among Israelis during times when Israel was engaged in wars against its Arab neighbors. Immediately after Israel’s victories, solidarity evaporated.

From the Holocaust, I learned that murderers have no problem justifying their despicable acts. The Nazis saw Jews as an inferior race poisoning the pure Aryan race. Even religion is used to justify horrific actions such as abusive exploitation of others, torture in the name of God, and even mass murder. Why? Because religion, in its very essence, includes violent elements. Religions are belief systems developed by people (though inscribed in holy texts, no one witnesses God’s revelation, and today people who claim God speaks to them would be considered to be having psychotic episodes). Religion requires its believers to do two main things: The first is to recruit as many other believers as possible, since as their number increases, so does the self-conviction of followers of the religion. The second is to fight those who believe in any other religion, who are perceived as threats and infidels. This is the black shadow of the optimistic approach I mentioned previously. (How the CM model addresses this shadow is discussed below.)

The second thought is my disbelief in an entity called God. It is not possible that an omnipotent God would see humans as the crowning glory of His creation. Such a God could not watch with equanimity as beings created in His image (as the believer claims) carry out the horrors of World War II and the planned extermination of European Jewry, and do nothing to prevent it. There is no acceptable explanation for this in my rational mind or emotional view. Is the Holocaust a punishment for the sins of my people? I simply cannot accept this argument in any way! What did the fetuses in their mothers’ wombs do? What did babies and children do? For me, there is no God, not then and not now. There are only vicious and hate-filled people, and I belong to this horrible species. In this respect, I sympathize with the viewpoint of Dr. Rieux in Camus’ (2001) novel *The Plague*, who is in no way prepared to accept the death of innocents. There is no justification for it! Sagi (2000) suggests that Camus’ humane approach emerged from the horrors of World War II.

All I know about my paternal grandfather is that he was a highly educated man who left the rabbinate to work in the fur trade, and that he wrote, in beautiful Hebrew lettering, a moving dedication in a book of Haim Nachman Bialik’s poetry, published in Warsaw, which he sent me for my first birthday. At the time, my parents’ financial situation was dire. My father could not find work and had returned home after six weeks of wandering around the country. He worked anywhere they needed an electrician in what was then British Palestine. This situation went on for many years. One day when I was a child, he returned from the Dead Sea, and I asked him: “Daddy, where did you sleep?” He said: “I’ll tell you where I slept, Sammy. After everyone had finished eating in the dining room, the British went to get drunk in their canteen, and the Bedouin went out to smoke a hookah and drink coffee in their tents. I cleaned the dining room, spread a sheet on one of the tables, put a backpack under my head, spread a towel on it, and covered myself with another sheet. There I slept.”

Shortly after my first birthday, my parents decided to return to Poland for at least one year because the situation in British Palestine was so difficult. (My maternal grandfather, who was an artisan, had established a foundry in Jaffa. My father, an electrical engineer originally from Poland, did not find employment there due, in part, to the resistance of my maternal uncle, who refused to hire him. In addition, my mother wanted to get to know my father’s family, who, according to his stories, were a stable and well-educated family. My father graduated from the Polish Polytechnic with honors in electrical engineering (an expert in high voltage electricity). He moved to Israel due to his Zionist beliefs (and for this brave act I admired him). My father greatly admired his sister, who was a professor of nuclear physics (and, by all accounts, a genius). His brother was one of the most famous lawyers in Warsaw. His other sister was married and had a good life.

My parents bought tickets for a ship to Poland. A few days before sailing to Europe, they heard on the radio that Germany invaded Poland, and World War II began. A short while later, they received a telegram from my grandfather, Solomon: “Do not come to Poland. Germany invaded.” Afterwards, my parents received a postcard from Poland through the Red Cross, with the brief message: “We are all here in the Warsaw Ghetto, still alive, I don’t know until when. Signed, Solomon.”

They were all exterminated in the Warsaw ghetto.

My father assumed that his sister, a professor of nuclear physics, would have survived because the Red Army could not allow the killing of a scientist of her magnitude. My mother, who knew the bitter truth, never told my father that the Warsaw Ghetto was liquidated before the Russian Red Army arrived in Warsaw.

Every time I recall this possibility of my parents’ return to Poland and the realization that my life could have turned into a terrible torment in the hell of Nazi-occupied Poland, horror permeates me. Despite my personal salvation, I cannot believe that there is such an intangible entity as God, who would allow such horror to take place. I myself might have experienced this cruel torture, and even witnessed the torture and murder of my parents. Little stood between me and the end of my life as the skeleton of a little boy thrown on a pile of skeletons. No divine entity would allow the brutal destruction of six million humans, which could have included my parents and myself. This entity does not exist. The horror did occur, and to my dismay it may occur many more times.

My worldview is not based on any logical argument that disproves the existence of God. Rather, it is an emotional belief that serves as the foundation of my soul and is an inalienable part of my personal infrastructure. This is probably the reason I find it difficult to read the words and writings of Martin Heidegger, a Nazi who made an academic speech praising Hitler’s supreme importance when he was appointed by the Nazis as the Rector of Freiburg University. I feel reluctant to read his works; they make me nauseous. (This is not nausea in the sense referred to by Sartre, but a nausea similar to the one from the stench of spoiled food. Despite all this, I recently skimmed through some writings of Heidegger, but I will not relate to his works in the current book.)

It is clear this book is written from an atheist worldview and a belief that man is fundamentally evil. Therefore, the book must answer two fundamental questions. First, since atheists do not have a life-meaning anchored to faith in God that offers a reason and purpose for the existence of humans, what alternate type of life-meaning is suitable for them? Second, if atheists (like me) also believe that humans are essentially evil, what system of life-meaning might be designed for them? Since this entire book is an attempt to answer the first question (regarding a general and secular life-meaning), I will first briefly discuss the second question as it relates to the history of my life.

Once I realized that I did not believe in God and did believe that man is intrinsically evil, the following question arose in my mind: why did these harsh crises of faith not cause me to despair and feel a sense of meaninglessness? How did I not enter into a state of confusion and feeling lost? Although several philosophers discuss this possibility (see the Review and Discussion sections in Landau, 2017), I continued to live without a life-shaking crisis. I never considered suicide, which Camus (1992) considers to be the most important question in philosophy.

Long years of deep pondering led me to a conclusion based on two factors. The first is that, despite my disbelief in religion and the intrinsic goodness of mankind, I have had important life trajectories that have instilled in me profound life-meanings that immunized me from these two oppressive thoughts. These meanings will be the focus of the present book. Second, in my opinion, saying “mankind is evil” does not necessarily stem from a feeling of despair, meaninglessness, or feeling of losing one’s path in life. There are three essential arguments for this.

The first argument is related to the CM model, which shows that life-meanings surround every human being and immunize them against feelings of being lost and confused. Since I will discuss this in the next few chapters, I now offer two additional reasons why I think a sense of meaninglessness does not necessarily emerge from the worldview that people are malicious and vicious.

The second argument is that if humans are evil, and David is a human, it logically follows that David is evil. Therefore, as an evil man, David must choose a malicious and vicious way of life (for example, he may become a brutal boss of the crime world). It is hard to believe that as an evil man David would choose to kill himself, because evil is directed at others, not at oneself. As an evil man, David will choose a malicious and wicked life path that is nevertheless meaningful to him. Therefore, it is not a matter of the meaninglessness of life, but rather of replacing one way of life with another. In fact, until David realized that all people were evil, he used to help others who were weak and needy. Only after having this realization did he become the brutal boss of the crime world.

The third argument is that in order for David to draw some reasonable conclusion from the statement "mankind is evil," he needs additional information by which he can judge it. David is necessarily a member of a culture, and his conclusions will be affected by the culture of which he is a part, since culture determines what the words “man” and “evil” mean. Hence, the process of drawing conclusions is as follows: If man is evil and cultured, and David is human, then he is both evil and cultured.

Thus, David can choose between two options. As an evil person, he could choose a cruel and vicious way of life. This would not result loss of life-meaning or suicide (see the first argument). However, as a member of a culture, David may choose a different path, opposing evil, accepting morals such as not murdering, stealing, or committing adultery, even if he is an atheist and does not attribute these morals to commandments of God’s will, but rather as social norms. Whichever choice David makes will indicate the way of life he considers significant and important. Therefore, it would not be accurate to conclude that because David is convinced that he is an “evil human” he must despair of any meaning to his life, and accept that the world is one great absurdity. (Similar arguments can also be raised against the argument that losing faith in God leads to a meaningless life; see below.)

**The Rational / Scientific Infrastructure**

Now I will briefly describe the second basis of my worldview, the rational-scientific infrastructure. This perspective is based on my studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where I studied psychology, sociology, and statistics. I completed my Ph.D. thesis on avoidance learning among white lab rats, under the guidance of Prof. Charles Greenbaum and Prof. David Samuel (who became Lord David Samuel some time afterwards). In addition, I studied life science courses (introduction to physics and chemistry, including labs), and I attended numerous philosophy of science courses (in Jerusalem and Haifa). I read with great and profound interest dozens if not hundreds of books and articles on the natural sciences and the philosophy of science - a growing interest of mine over the years. (The general public may enjoy much of this scientific literature, for example, Carroll, 2016; Einstein, 2015; Einstein & Infeld, 1978; Kirsch, 2006; Messerly, 2012).

Based on these two emotional and rational / scientific infrastructures, I developed a worldview that shaped the boundaries of the way I perceive the meaning of life.

1. This worldview is atheistic. Life-meaning cannot be grounded in belief in God and observance of religion. Meaning must be anchored to mankind and society, or scientific knowledge.
2. Except for Meaning 1: Innate Meaning (described in the preface, and on which I will elaborate later), people are not born with an understanding of life-meaning, a clear and defined path in life. They acquire this with the help of educators in the society to which they belong. Part of this is scientific knowledge, acquired from professors, mainly at universities or research institutes. However, a large part of Meaning 2: Acquired Meaning, such as language acquisition and social norms are learned before any type of scientific knowledge, which tends to be acquired later. Learning acquired at an early age is especially powerful. It stays embedded in a person and is difficult to change or destroy. (I suppose that is a satisfactory explanation for why there are religious scientists.)
3. Scientific knowledge may be the basis for life-meaning and choosing which life path a person may follow. It is a fact that modern life, from foundation to rafters, is shaped by technologies based on scientific discoveries. Hence, modern human societies base their life-meanings on scientific innovations. The pace of discovery and development is extremely rapid. (For example, the use of cell phones began to spread only in the mid-1970s, yet it is difficult to find today a single person living in a modern society whose smartphone is not an integral part of what gives meaning to his or her life.)
4. Science does not provide definitive knowledge. Scientific knowledge is provisional, and may change as a result of subsequent research. Therefore, it is impossible to offer a sound understanding of the universe and a permanent and stable life-meaning on the basis of scientific knowledge. While one may regard the pursuit of scientific research as a meaningful way of life, scientific knowledge is uncertain, and therefore it is impossible to build a stable life-meaning on it. By contrast, life-meaning grounded in faith in God is fixed and unchanging.
5. A life-meaning that is unstable and changeable does not necessarily create a crippling state of anxiety or acute depression that leads to contemplation of suicide. Rather, it may inspire great curiosity to discover, understand, and integrate the changes into one’s life.
6. The way in which one tries to understand the world and to construct a life-meaning is by developing abstract models which, through their analogy to reality, largely explain how the world works. When such a model is compared to reality and undergoes empirical examination, it becomes a useful high-quality scientific research tool. However, if such a model is not compared to reality, it remains merely a belief and becomes a magical device in the creation of religion.

This worldview led me to differentiate between two types of questions related to the concept of life-meaning. The first type, which I call “cosmological questions” include: How was the world created? What is its purpose? How were humans created and for what purpose? The second type, which I call, “life questions” include: How (reasons, arguments) and why (purposes) are life-meanings created? What life paths may a person follow?

This book is not intended to answer cosmological questions. Among other reasons, this is because I am neither a physicist nor a cosmologist. Moreover, experts also find it difficult to offer answers to these questions. For example, Carroll (2016), who has attempted to offer a broad worldview and answers to the question of life-meaning that are based on knowledge in the natural sciences, such as physics and evolution, admits an inability to address cosmological and life questions. He writes: “We don’t know how the universe began, or if it’s the only universe. We don’t know the ultimate, complete laws of physics. We don’t know how life began, or how consciousness arose.” (Carroll, 2016, p. 13).

*Implications Associated with this Worldview*

Given that this worldview is built on personal, emotional, and rational / scientific elements, the question arises: How can this book be classified? I propose classifying works of this type according to the following two criteria:

1. The source of the problem and subject of discussion. These may be personal (e.g., the Holocaust’s influence on me); philosophical; or theoretical and related to scientific studies (social sciences or exact sciences).
2. The method of dealing with the problem. This includes personal and individual methods (for example, I am not prepared to receive explanations based on God’s will); use of philosophical tools; theoretical methods, based on use of scientific methodology.

How can this book be classified according to these criteria? The source of the problems discussed are personal and philosophical. I described above the personal source, especially the impact of the Holocaust. The second source is related to ongoing learning and reading of philosophical literature. To clarify, I was introduced to existential philosophy through Bakewell’s (2016) book *At the Existentialist Café*. I decided to read it out of curiosity and because I am a fan of popular historical and philosophical science literature. I felt it would be interesting to become acquainted with existentialist philosophers. This book introduced me to the world of these philosophical thinkers. There I found, to my great surprise, that some of the ideas developed by Camus and Sartre were ones I had thought of myself, and I share a great deal of their concerns. Regarding other ideas I have had about life-meaning, these were not fully developed, but some seeds were planted in the field of my mind. (Some of these ideas formed the basis for novels I wrote, such as, *Solip Wild Horses*, *Who Are You, Rosalind*? and *Ghost Dance*.)

My interests had been focused on the philosophy of science and consciousness, especially on issues of consciousness problem and explanation structure in science and psychology in particular. I admit that the little I knew about existentialist philosophy came from my readings, as an academic, of works by and about Sartre, de Beauvoir, Heidegger, and Kierkegaard. However, because I did not see them as major figures in the literature of the philosophy of science, I did not pay much attention to them or devote time to reading their writings. Clearly, a person does not have enough time to read all the important works in one’s field of interest. Things changed completely after I finished *At the Existentialist Café*. Suddenly, I found myself immersed in reading existentialist literature, focusing primarily on works by Camus (1971, 1985, 1992, 2001) and Sartre (2014), and writings about them.

As noted, the sources for this book are personal and philosophical. Similarly, the means I use to address deal with them are also mixed: personal (as I say, I am not willing to accept religious beliefs), philosophical, and theoretical. I develop a theory to explain how life-meanings (innate and acquired) are created, how human behavior can be explained through these life-meanings; and what happens to a person who experiences a loss of acquired meaning.

In comparison, I consider how Camus’ works would be classified, in accordance with the above two criteria. I suggest that the source of the problems that Camus discusses are personal and philosophical. The methods he uses to address the problems he raised are also personal and philosophical. He did not use scientific methodology. Neither did he develop a theory to explain absurd behavior. The concept of absurdity was addressed in a personal way in his book *The Stranger*, and in a philosophic way in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (for a similar interpretation of these books see Sagi, 2000).

After clarifying that the source of the current discussion and the way it is handled are influenced by my personal point of view, the following question arises: Why would anyone besides me be interested in reading what I write? One could argue that this writing expresses only my personal, individual perception. I could write my theoretical view as a way to organize, for my own use, all my ideas into one systematic method, so that I could finally understand something about the world, myself, and the relationship between them.

But others might not be driven by such a motivation. In most cases, when friends and I talk over a cup of coffee and cake, or while sharing a delicious meal or smoking a fragrant cigar and drinking good wine or beer, our talk is not about understanding the world and our place in the infinite universe. We speak about minor daily problems. We gossip, discuss politics and make jokes (because politics reveals the absurdity of man). We speak about things we want to buy, trips we’ve taken, movies, TV shows, and books. We never discuss theoretical views of the world. We make no systematic attempt to understand the world, human society, or our relationship with our physical and social environments. So why would anyone want to read my personal theoretical worldview and its impact on constructing a theory of life-meaning?

I can think of several possible answers. It seems the most relevant is an analogy between the interest in the arts and interest in a personal, theoretical worldview. Just as my son is interested in books and films about imaginary superheroes, people may also be interested in an individual theoretical worldview. What do the arts (painting, literature, theater) have in common? They all describe and discuss individual characters. In novels, you meet characters such as Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary, Le Pere Goriot, Don Quixote, Oliver Twist, Tom Sawyer, etc. In paintings, you see beautiful and full-bodied women like Mona Lisa, and statues such as Venus de Milo, Les Bourgeois de Calais, Moses, and David. In theater, you may see plays about heroes and heroines such as Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Peer Gynt, Miss Julie, and Mother Courage. Clearly, artists have devoted their lives to describing and explaining the behavior of these characters, whose degree of overlap with the viewer or reader is not great. Yet, no culture can be discussed without noting its artistic works.

This leads to the next question: Why are people interested in works that deal with individual characters whose degree of similarity with theme as a viewer or reader is low? Part of the magic of these works of art lies in the worldview of the depicted characters. Some represent the spirit of the times and others represent the worldview of the creator. (I am not going to elaborate on the worldview represented by, for example, Madame Bovary or from Rodin’s wonderful sculpture Les Bourgeois de Calais).

Now I will discuss two reasons for interest in the artistic works, which, in analogy, may explain interest in the current book. First, artistic works evoke great curiosity. Humans are curious creatures who want to learn about the world and about themselves in every way possible. This includes the pleasures of the arts which present, among other things, worldviews that express something interesting and important about life. This suggests that our need to hear important truths about life is fulfilled by viewing or reading works of art. Incredible paintings have been found in prehistoric caves, and archeological excavations reveal paintings, sculptures, figurines, scrolls, and pottery communicating interesting and beautiful stories. This indicates that humans have always felt a need to explore and express sentiments about life in various ways. Similarly, a theoretical worldview is an attempt to say something meaningful about life.

Second, art provides us with the means to enjoy the use of imagination. We are quick to identify with heroes, even unrealistic ones such as Superman or Spiderman, and play with the possibilities of being like them. People may also take a theoretical worldview, agree with it, criticize it, change it, and play an imaginary game about the nature of the world and mankind this worldview depicts. (I will not address here another potential reason for interest in art, namely that it gives rise to a sense of beauty, because this concept does not naturally fit in a discussion of complicated philosophical and scientific ideas, which are more accurately described by concepts such as interesting, eye-opening, or useful.)

As can be seen from the discussion so far, this book can be classified as similar to a scientific essay offering an empirical theory, while it is also influenced by philosophical and personal aspects. This is not a classic science textbook, based solely on rational thinking and scientific methodology. However, it should not be classified as a book expressing religious, ideological, moral, or ethical beliefs based on deeply held emotional elements, which teach individuals what to do, how to behave, or what to think. This book is an expression of holistic thinking and cognitive processes based on rationality and emotions, because people build their existence, worldview, and life-meanings on both.

In this respect, my worldview, as expressed in the present book, is not a variation on Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialist thesis (2014). It seems to me that Sartre’s philosophy in his book *Existentialism is a Humanism*, is not well-defined. It may be a moral theory that determines what is done and should be done, as Sartre writes, "Upon this level therefore, what we are considering is an ethic of action and self-commitment.” (Sartre, 2014, pp. 30-31). Alternately, it may be a philosophical behavioral description of man: “There is this in common between art and [existentialist] morality, that in both we have to do with creation and invention. We cannot decide *a priori* what it is that should be done,” (ibid, p. 37). Clearly, if existentialism is a theory of action and commitment, then it is possible to predict, with a great deal of confidence, what individuals will do in moral situations, since their behavior is dictated by moral rules. Therefore, it is incorrect to say, “We cannot decide *a priori* what it is that should be done.”

Contrary to Sartre’s view, the theoretical approach described here is not a mandatory moral theory. It does not claim to be the absolute truth, for the following reasons. First, science never states absolute facts. Second, I clearly recognize that I may be wrong in this, as I have been wrong regarding many other things in my life. The present book is a theoretical worldview built on the scientific method interwoven with philosophical analysis and personal life experiences. Using this approach, I strive to understand humans and their concepts of life-meaning. I hope others find it (at least somewhat) interesting.

Thus, anyone who rejects my proposed theoretical approach, in whole or in part, for any rational or emotional reason – they are free to reject it. If any readers dispute this view or any part of it – they are free to dispute it. If some readers agree with any part of it – let them agree. In any case, this is not a moralistic preaching, it is a rational-empirical theoretical approach, based in part on the life experiences of an individual who loves to examine life and who aspires to understand it. If anyone learns something from reading it, I will pat myself on the back and consider it a job well done.