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CORE EXISTENTIAL PILLARS OF THE PERSON

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Abstract. This extended abstract outlines a conceptual article that explores the core existential pillars sustaining a person's inner stance and resilience in times of global crisis and war. Drawing on existential philosophy and existential-analytic psychotherapy (V. Frankl; A. Längle) and on contemporary Ukrainian psychological thought (S.D. Maksymenko), the paper argues that personal being — together with love, freedom, will, and responsibility — forms a robust foundation for self-actualisation, ethical agency, and meaning-making. Methodologically, the work applies a phenomenological attitude to describe structures of experience, qualitative content analysis of philosophical and psychological sources to elicit key constructs, and comparative interpretation of motivational paradigms in Freud (life/death drives), Adler (will to power), and Frankl (will to meaning). The article further clarifies the three-dimensional anthropological model (somatic, psychic, spiritual/Person), highlights the central role of experience in integrating inner and outer existence (Vygotsky; Bozhovich), and systematises Längle's four fundamental motivations as a practical compass for existential orientation. The conclusion synthesises an applied framework for psychotherapy, education, and psychosocial support in high-uncertainty contexts.

Keywords: personality, personal being, Person, meaning, love, freedom, will, responsibility, fundamental motivations, resilience.

Introduction.

Rapid and chaotic societal change, aggravated by pandemics and full-scale war, erodes external structures of certainty. Under such conditions, the person's inner stance becomes a primary locus of resistance to dehumanisation. The article returns to philosophical-psychological roots to reconsider personality as a meaning-creating subject capable of dialogue with the world and oneself. The aim is to conceptualise the existential pillars that secure integrity, agency, and humane relatedness in crisis.

Main text.

Human history abounds with examples of the collapse of social foundations that placed people in dramatic challenges and uncertainty. A vivid case is the Second World War. In such circumstances, the question arises: what can one rely on? Philosophy, particularly Stoicism, offered an answer by teaching to seek support in the inner world. Its representatives — Zeno, Epictetus, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius — emphasised that although we cannot control external conditions, we can choose our attitude toward

them. This acceptance and cultivation of inner resilience create a space for inner peace in an unpredictable world. In war, inner anchors become decisive.

Similar reflections can also be found in the works of modern followers of Stoicism. For example, Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, applies Stoic principles to explain how a person can discover meaning even amidst terrible suffering, emphasising the "will to meaning" as the driving force of human existence. Existential philosophy likewise offers an understanding of human nature as a source of inner strength. Thinkers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Paul Tillich, Viktor Frankl, Alfried Längle, Rollo May, Emmy van Deurzen, and Ernesto Spinelli have developed ideas that help to grasp human existence in its deepest dimension.

The anthropological characteristics identified by V. Frankl — will to meaning, love, freedom, will, and responsibility — serve as driving forces that help a person preserve integrity and discover meaning even under seemingly hopeless conditions. When external supports collapse, inner anchors become the foundation on which life can be built, providing resilience and strength.

Personality as a developing whole. The person is a dynamic, integral, capable of self-development, self-determination, conscious activity, and self-regulation. Substructures include the bio-psychic basis, cognitive processes, experience, directionality (values/goals), and abilities, whose coherence supports adaptation and transformation.

Experience, described by L.S. Vygotsky as the "unit" of personality analysis, is a crucial node where inner and outer influences intersect. L.I. Bozhovich further emphasised that experience integrates the personal and environmental dimensions, shaping development and meaning-making within the three-dimensional model of being — inner being, outer being, and the space of being. Experience is a mediator that links values, feelings, and actions, sustaining integrity and adaptability. When the capacity for experience is blocked, fragmentation, rigidity, and maladaptation emerge, leading to defensive patterns and loss of flexibility. In contrast, a cultivated openness to experience strengthens emotional competence, self-awareness, and the ability to respond adequately to external challenges.

As developed by Viktor Frankl and expanded by Alfried Längle, existential analysis views the human being in the unity of three dimensions: somatic, psychic, and spiritual. The spiritual dimension —*Person* — constitutes the very core of personality. It endows the individual with the capacity to be an "I," to enter dialogue, to make authentic choices, and to assume responsibility. According to Frankl, the human being is a "facultative being": not a fixed essence given in advance, but a possibility that becomes real through freedom and decisions. This model highlights human existence as an open process of becoming, where dignity, autonomy, and responsibility are continuously realised.

Studying what drives human development has been central to psychology, with each major thinker offering a distinct motivational paradigm. **Sigmund Freud** described human behaviour as governed primarily by instinctual drives. The *life instinct* (Eros) strives toward survival, reproduction, and pleasure, while the *death instinct* (Thanatos) represents unconscious tendencies toward aggression, destruction, and a return to an inorganic state. For Freud, personality is formed in the tension and conflict between these forces, often resulting in neurosis when unresolved. Motivation is thus fundamentally biological, rooted in the dynamics of instinct. By diverging from Freud, Alfred Adler proposed the *will to power* as the primary human drive. He saw individuals as motivated to overcome feelings of inferiority and to strive for mastery, competence, and social belonging. For Adler, motivation is relational and social, oriented toward establishing significance and contributing within the community. Unlike Freud's focus on intrapsychic conflict, Adler emphasised growth, self-improvement, and social responsibility. **Viktor Frankl** introduced a radically different perspective with the *will to meaning*. Having survived the Holocaust, he argued that the deepest human motivation is not pleasure or power, but the pursuit of meaning. This will to meaning unfolds through three main avenues: (1) *creative values* — contributing through work or achievements; (2) *experiential values* — encountering truth, beauty, and love; and (3) *attitudinal values* — adopting a dignified stance toward unavoidable suffering. Frankl thus placed existential freedom and responsibility at the core of motivation. **Alfried Längle**, expanding on Frankl, articulated the model of *four*

fundamental existential motivations. These address life's essential questions: (1) *Can I be here?* — space, protection, and foundation; (2) *Do I like to live?* — relationship, time, and closeness; (3) *May I be myself?* — attentive respect, recognition of values and justice toward oneself; (4) *What is the meaning of life now?* — connection and context, values in future, and creative becoming. Längle's framework situates motivation not in drives or power, but in existential conditions that allow life to be lived as meaningful and authentic.

In comparison, Freud emphasises instinctual survival dynamics, Adler highlights social striving and mastery, Frankl shifts the focus to existential meaning, and Längle deepens this orientation by grounding it in four fundamental conditions of existence. Together, these perspectives show a movement from biology (Freud), through social psychology (Adler), toward existential and phenomenological understandings (Frankl, Längle), reflecting an evolution of motivation from drives to values, and from determinism to freedom.

Within Ukrainian psychological thought, S.D. Maksymenko introduced the concept of *nuzhda* (Ukrainian: «нужда») as a central dynamic principle of personality development. Unlike static notions of need, *nuzhda* is described as a living flow of energy — a unity of the biological and the social — which mobilises growth, transformation, and creativity.

Nuzhda is not reducible to biological instinct or social demand alone; rather, it is their inseparable integration. The biological side includes drives essential for survival and reproduction, while the social side encompasses cultural norms, interpersonal relationships, and values. Only in their unity does *Nuzhda* fully reveal itself as the force of development.

According to Maksymenko, *Nuzhda* inherently pushes the person to adapt and create new forms of being. It manifests as a striving for self-actualisation, capable of objectifying itself in achievements, relationships, and societal contributions. This way, *Nuzhda* transcends simple "deficiency" and becomes a creative impulse that fuels growth.

Maksymenko emphasises that *nuzhda* is affiliative by essence — it seeks

connection and belonging. Its highest expression is love, understood not merely as emotion but as a fundamental act of recognition and union with the other. Through love, *Nuzhda* overcomes isolation, generating deep interpersonal bonds and meaning.

In ontogenesis, *nuzhda* appears as the very mode of existence of the developing person. It unfolds through stages of life, each marked by new forms of striving and realisation. Thus, personality is not a fixed entity but a dynamic construction, continuously shaped by the creative and relational manifestations of *nuzhda*.

In summary**,** Maksymenko's concept situates human growth within a dialectic of biology, society, creativity, and affiliation. By framing love and interpersonal encounter as the genuine expression of *nuzhda*, his theory highlights the existential foundations of resilience and development. It resonates strongly with Frankl's will to meaning and Längle's fundamental motivations, offering a uniquely Ukrainian contribution to existential psychology.

In existential psychology, love is not reduced to an emotion or instinct but is regarded as a profound act that reveals the essence and potential of another person. As Viktor Frankl describes, through love, we perceive who the person is in the present and what they may become in their potentiality. Alfried Längle expands this by noting that love allows us to *see* the possibilities within the Other, thus fostering dialogue, mutual recognition, and authentic encounter. Love integrates and strengthens bonds, offering stability in times of fragmentation. It nurtures personal and relational growth, providing the energy that sustains resilience. In this way, love challenges the entropy of human relationships — the natural tendency toward alienation, indifference, and disconnection. Instead, it creates a space of recognition, belonging, and shared meaning.

Moreover, love's affiliative dimension reflects the fundamental human need for connection and continuity. It affirms dignity and uniqueness, counteracting dehumanisation, especially in times of crisis. By uniting people in mutual attention, respect, and recognition of value, love becomes a transformative force that grounds existence and opens it toward transcendence.

In summary, love as a spiritual act embodies the deepest expression of *nuzhda*. It

sustains life against the forces of entropy, cultivates growth through authentic relationships, and empowers the person to move beyond isolation into a shared horizon of meaning and responsibility.

Self-Actualisation and the Fulfilled Existence. The striving toward self-actualisation has been a central theme in existential and humanistic psychology. It denotes the inner movement of the person to become what they authentically are, to realise their inherent capacities and values. In this perspective, self-actualisation is not simply the achievement of personal goals but the alignment of one's life with a more profound sense of meaning and responsibility.

Following S.D. Maksymenko, self-actualisation is not a static state but a continuous process of growth and self-realisation. It involves setting and pursuing life goals, overcoming obstacles, and transforming challenges into opportunities for development. Importantly, this journey is inherently creative: each decision and act becomes a step toward shaping a unique personal existence.

Alfried Längle expands Frankl's insights by introducing the notion of *fulfilled existence*. It means living life according to one's deepest values, responding authentically to life's demands, and maintaining an inner dialogue with conscience. A fulfilled existence is not measured by external success, but by the depth and authenticity of engagement with life.

Both self-actualisation and fulfilled existence are inseparably linked to existential freedom. Freedom is not merely the absence of constraints, but the capacity to choose meaningfully in each situation. Responsibility is the corollary of freedom: each choice shapes not only one's own destiny but also affects others. Thus, actualising oneself implies living responsibly and ethically. Attaining self-actualisation or fulfilled existence is not an endpoint but a threshold that opens new horizons. The moment of fulfilment carries a dual quality: it brings satisfaction and closure and calls for new growth. In this sense, human existence is inherently dynamic, constantly moving beyond itself in search of more profound realisation. In summary, self-actualisation and fulfilled existence represent the culmination of existential striving: to live authentically, responsibly, and meaningfully. They are not final states, but ongoing

movements of becoming, in which the human being transcends mere survival and situates life within a horizon of values and purpose.

In conditions of uncertainty — especially in times of crisis such as the present — the most profound human contribution lies in the capacity to live with freedom, authenticity, and responsibility. Inner spiritual and emotional autonomy enables authentic self-expression that remains aligned with personal values. Responsible action, in turn, sustains humane coexistence, ensuring that dignity, solidarity, and meaning are preserved even when external structures collapse. By embodying these existential pillars, the individual not only secures personal resilience but also contributes to the survival and renewal of the community.

Conclusion.

The core existential pillars — personal being (*Person*), love, freedom, will, and responsibility — orient personality toward integrity, resilience, and meaning-making. Experience acts as a dynamic mediator, integrating inner and outer dimensions of life. Frankl's threefold model of somatic, psychic, and spiritual existence and Längle's four fundamental motivations provide a practical framework for psychotherapy, education, and community care. In conditions of prolonged crisis, this existential orientation enables individuals and societies to transform threat into growth, sustain human dignity, and preserve the capacity for purposeful action.

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