

How we can locate validatable foundations of life themes

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ABSTRACT

Fractured personal identities contribute to conflict and corruption, underscoring the significance of comprehending identity, its expression, and societal context. Identity encompasses existence, fundamental values, and purpose, spanning from structured to arbitrary. Identity, itself, initiates one's core, which, in turn, produces virtues and ethics, molded by one's values. Living those values – internalizing them – is virtue. Imminent in our discourse is structure, repeatedly encountered in our journey through spacetime. Such bespeaks of order. We need to understand the nature of order and how it came to be, and implications for our identities. The Voris method, particularly the Authentic Life Theme Assessment (ALTA), is an identity proper, effectively demonstrating that one's core produces fundamental values that result in life themes, all affirming an individual's existence, distinctiveness, purpose, and influence.

Keywords: Personal Identity, Voris Method, Identity and Order, Personality, Authentic Systems, Core Values, Virtue Ethics, Values Clarification

1. INTRODUCTION

At no time in modern history have we been so close to global annihilation by thermonuclear war. Social breakdown is occurring in countries all across the planet. Worsening health (e.g., obesity and mental health), job dissatisfaction, and family problems have been mounting over the past decade, along with economic difficulties (debt, lower wages, and inflation). According to recent statistics, 70%-80% of Americans consider their families dysfunctional. It has been proven that family connections are fundamental to our emotional and psychological well-being [Gourani, 2019]. Life expectancy declining in US, more shootings, and road rage are symptoms of social fracturing. Its national debt is about 34.8 trillion dollars (as of 9 June 2024), and, at the current rate of increase, most likely will not be payable, thus risking economic meltdown.

Social integrity depends on individual integrity, and conversely. Both must have integrity to meet the Holocene Extinction successfully and live more harmoniously in their environments. Asking the “why” of events necessarily invokes philosophy and a question of how we have arrived at the current socioeconomic system. Notice the conspicuous absence of philosophy in the school system.

Humans traverse life exhibiting a life theme, a pattern of thinking and behavior. They may not know why they act in these ways, and personality assessments, counseling, values clarification

programs, and philosophy courses often fail to enlighten due mainly to their addressing the behavior itself or options for behavior, that is, effects, not causes, or reasons. A person not able to identify why s/he acts may live more randomly than purposefully. A person not knowing what motivates her/himself also cannot communicate with her/himself or give personal meaning to others. It is questionable, at best, whether a society populated with such individuals can avoid conflict. Extreme cases of internal conflict can result in external violence, or in the collective case, wars. We need to know what generates a person's behavior to forestall both personal and social calamities. To see why requires patient thinking, more specifically, philosophy.

Teleology (end, goal, or purpose) requires ontology (that which exists to create the end). To speak of origin implies, of course, its existence (mental or physical), and to accept the idea of existence requires our justification in believing it to be so, or epistemology. However, epistemology exists as well. Rather than an infinite regress of ontology-epistemology-ontology or which precedes the other, there is the hoopsnake, yin-yang, systems feedback, recursion, and the popular chicken-egg problem. Nevertheless, we need to intervene in this cycle to inform a conflicted person about their origin of behavior. The very reason or grounds on which we accept these statements are commitment, both as an object (ontology) and process (epistemology), neither existing without the other.

Much is unknown about locating origins. Too, “cause” is controversial, a safe word being “association”. Still, it is not frivolous to ask what yields something else. Scientific and mathematical frameworks will assist us in wrestling with our ultimate origins. Quantum physicists admit they are unable to locate the “final” smallest of the smallest “particles.”. Instead, they must be content with observing field effects. From them, they infer a particle's characteristics. A second framework is calculus, where observers settle on what is practical or satisfactory for answers. Neither is an “absolute”, reminding us of our limitations in knowledge.

The present scope of this paper is merely an introduction to a new discipline I'd like to call “identity location”. Immediately relevant to this present journal, The Journal on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics (JSCI) is both informing and systems, as well as an interdisciplinary (better, transdisciplinary) approach needed for identity location. Before engaging in particulars, we need to be aware of our universe within which identity is found. This includes the nature of our apprehension and its processes. What is that which we are aware, but more critical, how is it that we are even aware, at all?

2. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 The most fundamental law

How do we apprehend, generally? Can something, in and of itself, be without what it is not? We start with arguably the most difficult condition of all: a state of no contrast, distractions, or distinctions. Eastern religions implore one to evacuate the mind of everything and enter a state of bliss – no stimulation, distractions, or even thoughts. Ours is not the place to answer if this is a state of nothingness, non-being, or emptiness, but to consider it as, perhaps, a pre-realization, where any single thing other than that state is a distraction. Other conceptualizations are perturbation, distinction, and point. Herein, we have difference, sufficiently expressed by something and its other, a binary relationship. Out of silence emerges the singularity of two parts, each dependent upon the other for its existence, the essence of the unity of difference, more commonly known as the “unity of opposites” (“opposite” being a type of difference). Some duals are left-right, up-down, chaos (physics)-entropy, episteme-techné, alive-dead, and build-destroy [Horne, 2022]. Beginning with a whole and disturbing it substantively obeys Rene Descartes famous 1637 dictum:

We need “...to divide each of the difficulties under examination into as many parts as possible, and as might be necessary for its adequate solution. [Descartes, 1637/1912, p. 15]... by showing we cannot conceive body unless as divisible”[Ibid., p. 76]

If we are to say that our presence began with a “big bang” (Nature’s Cartesian cut), the “singularity”, it is safe to say that everything emerging from it includes processes (movement) and objects (stasis), observing, each existing because of the other. Revisiting the “particle” at Planck scale diminishes to a point (dimensionless) from repeated Cartesian subdivision - the smallest of the smallest (infinitesimal), leaving behind the ever expanding (infinite). Bound up with distinction is spatiotemporality. Recalling Newton, individuality requires its opposite, i.e., something else, these two incapable of occupying the same place. Because we shift from one apprehension to another, there is time [Rovelli, 2021]. From this law emerging from perturbing, or fracturing the whole, we may observe the following:

- The principle of imminence – *a posteriori* contains the *a priori*. The origin is found in the consequent – becoming. This may be re-framed as the principle of inheritance.
- Criteria of repeatability – the Principle of Induction – the future resembles the past, corollary to the principle of imminence. We apprehend empirically (concretize), memorize (abstract/mentalize), and repeatedly apply, evaluating repetition with same standards as creating unit [Horne, 2020]. Demarcation of time and number rely on this process, the unit created in the first step.

2.2 The two pillars of philosophy

The substructure of thinking about identity is built with two supports: ontology and epistemology. If we accept the above as what there is, we also have made an ontological commitment that must give force (sustain, or justify) every thing that follows. Subsequent affirmation, given the principle of immanence, carries the same essence.

How can we justify the above? How do we know? Questions of space, time, inheritance, and imminence are embedded in the scientific literature we accept. Ontological commitment (a definite act) might, it seem, subsume its own justification, but such violates the most fundamental law. Its other is epistemology, the process, or how we know.

Because ontology and epistemology depend on each other for existence (singularity), perforce, recursion occurs, well symbolized by the yin-yang and hoopsnake images. Indeed, these represent the most fundamental law, itself.

2.3 Metaphysical barriers and the response

To know something incorporates our realization of limits. We first encounter this with our inability to escape ourselves. That is, we see ourselves and everything around us through ourselves. Bias is inherent. Even if a deity appeared, or our “absolute” authority, we would be in the same “fishbowl”.

A second manifestation of limit is continuing Descartes’ divisions until we arrive at Planck scale ($1.616255 \times 10^{-35}m$), where “particles” flick in and out of existence and where nothing apparently is certain but uncertainty. Another consequence is the inability to establish boundaries. A corollary is Xenon’s famous “tortoise and hare” problem, the hare never able to overcome the tortoise, as with successive halving of distance, with always some distance left to travel. A second corollary is finding the area of a circle, successive subdivisions, as Archimedes did [Swetz, 2013]. A third limit is our inability to apprehend things by themselves without contrast, save for deep meditation, perhaps. A corollary here is why the dialectic between something and its difference produces what it is (the most fundamental law “working”).

Yet a fourth, but two-part limit, was articulated in a very abstruse manner by Godel, that one cannot find a complete and consistent set of axioms for all mathematics, and no system can demonstrate its own consistency. This is similar to Russell’s set of all sets problem, in that each successive set of anything must also have its own characteristics and standards for inclusion specified. The second part applies to humans, that each of us cannot prove our own being.

Many other “paradoxes” arise, seemingly having no resolution, each expressing our knowledge limitations. Such appears to cast a pall over our existence, asking equally profound questions about whether there is “progress”, purpose, and even “consciousness”.

Part of any response taking into account metaphysical barriers is the concept of transdisciplinary. Our pursuit of knowledge, given Descartes, has subdivided our world into many disparate parts, oftentimes many not interacting/communicating with the others, resulting in the siloing of information. What is known in one area may not be known in others, those unknowns being so because investigators think an insurmountable barrier has been encountered.

2.4 Resolution

Given our inability to identify boundaries, Archimedes and others realized that subdivision might occur forever. Ceasing it occurs by setting a limit, and that is done by us (especially mathematicians and logicians, with their axioms, rules, definitions, and so forth), and such is inherently biased. A similar

problem occurs if one is found in an environment with no reference frames. Imagine an astronaut in deep space with nothing in sight.

Still, we need a reference frame, and it is expeditious to work with what we apparently cannot change – us, our being our own reference frame, more succinctly for our purposes, our identity. All we have left is bootstrapping. Once we arrive at this conclusion, a second inescapable circumstance greets us. We live in a web. Everything is integrated and interdependent. Similar words are network, matrix, lattice, etc., all because of the most fundamental law. The singularity is both integrated and interdependent. Applied to more than two, there are the triad, quad, and *ad infinitum*.

How do we know if we have selected the right bootstrap? The criteria of repeatability, inheritance, and imminence appear to be about all we have, all dependent upon ontological commitment and its parameters.

3. ANATOMY OF ONE'S BEING

We descend from the effects – life theme, personality, values (and the way they are internalized – virtue), to the metaphorical particle producing them, one's core. The phrase "one's core" strictly implies uniqueness, thus identity, which stands on a well-defined platform, the proverbial turtle supporting it being a supposition forced on us by metaphysical limitation.

Front and center is "identity", and it resides in an environment. Each necessitates unpacking, especially the former. For now, let's be content with a "common sense" view to orient us to the elements involved in identity location, identity being oneself and no other. Using our scientific model of observing the effects of a "particle", we observe behavior translated into life themes as the initial effect of one's core, followed by values. What is contained in that core hallmarks one's identity. Identity exists as unique, recalling Newton and his two entities not occupying the same space at the same time, or, in modern parlance, spatio-temporally. We now start peeling away the layers of the proverbial onion to reach its core: life theme – personality – values – virtue – core – identity.

3.1 Life theme

Throughout history, civilizations and their philosophers have recognized diverse "life themes," recurring patterns of thought and behavior reflecting an individual's identity. "Theme" encompasses a broad subject area; all words orbit around a consistent pattern of unified meaning, indicating significance or value. Buried in the synonyms is "meaning", "significance", and "importance" – that importance expressed by the self. These compose the motivation for one's behavior, or the essence of a life theme. Various facets of "meaning," such as "significance," "worth," "substance," and "endowment," are illuminated by a thesaurus. Examples include love, personal value, power, freedom, truth and justice, triumph over adversity, survival, friends and family, domination, coming of age, fear, accepting change, communion, agency, and redemption. A search online under "life themes - images" yields numerous charts, systems, graphs, and other visuals presenting various organizations and programs. Yet, midst this abundance, there's a recurring question: how can the plethora of themes be condensed into a few fundamental ones that encompass the rest? This is a worthy

project, evaluating the efficacy of each requiring separate research efforts. Our focus here isn't on comparing and contrasting these systems, but on examining one for its effectiveness, probing whether it translates theory into practice based on a method of locating and expressing identity.

3.2 Personality

The American Psychological Association says:

Personality refers to the enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns. Various theories explain the structure and development of personality in different ways, but all agree that personality helps determine behavior.

[APA – Personality, 2023]

Apparently, there is a qualification,

Traditionally, the use of personality traits in applied settings has been predicated on their ability to predict valued outcomes, typically under the assumption that traits are functionally unchanging. This assumption, however, is both untrue and a limiting factor on using personality traits more widely in applied settings.

[Bleidorn et al, 2019]

... and, "...personality has a stable component across the life span, both at the trait level and at the profile level, and that personality is also malleable and people mature as they age" [Damian, 2019]

From American Psychiatric Association:...

Personality is the way of thinking, feeling and behaving that makes a person different from other people. An individual's personality is influenced by experiences, environment (surroundings, life situations) and inherited characteristics. A person's personality typically stays the same over time.

[American Psychiatric, 2023]

The World Health Organization says "personality" is:

a variety of conditions and behaviour patterns of clinical significance which tend to be persistent and appear to be the expression of the individual's characteristic lifestyle and mode of relating to himself or herself and others.

[WHO, 2023]

Behavior is an effect, and the only way we know a person is thinking or feeling is by, again, the effects these produce. "Person" is the root word for "personality", and the former's etymology is telling. The [Online Etymology Dictionary](#) says:

person (n.)

c. 1200, *persoun*, "an individual, a human being," from Old French *persone* "human being, anyone, person" (12c., Modern French *personne*) and directly from Latin *persona* "human being, person, personage; a part in a drama, assumed character," originally "a mask, a false face," such as those of wood or clay, covering the whole head, worn by the actors in later Roman theater. OED offers the general 19c. explanation of *persona* as "related to" Latin *personare* "to sound through" (i.e. the mask as something spoken through and perhaps amplifying the voice), "but the long o makes a difficulty" Klein and Barnhart say it is possibly borrowed from Etruscan *phersu* "mask."

It is a projection, not an essence. In the realm of assumed identities, a person becomes an avatar, embodying a representation of the genuine. Plato's allegory in "The Republic"

(Book Seven) illustrates this concept vividly: individuals traverse an elevated stage behind an audience, while silhouettes atop poles cast shadows on a wall illuminated by a large fire. Exiting the spectacle, the audience discovers the sun's brilliance illuminating the true forms, underlying the shadows they had beheld. Within this framework, personalities resemble mere shadows on the wall, prompting Plato's critique of our failure to grasp reality, dwelling instead in the realm of illusions. This notion resonates with the Eastern philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism, which speak of Maya, the illusory nature of our worldly existence. The personality, then, is not the core, or one's identity.

Summarizing, personality and a life theme are distinct concepts. A life theme encompasses behaviors and the underlying core values such as ethos, virtue, and virtue ethics. Unlike the mask of personality, a life theme displays deeper aspects of one's being and how it is expressed or concealed. While personality assessments often focus on surface traits, they often overlook the essence of an individual's core values and one's living them out.

3.3 Values

Learning of the word's origins:

value (n.)

c. 1300, "price equal to the intrinsic worth of a thing;" late 14c., "degree to which something is useful or estimable," from Old French *value* "worth, price, moral worth; standing, reputation" (13c.), noun use of fem. past participle of *valoir* "be worth," from Latin *valere* "be strong, be well; be of value, be worth" (from PIE root **wal-* "to be strong").

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/value>

does not tell us what generates it. Too, "values" is ambiguous word, synonyms for which are "ethos", "virtue", "convictions", "philosophy", and "ethics" (using *Word Hippo*, my favorite thesaurus). Here, virtue is not the same as value, because virtue, itself, is a value. Axiology (the study of value) is outside the scope of this paper, but suffice it to say, ethos is the set of core values, ethics is rules of conduct stemming from values, and morality is how those rules are translated into action. For example, the pursuit of truth and knowledge has the greatest meaning in life (ethos), we should do everything to promote education – like building schools (ethics), and we make laws – and see them carried out by establishing a schools system (morality). Of course, these categories overlap, but, in general, they progress from the abstract to concrete. Closest to the core is ethos, but, we have not arrived at its source, that is, the "why". A personality not equivalent to the core is conflicted.

3.4 Virtue

Living a core value (internalization - Althusser), is virtue. "Practice what you preach." Virtue, itself, is a value, as well as a process. That is, the process is an object, and the object is process. Process is realized ("real + ized" (or not). For Classical Greek philosophers "virtue" is the capacity for virtuous conduct in everyone.

virtue (n.)

c. 1200, *vertu*, "moral life and conduct; a particular moral excellence," from Anglo-French and Old French *vertu* "force, strength, vigor; moral strength; qualities, abilities" (10c. in Old French), from Latin *virtutem* (nominative *virtus*) "moral strength, high character, goodness;

manliness; valor, bravery, courage (in war); excellence, worth," from *vir* "man" (from PIE root **wi-ro-* "man").

[Virtue – etymology, 2023]

"Moral", is the way ethics is carried out (from the above heading, "values") and "conduct". Resolving the relationship between values and virtue is virtue ethics.

3.5 Virtue ethics

Ethics embodies the persona of ethos, while morals reflect the persona of ethics, much like a person embodies the mask of "who," which represents ethos. Simply put, "virtue ethics" concerns the extent to which core values are actualized. This concept can be likened to the kineticization of potential. Recall that ethos constitutes the fundamental core value, ethics serves as the guidelines for enacting those values, and morals represent specific instances of ethical actions.

Virtue ethics addresses how individuals treat themselves and others within society. Are they striving to fulfill their potential? Do they hold themselves in high enough regard to do so? Are individuals engaging in honest work, maintaining fairness, avoiding conflict, and displaying empathy and helpfulness? These considerations define the virtuous individual within a community. Just as individuals can possess virtue ethics, so can societies.

To now, we have described effects of the core: life theme, personality, values, virtue, and virtue ethics. Now, we advance to the origin.

4. IDENTITY

4.1 How we talk about identity

Initially and in the most abstract/linguistic way, anything having an identity means that something is what it is and nothing else, or as Collins dictionary says pertaining to logic, "that relation that holds only between any *entity* and itself", its primary definition, "the state of having *unique identifying* characteristics held by no other person or thing". Ubiquitous are dictionaries setting forth the primary definition applying to persons.

The word's etymology and growth of meaning is captured nicely by:

identity (n.)

c. 1600, "sameness, oneness, state of being the same," from French *identité* (14c.), from Medieval Latin *identitatem* (nominative *identitas*) "sameness," ultimately from Latin *idem* (neuter) "the same" (see *idem*).

An earlier form of the word in English was *idemtitie* (1560s), from Medieval Latin *idemtitas*. The term **identity crisis** is recorded by 1954. **Identity theft** is attested from 1995. **Identity politics** is attested by 1985, the phrase said to have been brought to attention by the Black feminist Combahee River Collective Statement (1977).

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/identity>

That is, the essence of the word – sameness – has not changed. Our question, now, is what is it particularly that remains the same? It is the core, the source, which emits/creates effects. This core characterizes one's origin, or reference frame.

In first-order logic, an individual is represented symbolically by a variable, such as “x”, but this cannot stand alone, except without something characterizing it, i.e., a property, “P”, the upper case property variable. For example, “x”, an individual has the property of a house (P), “Px”. Our special case is of the individual (x) having the property of existence (P), the oddity being existence, itself.

Repeating the introduction:

... to accept the idea of existence requires our justification in believing it to be so, or, epistemology. Which precedes the other is answered by the hoopsnake, yin-yang, systems feedback, recursion, and the popular chicken-egg problem. Nevertheless, we need to intervene in this cycle to inform a conflicted person about their origin of behavior.

At the most reduced level, the individual (that which is identity, itself, in the abstract) is the ontology, the epistemology the existence. Metaphorically, ontology is the dimensionless point – stasis, epistemology the first dimension and process (by virtue of the fact spatiotemporality is required – something and its other) framing it. Herein is the building block of concrete identity. The verb “to be” (I am) bespeaks the ontology-existence singularity. Without ontology – what exists – epistemology would not. To have a known (existence) requires a knower (epistemology) and vice versa. This recursion, feedback, applies to identity location, development, and affirmation, as will be seen below. Identity wears the mask of the persona (recalling the etymology of “person”); it is the “who”. An individual contemplates its existence, from which emanates the person, in turn existing and justifying itself through epistemology via meaning.

“Who are you?” does not equal “Whom are you?”. I will use this little grammatical exercise to illustrate the depth of our problem. Merriam-Webster says:

Who performs the action of a verb (e.g. “Who sent us this gift?”), while whom receives the action (“We got this gift from whom?”). In grammar terms, that makes who a subject, and whom an object. When following a preposition, whom is the preferred choice (“To whom should we address our thank you note?”).

The choice between *who* and *whom* can sometimes be confusing, and this has always been the case. But English is extremely flexible, and actual usage doesn’t always follow the strict rules of grammar. Our ears are our guides, and there are many constructions (like “*Whom* did you speak to?” vs. “*Who* did you speak to?”) in which *whom* may be technically correct but still feel fussy or unnatural. In these cases, it is perfectly standard to use *who*. [Who-Whom distinction, 2023]

It should not be difficult to see how the verb of being could equate “you” with a subject or an object. Our very language allows the objectification of human beings (as in “human capital”). While ordinary and relatively non-competitive circumstances may allow one to ignore these distinctions in everyday discourse, the essence of the language does allow – no, impels – clarification of whether a person is a subject or object. Such is critical in discussing one’s relations to society, especially, its institutions. Here, one may affirm a personal identity, but it may be transmogrified by social shaping. My use of a word normally found in a humorous or grotesque context is apropos in the current age of oppression and conflict.

Identity not only includes the impetus (core values) for one’s living but how it is carried out (virtue). Such suggests itself in behavior, whether the person is selfish, communitarian, is a master in what they do, noble, or rogue. The person may be integrated with society or alienated, reflecting the integrity of one’s identity. The “who” expresses themselves as happy/sad, meaningful/empty, purposeful/aimless, alienated/belonging, and so forth. While one has an identity, its expression may even be contradictory.

Does identity change? Identity and equivalence are comparison operators. James K. Feibleman [1979], in *The Assumption of Grand Logics*, wrote that $x=y$ (identity) is not the same as $x \circ y$ (equivalence). Something in itself is tautologous. For equivalence, an elephant is equivalent to a tree (for example), in that both are equivalent with respect to each being a living thing. The equivalence quickly breaks down with another comparison standard, as in whether both are mammals. Equivalence, then, means that both are the same, given one or more properties. What about us?

How do we compare something to itself in space and time – from one particular moment and location to another? Because, as Heraclitus observed and physicists confirm, everything is in a state of flux; identity becomes equivalence, because, minimally, subatomic configurations will vary from time frame to time frame. For practical (macroscopic world) purposes, something remains identical to itself. So, too, the mathematicians agree. Relax yourselves for statistical purposes; our identity remains affixed.

Logicians, like Bertrand Russell in his “[identity and definite description](#)”, solved the problem simply by pointing to something unique, never anything else. Again, it is what it is and no other. For us in the macro world, we will say the core of the person is constant while it changes masks, a determination realizable through dynamic validation (repeated snapshots in ongoing time). Identity is one’s reference frame to explore the world. Compromise its integrity, and everything following inherits the faults.

4.2 Attempts to Locate Identity

Persons in an unsettled state may take personality “tests” (properly called “assessments”, as tests have only “correct” answers). Values clarification may help a person report what is meaningful to them, but a) the categories of values are disparate substantively, and b) these methods do not reveal what generates values. Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) has been deemed pseudoscience [Witkowski, 2010], psychotherapy is has varying effectiveness, and philosophy courses are not specific enough. All of these have the common problem of not reaching one’s core, and the narrative below will serve as a comparison for the above. (all which can be explained in detail by an internet search).

More controversial, but promising are genetics and DNA, with neuroimaging of coarse structures emanating from the former two. Neuroimaging, in turn, is mapped to human behavior. At least this is the goal of projects like the Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) undertaken by the US National Institute of Mental Health [RDOC, 2024].

5. THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

5.1 Order

Returning to the initial binary condition resulting from how the singularity is composed, we also should observe that an arrangement can be made, that is, an ordering. To do this - even absent materiality, i.e., abstraction, we have to minimally accept temporality. Space requires temporality; temporality requires space. In fact, even as we are thinking, time occurs. Perforce, we think something and then another; time has occurred. In our meditation example, we can meditate, have a thought, and return to meditation. In this string, meditation precedes thought, followed by meditation. Appealing to Newton – no two entities can occupy the same in space (or time).

In the first dimension, we have two orderings, or arrangements. Otherwise stated, we have the minimum conditions of order. Regarding the singularity in the same fashion, we consider either something before or after what it is not. At our dimension's most reduced scale – even where “particles” are observed and disappear, ordering exists; it is innate in our dimension. Our observations and their reportage express our ontology, that which exists. All of this is innate in our very being. Recall the principles of imminence and inheritance.

5.2 Compound order and deep structures

Compound order emerges from the simple, corresponding to compound dimensions, the simplest (single) being the line, planes (two) composed of lines, and space (three) of planes, spatiotemporality binding these together. Deep structures are those occurring at the basest layers of our universe. These include conceptual structures, as exemplified in the duals, explained above.

More specific to space is how entities are arranged at the “ground” level, emanating from the micro to the macro level. Every competent high school student having taking a chemistry course should know that the most stable elementary substance is an element, which is constructed by atoms. Elements combine with others in a predetermined manner, according to the electromagnetic properties of the elements, that is valences. That is, the resulting molecules are built by atoms geometrically. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the long history of development, suffice it to say that with James Clerk Maxwell works on electromagnetism, modern science has valence shell electron pair repulsion (VSEPR) theory to predict the geometry of individual molecules, bearing in mind that these atoms and molecules are bound electromagnetically. Such is physical chemistry, inherent/innate in our world. Again, what occurs in this microworld percolates up to the macro. Particularly, atoms compose molecules, molecules composed DNA, DNA builds genomes, genomes build neurostructures, and human behavior is now being correlated with those neurostructures. This fact will be revisited later in explaining the correlation of life themes with the human genome. An exciting plethora of literature is emerging on the geometry of thought, with severe implications for developing artificially intelligent beings. [Geometry of thought, 2024] Here, each brain is unique, hence the particular geometry.

Geometry can be reduced to pure mathematics, as relationships of positions are with angles and curves described by numbers. Max Tegmark exemplifies mathematical reductionism

(remember Descartes?) in his 2016 article “The Mathematical Universe”, with, “our physical world is an abstract mathematical structure.”. As an aside, problems abound with ascertaining what is “physical” and “mental” [Horne, 2022], but reducing everything in the macro world to numbers (at least as a bootstrap) is not out of the question for reasonable predictability/pattern establishment.

A mathematics of thought is not outrageous, initial work by child psychologist Jean Piaget [1972] in his *Traité de logique - Essai de logistique opératoire* describing the correlation of foundational logical structures to psychological development. Brain development progressively accommodates spatiotemporal complexity, represented by set relationships of inclusion/exclusion/equivalence, mathematical relationships, in themselves. The mathematics of the brain (genetically – and ultimately determined by mathematical/geometric relationships of atoms) governs the child's behavior.

We now are well on the way to affirming claims of innate structures. Archaeologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (28 November 1908 – 30 October 2009), exemplifies structuralism, as does Michel Foucault. Child psychologist Jean Piaget (9 August 1896 – 16 September 1980), Mathematician Max Tegmark (5 May 1967 -), and physicist John Archibald Wheeler (9 July 1911 – 13 April 2008) are others. Political scientists refer to the “structuralism versus functionalism” interaction. Ancient philosophers like Pythagoras (570 – 495 B.C.E.), Democritus (460 – 370 B.C.E.), Plato (428/427 or 424/423 – 348 B.C.E.), and Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.E.) thought similarly.

We will not be able to simply get to the atomic level of mentation here, but we will accurately probe to the foundation of one's behavior. Specific biology emits specific modes of behavior, and once the mental source of behavior is identified, neuroscientists can take over if cognitive measures are insufficient to ameliorate situations desiring intervention.

6. PROBING WITH THE AUTHENTIC SYSTEM FOR THE CORE GIVING RISE TO THE LIFE THEME

6.1 Problems addressed by the Authentic System

Now comes an overview of the Authentic System [<https://authentic-systems.com/>]. The Authentic Life Theme Assessment program involves identifying life themes and conducting workshops aimed at distilling from a series of individual conversations a comprehensive portrayal of one's identity and its manifestation in their life choices. With the Authentic website, we learn that the system can:

- Solve some existential issues with the truth of who you really are
- Tap into the unique motivating force that truly drives you.
- Develop profound self-acceptance and fresh interest in life again.
- Recognize who or what is stopping you from being who you really are.

[Voris, 2023, The Ultimate Journey]

All these lead to the “who or what” generating one's actions. **According to Authentic Systems, responses to the inquiry "What is your life theme?" will similarly address queries such as:**

- What gives your life Happiness?
- What gives your life Meaning?
- What gives your life Purpose?
- What gives your life Belonging?

[Ibid.]

6.2 The four Authentic System life themes and their consequences

Drawing from a rich tapestry of virtue and value systems worldwide, a cross-comparison has distilled them into four central pillars: love, power, justice, and wisdom. These foundational virtues trace their origins back to Plato's specifying prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance in Book IV of "The Republic" (426-435[a]), which were further elucidated by Aristotle [1984] in his "Nicomachean Ethics". The Stoics and Cicero also recognized and expanded upon these virtues. Within the Christian tradition, they are echoed in the Apocrypha (Wisdom of Solomon 8:7 and 4 Maccabees 1:18-19), as well as by the Doctors Ambrose and Augustine. Aquinas elaborated on their supernatural counterparts, known as the theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity.

Across diverse cultures, including ancient Egyptians, North American indigenous peoples, global Shamans, European philosophers, and psychotherapists, these four themes consistently emerge as central ideas. The historical presence of these four universal and innate sources of motivation underscores their authenticity across cultures worldwide. The Authentic programme, as outlined by Voris (2019), draws from these four cardinal virtues, serving as overarching "headings" under which all other virtues may be categorized. It is important to acknowledge that our cultural and historical contexts profoundly shape us, and Authentic Systems, being Western-based, naturally reflects more influence from Western aspects of virtue.

The durability of a cardinal virtue system provides stability and serves as a necessary reference frame. In this context, classical philosophy, particularly the contributions of Plato and Aristotle, offers enduring foundations. However, extending beyond classical philosophy, diverse cultures have developed their own systems of four-fold virtues over centuries. The shared presence of these lasting four-valued systems offers a rational starting point for identifying one's core values or theme and evaluating life experiences. We can reconcile the classical rendition of the Greeks within this broader framework.

Table 1. Classical virtues compared with Authentic System virtues

PLATO	ARISTOTLE	AUTHENTIC SYSTEMS
wisdom	prudence	wisdom
justice	justice	justice
moderation/	temperance	love
courage/fortitude	courage	power

Whether the content of the left two columns can align with, be interpreted within, or be equated to the those of Authentic Systems (a research proposal) is not as significant as virtue ethics, itself.

A life theme--

- is irreducible and absolute and cannot contain another Theme.

- must be independent from all contextual characteristics.
- must be present in every culture and historical period.
- must generate meaning to form and content of linguistic expression.
- must assist in the construction of the self.
- must manifest in dialog expressing aspects of the self.
- is responsible for the bias found in awareness and later choices made.
- must defines both guilt and shame.
- must be one of four Virtues elevated to theme from which all evolves.
- [Voris-Horne - Private email – 3 November 2023]

6.3 The four themes

Love: Advocates of Humanity

One with a life theme of love has a "keen awareness of the needs of self and others. empathy, advocates for other peoples, rescues others, is a communitarian, family-oriented, cares for animals (and plants and the environment), volunteers, is altruistic, shares, and generally puts others above themselves" [Voris, 2023, *Discover the Power*, p. 35].

Justice: Arbiters of Humanity

The justice theme is about

... awareness of what is fair, right and good and can balance between fact and sentiment. ... First, abstractly, as an arbiter and negotiator, guiding others toward the ideas of excellence and integrity. Second, physically, as an artist or engineer seeking symmetry and harmony through the art of creating."

[Ibid., p. 47]

These are translated into life as:

An architect brings function and aesthetics

- A landscape artist brings together nature and human imagination
- A chef finds balance to ingredients, temperature and time.
- A negotiator finds harmony between two in conflict
- An editor seeks symmetry between the author and the world.

[Ibid., p. 48]

Wisdom: Teachers of Humanity

Persons with a wisdom theme "... possess a natural, deep desire to grasp knowledge" [Ibid. p. 59]. that may be compulsive. They are more objective, as opposed to being emotional. One is "...driven to know what you feel is required" continuing "to learn more and more until you are sufficiently satisfied only to be driven again" [Ibid, p. 60].

Wisdom People excel in careers or social roles requiring extensive knowledge. The Wisdom Person is happiest when serving as an expert go-to person or resource for others. He or she is more than happy to take on all the research and knowledge acquisition for which others have neither the time nor the inclination. [Ibid., p. 60]

Researchers, academics, teachers, and investigators would fit into this class.

Power: Leaders of Humanity

Power concerns, "... a need to act upon your thoughts and get into action. Empowerment finds its expression and purpose through you as a natural leader and agent of change" [Ibid, p. 69]. "Power people value the alphas and implore others to be so, and are the resource to make this happen, ... advising, consulting and guiding others to achieve their own self-realization and mastery" [Ibid., p. 70]. These persons are the one who emphasize responsibility, decision-making, assertiveness, and other traits that make persons leaders.

It doesn't take much imagination to think of those in this category; name any career leader.

6.4 Relationships of themes

Though one theme may take precedence, others also exist to differing extents. Each theme interacts with the others, resulting in 16 potential permutations. These interactions span from individuals with the same theme or different ones, fostering harmony, to scenarios of complete antagonism toward one another.

For example, from Voris lists some life thematic interactions:

- Love and Wisdom
- Love and Justice
- Love and Power
- Love and Love
- Wisdom and Justice
- Wisdom and Power
- Wisdom and Wisdom
- Justice and Power
- Justice and Justice
- Power and Power

[Ibid., p. 79]

With examples,

- Because the Justice Theme consists of part Love and part Wisdom, a Justice Person finds strong kinship with a Love Person. It is very common to see pairings of Love People with Justice People. [Ibid., p. 93]
- Power People are all about action and they announce the actions needed to be done. If a Love Person agrees with the Power Person's agenda, then all is well. Ultimately, the Power People need Love People to serve the agenda. [Ibid, p. 97]
- The Justice Theme consists of part Love and part Wisdom, so a Justice Person finds kinship with either a Wisdom Person or a Love Person, depending on which of these is more dominant within the Justice Person. A good example is if the Justice Person expresses 70% Wisdom and 30% Love. The Wisdom person will occasionally find the 30% Love mildly irritating but certainly worth the relationship. [Ibid., p. 103]
- Wisdom People may be drawn to one another in social circles, projects and causes, perhaps because they need to work together in some capacity to synergistically combine their individual knowledge. However, in terms of close personal relationships, a Wisdom Person and another Wisdom Person is a relatively rare combination unless other motivations are sufficiently diverse. [Ibid., p. 111]

This combination definitely falls under the category of strange bedfellows. Rare, but still entirely possible with enough awareness and mutual understanding, a relationship between a Justice Person and a Power Person is far more likely to be fruitful if the Justice Person favors Wisdom over Love in his or her personal mixture of the two virtues. [Ibid., p. 113]

6.5 Life theme behaviors

Authentic Systems explains life theme behaviors, such as (wording provided by the programme's founder, John Voris):

- Procrastination - Procrastination is a symptom of avoiding nonconforming activity, threatening identity stability.
- Negative self-image - Negative self-image results from not knowing your Authentic Identity and feeling forced into a contra-image.
- Balancing work and home struggle - This is a symptom of social engineering and not knowing your Life Theme
- Goal setting - Artificial goals have timelines and conclusions. Authentic goals transcend time and form internal structure.
- Dealing with Human conflict - Conflict occurs when two Authentic Identities expressing two versions of morality and ethics come in contact. Had they known their Authentic Identities this would be avoided.
- Self-confidence - Everyone has self-confidence when expressing his or her Life Theme.
- Self-discipline - The need for conscientious self-discipline is a symptom of engaging in inauthentic nonconforming activities forcing consciousness to supervene our natural authentic expression.
- Getting out of comfort zones You can only become who you are and have been. There is a difference between new and uncomfortable activities within your comfort zone, and violating the boundary of your Authentic Domain.
- Fear of success and failure - Our Authentic Life Theme directs and forms boundaries to our choices designed to capture happiness and avoid misery. When we mentally project Performing an activity or Being someone beyond our Authentic Domain, we feel our sense of self being threatened. This is what causes fear. No one is afraid of Success or Failure only identity nihilism.
- Listening skills - The Life Themes of Love, Justice, Wisdom, and Power contain their own lexicon for speaking and listening. The only true way to hear what a different theme is saying is for the listener to suspend his or her authentic lexicon and tap into the Domain matching the speaker.
- Communication skills within the family - When family members communicate knowing the Life Theme of the other, harmony always takes place.
- Dealing with anger and frustration - Both anger and frustration are symptoms of obstacles blocking authentic expression. While joy, and the feeling of success are the results of unblocked authentic expression. Stopping someone's expression of anger is like stopping someone's expression of joy: they both are sign posts of what to avoid and what to embrace.
- Negative habits - Negative habits are symptoms of a blocked Authentic or Synthetic Expression. To overcome negative habits, that person must first know

his or her Authentic Identity that will reveal the type and kind of blockage to be removed.

7. THE AUTHENTICITY BLUEPRINT

Being, doing, and escape compose the Authentic Identity Blueprint, explained by the following figure:

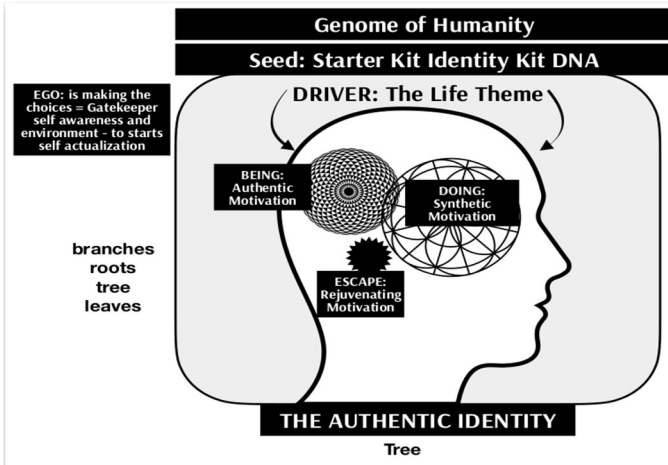


Figure 1. Authentic Identity Blueprint

[Voris, 2023, Authentic Identity Blueprint, p. 1]

Being is the Authentic motivation, doing the synthetic motivation, and escape the rejuvenating motivation, explained by this diagram:

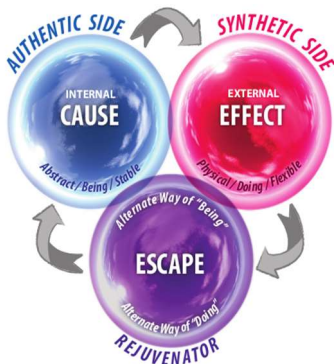


Figure 2. The Life Theme Cycle

[Voris, 2023, Discovery Session Workbook, p. 8]

The Authentic Side embodies stability and structure in one's essence, demonstrated through life's commitments - the embodiment of the "Real You". It remains steadfast and purpose-driven, conveying one's unique existence to the world with the affirmation, "I exist, I am unique with purpose and I make a difference." This aspect fosters a sense of fulfillment and sustainable happiness. The Synthetic Side, as perceived by others, manifests stability and structure in actions and behaviors. It exhibits adaptability, creativity, and spontaneity, embracing various ways to express oneself and exercise free will. This facet aids in navigating life's challenges with versatility. The Rejuvenator serves as a temporary escape from both the

Authentic and Synthetic sides, allowing for a break and recharge. It facilitates moments of behavior deviation from one's usual self and plays a pivotal role in nurturing enduring, intimate relationships. The interplay between the Authentic (self-observation) and Synthetic (perceived by others) aspects constitutes a fundamental law (self-perception in terms of perception by others) with the Rejuvenator acting as a catalyst for this recursive dynamic.

"Authentic" is the identity, reference frame, or core. As a homeostatic, adaptive, or autodestructive system, cause yields effect, which feeds into escape, escape feeding into cause to complete the cycle.

All these combine to yield the life theme, illustrated by the following diagram:

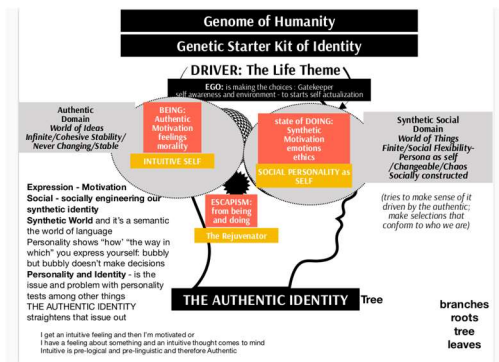


Figure 3. Genome of humanity

[Ibid., p 2]

Physical expression encompasses language and action, serving as intentional mediums through which the Authentic Identity is shaped. This identity represents the comprehensive and complete manifestation of self-expression. It is through these means that motivation is generated, leading to the formation of one's Authentic Identity. This identity, in turn, underpins various philosophical aspects crucial for understanding the overarching purpose or "why" of one's life theme.

Note the genomic basis of humanity, my explanation above in the section on innate structures emerging from primary order, again, order – geometry – atom/molecule (valence) – DNA – genome – neurocorrelates to behavior.

8. THE AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Individuals establish their initial connection with the Authentic program through an online assessment tailored to aid in understanding the primary life theme influencing their thoughts and behaviors. This assessment is designed to identify which life theme holds the greatest significance in shaping their actions, ultimately providing a framework for living purposefully. Upon completion, a personalized report summarizing the test results is generated and delivered to the individual.

The assessment consists of a 25-question multiple-choice format, featuring inquiries such as, "Which word-pair best describes you?", followed by:

- Research – Theory
- Deluxe – VIP
- Compassion - Hope
- Balance - System
- What happens after assessment?

... the answers to which will be used to say a person has a predominant life theme of wisdom, love, justice, or power. If an individual questions their initial categorization, additional questions are provided to refine the assessment. Further exploration and clarification of one's life theme are achieved through the Authentic Life Theme Assessment (ALTA) [<https://johnvoris.com/discover-your-life-theme/>].

The ALTA interview process begins with the client receiving a "Discovery Session Workbook," which elaborates on the theory of life themes, using the authentic-synthetic-rejuvenator model as explained previously. At the conclusion of the workbook, clients are encouraged to jot down "Personal Notes, Questions, or Observations".

Upon finishing the workbook, the client undergoes an interview featuring probing questions categorized under authentic, synthetic, and rejuvenator themes. Validation occurs by comparing the responses in the workbook with those given during the interview. Clients receive a personalized "Life Theme Report," as illustrated in the following example for an individual whose reported life theme is wisdom.

Your Life Theme is Wisdom

AUTHENTIC SIDE

Authentic Motivator: Theoretical Knowledge

Authentic Facilitator: Holistic Knowledge

Authentic Acknowledgment: Theoretical Knowledge

SYNTHETIC SIDE

Synthetic Motivator: Pragmatic Connection

Synthetic Facilitator: Pragmatic Design

Synthetic Acknowledgment: Pragmatic Design

Results Type: Abstract

Consumer Type: Expression

Social Type: Introspective

REJUVENATING IDENTITY

To Engage in Chaos and the Unknown

AUTHENTIC PURPOSE

To Generate To Generate Theoretical Knowledge through Pragmatic Design [Ibid., p. 2]

The client found the report to be highly precise, mirroring his role as a philosophy professor. He noted that it accurately captured his inclination to immerse himself in intellectual pursuits, focusing on generating abstract knowledge. Thirteen pages meticulously outlined various aspects of these observations. For example:

Authentic and Synthetic: The Dualistic Nature of Your Single Identity

Within your Life Theme there are two distinct sides of your single identity: An Authentic Side which expresses your abstract state of "being" and a Synthetic Side which expresses your outward state of "doing".

Together, these two produce a sort of identity engine that drives your overall sense of Wisdom forward allowing for a complete sense of self-expression and unified identity. It enables you to project your unique brand of Wisdom out into the world. In essence it declares: "I exist, I am unique, I have purpose and I make a difference." [Ibid., p. 5]

...

Challenges of being Abstract Results Driven

You assume that everyone else is abstractly based like you, and that they desire the same type of outcomes and results. Therefore, you can be out of touch with people driven by

physical results and you can also misinterpret their intent and they you. Typically speaking you may find it difficult to adequately explain to others the many ideas floating in your head and the value they contain. Often times, since you find that ideas create more ideas you are excited about all the possibilities and may have to battle the perception of others thinking that you are scatterbrained, flighty or easily distracted. [Ibid., p. 10]

During the ALTA interview, different types of authentic motivation, such as relationships, are identified. This process relies on an extensive database encompassing various forms of authenticity. It is important to note that the interview and assessment are personalized experiences, devoid of automated responses or evaluation algorithms. These assessment methods (written and interview) fulfill the requisites for an identity probe, because the nature of identity is uniqueness, and such can be revealed by specially-tailored questions relating to particular aspects of one's life, both lived (the effects), and motivations.

8. RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Below are several research areas suggested by our exploration into personality and identity assessment, not listed in any particular order. We've already observed a philosophical dimension, where individuals may comfortably delve into a deeper understanding of themselves.

To position Authentic Systems among other personality assessment programs, a comparative analysis would be beneficial. Highlighting Authentic's capacity to address the deficiencies of other programs, particularly the failure to elucidate how and why individuals internalize or struggle to internalize their core values, would be illuminating.

Regarding the values themselves, it's crucial to comprehend how they are formulated. A comparative study would be fruitful. For individuals identified outside the "Wisdom" category in the Authentic program, understanding the driving forces behind their quest for meaning is essential. Research could explore how power, love, and justice influence introspection and contribute to a sense of meaning in their lives.

Although genetic epistemology wasn't directly addressed, the work of philosophers like James Mark Baldwin and psychologists such as Jean Piaget raises intriguing questions about the biological basis of values. Supplementing such inquiries with neurocorrelation research could provide valuable insights into the biological foundations of core values.

Exploring the interplay between various quaternary value systems – the foundation of the Authentic system, such as the relationship between different four-temperament theories, could shed light on the underlying algorithms used for translation. Identifying successful systems and understanding their mechanisms would enrich foundational theories.

The examination of cultural classifications of virtues is another avenue worth exploring. Investigating their efficacy and extracting their essence, considering historical and cultural contexts, would deepen our understanding of virtue frameworks.

Understanding the impact of mental health on personality assessment programs is crucial. Mental health influences both the sender and client in communication processes. This intersection

of philosophy and psychology reveals profound questions about life themes, meaning, and existential angst. Programs may unexpectedly confront individuals with significant philosophical inquiries, potentially overwhelming them.

Life themes can influence multiple filters and factors in the information process. Recognizing the presence of multiple feedback loops and their effects on individuals' interpretations of life themes is instructive. Specifying these loops and studying their duration across individuals would enhance our understanding of the communication process. Employing modeling and simulation techniques to simulate sender, recipient, message, and environmental variables would further elucidate how individuals and their values navigate the communication landscape, offering insights into their adaptability and resilience.

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our world grapples with crises, witnessing global conflicts and growing societal and individual disillusionment. At the heart of these challenges lies the fundamental question of human identity. Many individuals either lack a clear understanding of who they are or harbor internal conflicts regarding their identities. They often remain unaware of their core values, let alone contemplate their origins and persistence. Instead of authentic core values shaping their identity, individuals often adopt masks such as religion, ethnicity, race (a socially constructed concept), gender, or ideology. "Alienation" has become emblematic of our era, fueling conflicts exacerbated by identity politics, manipulated by demagogues to foster division.

What defines a person's uniqueness? By the inherent nature of existence, no two individuals are identical, not even twins (or potentially clones, if they were to exist). According to Issac Newton, no two particles can occupy the same place at the same time. What imbues life into a person? How and why do they exist?

Identity produces a core, which, in turn, produces values, personality, and life theme – all effects. Such is predicated of deep structures emerging from innate order in the Universe. For the philosophy of an individual, ontology (existence) explains the existence of epistemology, which justifies ontology, this process characteristic of one's core stemming from the identity as order's "building block".

We have developed a method to pinpoint a life theme—a pattern of thought and action—by uncovering the source of core values, the meaningful essence that drives an individual's existence, their *raison d'être*. This underlying reason guides behavior over time. Ethos shapes rules of conduct (ethics), which manifest in day-to-day actions (morals). The extent to which a person adheres to their ethos defines their virtues. Are they living up to their potential? A person acts as a "vehicle," propelled by their ethos toward a destination, constituting the triad of a life theme. In simpler terms, an individual may wear the mask of persona but is fundamentally propelled by ethos.

Many conflicts in our world stem from mismatches between individuals' core values and their actual behaviors. Confused identities contribute to environments in turmoil, where support structures may no longer align with individuals' confused identities. From a spectrum of values, ranging from the pursuit of

truth to hedonism, life themes find support, offering elucidation on the meaning of existence.

While personality assessment programs often urge individuals to explore their "personality," they frequently overlook the quest to uncover the core driving one's life. Without a foundation in philosophy, these programs merely cast shadows on the walls of Plato's cave. Key to a successful authentic program is the recognition of identity as paramount, with "order" as its prerequisite condition. Further dissection of identity's anatomy becomes imperative for any effective program.

Identity cannot be understood without robust communication. Effective communication necessitates well-crafted messages with substantive content, supported by a well-structured communication system within a conducive environment. Both sender and receiver must possess a mindset conducive to managing messages and their content. If we aspire to approach this process scientifically and reduce uncertainties, the informing process must prove effective. For some individuals, compromised communication abilities may contribute to identity issues, demanding acknowledgment from both sender and receiver.

The Authentic System serves as an initial step, directly addressing the central problem of identity and its philosophical underpinnings. Building upon client feedback and existing case studies, further research can elaborate on the interplay of existing variables.

Ultimately, a program that fosters introspection and embraces philosophy achieves more than those merely describing the effects of actions. Effects do not necessarily indicate causes, nor are they always significantly correlated.

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