

Authenticity as a Core Virtue in the Normative Framework of a Positive-Humanistic Psychology

Gordon Medlock
The Wright Graduate Institute

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the meaning of authenticity in relation to the theory of character strengths and virtues, and to demonstrate how it serves as an integrative moral ideal within the normative framework of positive psychology. The paper clarifies the meaning of authenticity, as defined within the existential-humanistic tradition, as a multi-dimensional construct.

Thus understood, authenticity assumes a much larger place in the catalogue of virtues and related character strengths than is typically allocated within positive psychology. It not only interfaces with many of the strengths identified by Peterson and Seligman, but also accounts for how individuals integrate their distinctive value orientations into their core sense of self and personal identity.

In all these respects, authenticity emerges as a central element of the normative framework of positive psychology, and thus highlights the essential continuity between the traditions of existential-humanistic and positive psychology. The paper explores some of the advantages of regarding authenticity as a virtue in the Aristotelian sense of being a form of know-how or skill in living well. As such, it becomes possible to discuss how it can be cultivated, taught, and integrated into the individual's fundamental character and way of being. It considers the hypothesis that the yearning for authenticity represents a fundamental human need, complementary to the need for autonomy as articulated in self-determination theory. It also addresses the lack within positive psychology of a constructivist theory of the self to account for how character strengths are incorporated into the fundamental value-orientation and self-structure of the individual. The paper concludes with a discussion of how positive psychology has brought attention to matters of virtue and ethics as they relate to our understanding of personal authenticity; at the same time, the paper demonstrates the importance of the existential-humanistic tradition to our understanding of the nature of human flourishing as a psychological and ethical ideal.

"The road up and the road down is one and the same." – Heraclitus

"The struggle ought not to be over authenticity, for or against, but about defining its proper meaning. We ought to be about trying to lift the culture back up, closer to its motivating ideal." – Charles Taylor

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the meaning of authenticity in relation to the theory of character strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and to demonstrate how it serves as an integrative moral ideal within the normative framework of positive psychology.

At the very outset, it may appear to be problematic to even refer to authenticity in relation to moral ideals or virtues. If we understand morality as a system of obligations and constraints on personal self-interest, then it might appear to be fundamentally at odds with the quest for authenticity. Authenticity is about expressing our true selves, often in opposition to conventional mores and standards for acceptable or sanctioned moral conduct. This point was made by Nietzsche and Freud about the fundamental conflict between culture and the life-affirming drive toward self-affirmation (Freud, 1962; Nietzsche, 1969). It was also one of the founding themes of humanistic psychology, focusing on the expression of our more spontaneous, childlike feelings and desires rather than being governed by the moral prescriptions of an overbearing superego (Berne, 1964; Perls, 1976).

Things look a little more promising if we consider ethics in the Aristotelian context as the art of living well, or the art of living a good life (Aristotle, 1962; Veatch, 1966). In this context, virtues are conceived of as strengths or

competencies that a person can cultivate in order to live a more fulfilling life. This association of virtue and happiness is what makes Aristotelian ethics attractive as a model for the normative framework of positive psychology. Peterson and Seligman's *Character Strengths and Virtues* (2004) provides a contemporary expression of the classical Aristotelian idea that virtues are in fact character strengths that enable us not only to live morally good lives, but also to find our deepest sense of fulfillment and personal happiness in doing so. Happiness or well-being and living morally go hand in hand in this framework.

Viewed in this way, it becomes easy to see how authenticity might be seen as a moral virtue or character strength. Peterson and Seligman (2004) in fact include it in their list of character strengths, as aspects of the moral virtue of courage. Likewise, existential thinkers emphasize the courage to be oneself in the face of anxiety or pressures to conform to external pressures or societal norms (Tillich, 1966).

Understanding authenticity as a form of courage makes good sense. As we explore the various dimensions of authenticity, we shall also see that they relate to many of the character strengths identified in Peterson and Seligman's strengths model (2004), including

- wisdom – especially creativity, openness to experience, open-mindedness, love of learning, and perspective;
- courage – especially bravery, authenticity, and vitality;
- humanity and justice – especially love, compassion, responsibility, and fairness;
- temperance – including prudence and self-regulation; and
- transcendence – including the experiences of awe, wonder, and elevation, hope and
- future-orientation, playfulness, and spirituality, faith, and life purpose.

This list of virtues and character strengths is drawn from across the major world religions and ethical systems (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and is presented as a framework to enable individuals to identify the specific character strengths that they can affirm as representing their core, authentic selves (p. 18) – thereby enabling them to integrate a concern with higher values into their personal pursuit of well-being.

What I am proposing here is that the principles of authenticity provide another way of looking at the process by which individuals orient toward broader meaning contexts and value orientations, such as those described in Peterson and Seligman's catalogue of virtues and related character strengths. This account focuses on a specific theory of human action and self-emergence that originates within existential-humanistic psychology, and reflects a fundamental human need for autonomy and authenticity, as described within self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). It focuses on the process by which individuals integrate specific value orientations as aspects of their core, authentic selves.

The process of authentic action and self-emergence is what is considered central in this account, not the specific character traits which an individual may exhibit. These character strengths are better understood, I believe, as potential value-orientations that individuals naturally consider when making self-defining life choices.

This approach differs from Peterson and Seligman's approach in at least two important ways. First, I am not considering authenticity as a virtue that necessarily applies across all cultures. It is a virtue specifically in democratic cultures that value personal freedom, autonomy, and diversity as fundamental aspects of societal and community life (Cook, 1997; Etzioni, 1996). Cultures that do not hold these values and which do not foster the development of individuality, critical thinking, and personal autonomy, will not hold authenticity as a core virtue. Authenticity as a basic value orientation is distinctive to modern, democratic cultures (Taylor, 1989).

Secondly, this account does not focus on character strengths as specific traits that individuals can be said to possess. Rather, the dimensions of authenticity are defined as principles of authentic action and self-emergence that carry with them an implicit ethical orientation that is similar in many respects to the framework presented by Peterson and Seligman (Medlock, 2012). As principles, they represent standards toward which individuals can orient as they make choices about what is important in life and how they establish a sense of meaning and purpose (Covey, 1990; Wright & Medlock, 1995). They differ from strengths in that they are not traits that individuals possess, but rather are aspects of an overarching value orientation focused on authentic living (Taylor, 1989). This value orientation includes a concern with human flourishing and the pursuit of morally and spiritually uplifting values – similar in many respects to the virtues outlined in the strengths model.

This is what makes the dialogue between existential-humanistic and positive psychology particularly interesting. My focus here is not on creating a universal value framework that is potentially valid across all cultures, but rather on the process by which individuals develop aesthetic, moral, and spiritual value-orientations as part of their process of becoming

authentic individuals. I happen to believe that this emphasis on the process of authentic action and self-emergence is actually strongly suggested in Peterson and Seligman's strengths framework, though I will leave it to others to confirm or deny that judgment.

The Meaning of Authenticity

One of the major challenges of defining authenticity as a virtue is that it is a multi-dimensional construct, similar in some respects to Seligman's construct of well-being (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Seligman, 2011). In a previous article (Medlock, 2012), I identified several key dimensions of authenticity, focusing on the individual's value-orientation toward an ideal higher self and the existential choices and dialogical relationships that lead to a coherent sense of self. The current paper includes these dimensions, but with a different focus. The current focus is on the process of authentic self-emergence as it arises from the experience of engaged presence in the here-and-now. This is the central dimension of authenticity, in the sense that all the other dimensions flow from this primary experience of engaged presence.

This focus is also central to Seligman's theory of well-being (2011), with the difference that engagement is associated with specific character strengths rather than with the experience of presence per se. This paper explores the similarities and differences between these two traditions of existential-humanistic and positive psychology, showing how each contributes to a fuller understanding of the nature of human flourishing.

The key dimensions of authenticity include the following: (a) congruence of internal emotional states, actual conduct, stated intentions, commitments, and self-representations; (b) open, non-defensive awareness of the richness and depth of experience; (c) presence and full engagement in the here and now flow of experience; (d) conscious, autonomous choice; (e) a growth mindset with an orientation toward developing potential and expanding possibilities; (f) responsibility and resolute commitment; and (g) a sense of coherence of meaning and purpose.

The argument to substantiate that these dimensions make up the core or essence of authenticity is grounded in an existential-humanistic theory of human action and the nature of the self (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Frankl, 1973; Glasser, 1998; Habermas, 1987, 1990; Heidegger, 1963, 1966; Kegan, 1982; Mahrer, 1989; Natanson, 1970, 1974; Rogers, 2004; Sartre, 1963; Taylor, 1989; Wright, 2005; Zimmerman, 1986). The full development of that theory is beyond the scope of this paper, though the account provided below relates the various dimensions to elements of this theory of authentic action and self-emergence. Suffice it to say here that authentic action is action that proceeds from being fully present in the moment and making conscious choices about what truly matters in life. Authentic selfhood emerges from authentic action, and includes a self-representation or personal narrative that accurately reflects those existential choices and serves to orient the individual toward an integrated sense of meaning and life purpose.

Thus understood, the theory of authentic action and selfhood assumes a much larger place in the theory of character strengths and well-being than is typically acknowledged within positive psychology. The related dimensions of authenticity not only reflect many of the value-orientations identified by Peterson and Seligman, but also account for how individuals integrate these value orientations into their core sense of self and personal identity.

Authenticity, Virtues, & Character Strengths

To help build the bridge between the existential-humanistic account of authenticity and positive psychology's theory of virtues and character strengths, let us consider what it means to refer to the various dimensions of authenticity as principles that help to orient individuals toward lives of higher meaning and purpose.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) define ten criteria for what constitutes a character strength. I will consider four of them in this account of the principles of authenticity. The first criterion is that it "contributes to various fulfillments that constitute the good life, for oneself and for others" (p. 17). The authors leave open the question of just what is meant by "the good life," but clearly it is meant to be a life that is both personally fulfilling and one that contributes to the well-being of others.

It is significant that in discussing this quality of fulfillment, the first characteristic mentioned for a character strength is "a sense of ownership and authenticity ('this is the real me') vis-à-vis the strength" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 18). Owning a specific character strength is a way of describing what it means to own a specific value-orientation as representative of one's core sense of self.

Secondly, a character strength is "morally valued in its own right, even in the absence of obvious beneficial consequences" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 19). This is to say that it is an intrinsic value, something that one chooses for

itself because of its inherent goodness. This characterization suggests that a character strength can be considered not only as a personality trait that someone, in a sense, possesses, as Peterson and Seligman characterize it, but also as a value that one chooses to affirm. Given the existential perspective that emphasizes the notion of choice in the construction of the self, this re-orientation to character strengths as value-orientations will prove to be helpful.

Thirdly, the authors emphasize that “the display of a strength by one person does not diminish other people in the vicinity” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 21). This, in effect, underscores the first point, that strengths have a moral import in that they concern our relationships with others. The notions of mutual respect and openness to other points of view are implied in this account of character strengths, and are also fundamental to the principles of authentic action (Medlock, 2012).

Fourthly, character strengths are defined, in part, by their relationship to negative opposites (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 22). This approach is similar to the way in which Aristotle defines virtues in relationship to the vices or excesses to which they are related. In Aristotelian ethics, a virtue or character strength is viewed as the mean between two extremes, as temperance would be considered the mean between the extremes of personal excess and being overly self-controlled. In the “manual of the sanities” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, pp. 3-32), a character strength is defined in contrast to the negative qualities that can be considered opposites or contraries. In this case, the negative opposite to congruence would be incongruence; the negative opposite to being open would be being closed, etc.

The dimensions of authenticity – congruence; open, non-defensive awareness of experience; presence and engagement; autonomous, conscious choice; a growth mindset; responsibility and commitment; and coherence of meaning and purpose – are principles of authentic action that naturally lead to living morally uplifting and fulfilling lives. The notion of the good life that the individual defines for him- or herself typically includes considerations of such values as wisdom, courage, humanity and love, justice, temperance, and transcendence. But the important point is not the definition of a schema for explaining how strengths are related to these values or virtues, but rather the definition of a process by which individuals draw on their cultural traditions as sources for their sense of identity and meaning (Taylor, 1989). In other words, the process of authentic self-emergence is our central concern as individuals, and the catalogue of virtues or values serves as a context for the choices we make in defining our authentic selves.

The Dimensions of Authentic Action & Self-Emergence

The first dimension of authenticity is the congruence of internal emotional states, actual conduct, and stated intentions, commitments, and self-representations. This is the dimension highlighted in Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) definition of the strengths of authenticity, honesty, and integrity as examples of personal courage (p. 249). It is also one of the fundamental qualities that Carl Rogers (2004) associates with effective therapeutic relationships and becoming a fully functioning person. Individuals who are authentic in this respect demonstrate the courage of their convictions, expressing what they really feel and think, both in their actual conduct and in their communications and representations of their intentions and actions.

This principle of congruence involves the courage to experience and express the truth of one’s experience in one’s communicative actions. This requires courage when the truth that is being expressed may not be welcomed by others, or when it may challenge a person’s cherished ways of seeing him or herself. There is risk in being honest and straightforward, while, at the same time, there is the reward of a genuine, honest, and intimate connection with others.

Congruence means being truthful at all levels of communicative action – experiential, behavioral and espoused intentions, commitments, and ways of representing oneself. All these levels of human experience and action are in alignment, and the person is experienced by others as being genuine, straightforward, and honest.

Conversely, a lack of congruence reflects an unwillingness or inability to define and represent oneself accurately. It often represents a lack of consciousness of one’s inner emotional states and disconnections between actual conduct and one’s stated intentions, commitments, and self-representations. Most typically it involves a lack of courage in exploring one’s own inner states – particularly those that are at variance with the way one likes to think of oneself or likes to be seen by others.

This lack of courage results in the indirect expression of aspects of oneself that one denies and thus projects onto others (Sartre, 1960) – what Jung referred to as the shadow aspects of the self (Jung, 1966; Moore & Gillette, 1990). These are often qualities that one perceives as negative and thus as “not-me,” and then projects onto others. In some cases they may be positive qualities, as when individuals with poor self-esteem project power and positive qualities onto others that they cannot accept within themselves.

The second dimension of authenticity relates to open, non-defensive awareness of the richness and depth of one's experience (Hodgkins & Knee, 2002; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). It includes a curiosity and willingness to explore one's inner life of emotions, fantasies, dreams, imaginings, and intentions, to determine which are "core" to one's sense of self. It also includes a sense of being open to the richness of our perceptions and sensations and ways of engaging with the perceptual world and the world of nature. And finally, it includes being open to the feedback and communications from others regarding one's own actions and intentions. These dimensions of inwardness, perceptual awareness, and relationships with others are fundamental building blocks of our sense of authentic selfhood, reflecting the three fundamental modes of being-in-the world described in existential philosophy and psychology (Keen, 1970).

These qualities of openness and non-defensive awareness are key to the development of wisdom, as Seligman and Peterson point out. The character strengths associated with wisdom include flexibility, being open-minded, thinking critically, creativity, curiosity, a lifelong love of learning, and the interest in exploring alternative perspectives (2004). This list of character strengths could as easily be used to describe the process of transformational learning associated with authentic self emergence – which is exactly the point. The re-evaluation of established frames of reference and established ways of being is one of the key aspects of authentic action that leads to the emergence of a new core sense of self (Mezirow, 2000).

The opposite of open, non-defensive awareness of experience is of course being closed and defensive. It involves attempts to defend established self-representations and ways of acting that are challenged by experiences that are at odds with these established patterns or constructs. This type of closed, defensive behavior often reflects value-orientations that are based on external sources or authorities, rather than on internally affirmed value-orientations (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Hodgkins & Knee, 2002). They also reflect what Buddhist's and Taoists refer to as an over-attachment to various positions and self-representations, with an unwillingness to see the continuous process of change that is inherent in the flow of experience (Epstein, 2008).

The third dimension of authenticity involves presence and full engagement in the here and now flow of experience. The principle of presence is extremely important to the notion of authenticity. It relates to the question of the meaning of being, which is the distinctive philosophical/theological question that underlies much of existential-humanistic philosophy and psychology (Heidegger, 1962; Zimmerman, 1986). It is also a primary focus of the virtue of transcendence referenced by Peterson and Seligman. They define transcendence in terms of such strengths as the appreciation of beauty and excellence; the experiences of awe, wonder, and elevation; gratitude; hope and future-mindedness; playfulness; and spirituality, faith, and purpose (2004). This orientation toward transcendence is the experience of noumenal reality beyond our capacity for knowing or understanding or reasoning about our life. It is the experience of being and faith that relates to our deepest yearnings for a sense of purpose and meaning in life, and ultimately is at the core of our spiritual identity (Barrett, 1962; Jaspers, 1957; Kierkegaard, 1954).

The experience of transcendence is in fact a defining characteristic of the existential-humanistic tradition, drawing on existential philosophy and Eastern spiritual traditions (Watts, 1961; Parkes, 1987; Zimmerman, 1986). It includes being open to the mystery of life with an attitude of "not knowing" and "letting things be." It is about letting reality emerge rather than attempting to force and control results – including especially the emergence of ours and others' authentic selves.

The question of the meaning of being is translated in various ways within existential and humanistic psychology to the question of what it means to be a unique, individual, human being in touch with the temporal flow of experiencing (Rogers, 2004). Being is defined as presence-oriented toward the future, retaining a sense of the past, and ultimately grounded in the here and now. Individuals who are present exist fully in the present moment. They are connected to the flow of life of their embodied, organic existence. They experience a sense of flow as guiding their actions, proceeding less from a sense of striving than from a sense of being in touch with the flow of life.

Experiences of flow and engagement are also emphasized in positive psychology, originating in the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and later in Seligman's theory of well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2011).

The account of positive psychology, however, does not adequately acknowledge the connection between flow and the quality of being as presence. There is a tendency to describe flow in terms of the control of inner life, goal-directed activity, and the expression of strengths or talents, rather than as a manifestation of the person's connection with the flow of experience at the core of their sense of self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

According to this existential-humanistic account of flow, the defining characteristic is the individual's being fully present in the moment, not the fact that the individual is expressing a specific character strength or exercising a form of

inner control. This capacity is present at every moment, no matter what quality of emotion or type of activity the individual is engaged in.

Presence also involves a back-and-forth interplay of full emersion in the flow of experience with a peripheral self-awareness or mindfulness of the present moment. This is what accounts for the ability to make conscious choices in the moments of flow, rather than operating completely unconsciously or unintentionally. In my current study of the creative process of artists, I'm finding that experienced artists become immersed in the creative process without reflecting on what they are doing. But even in this experience of flow, there are moments of conscious choice in which the artists are mindful of their creating as they are creating. In these moments they observe their work and make adjustments to enhance the underling intention of the work. This quality of being present-to experience is also what is emphasized in Eastern meditative traditions of mindfulness – an awareness of one's acting in the moment of action (Hahn, 1991).

This quality of being as presence also reflects the distinctive features of the existential-humanistic account of the self and the nature of authentic action. There are two aspects of being as presence that are fundamental to authentic action: receptive, responsive presence and pro-actively engaged presence. The first relates to the more spiritual aspects of being associated with meditative consciousness and the releasement from the will to power and from instrumental thinking (Heidegger, 1966; Zimmerman, 1986). It is an orientation that focuses on allowing actions to emerge from experience without will and striving, but simply from a sense of being. It is similar to the Taoist notion of integrity and acting from a space of "no-action" – action without specific will or intention, but allowing what is right to emerge from the flow of experience (Lao Tzu, 1990).

The authentic self that emerges from this mode of receptive, responsive action is simply a capacity to observe experience as it unfolds. It is an observing self that is conscious of acting without willing any specific action or result. It is, in a sense, a complete trusting of the flow of experience and the emergence of right action, without any attachment to the ego or sense of identity of the individual actor (Epstein, 2008).

The pro-active, engaged mode of presence-in-action is focused on the fulfillment of specific purposes and meanings that have personal significance to the individual. Engagement is a reflection of what matters to the individual actor – what he or she cares about and is emotionally invested in.

Engaged, purposeful action has two related modalities: instrumental action, oriented toward the achievement of defined interests, purposes, and goals; and communicative action, oriented toward understanding and being understood by others (Habermas, 1990). Instrumental action is oriented toward the effective achievement of defined ends, and focuses on the capacity for effective accomplishment of goals. It is the foundation of the economic, political, and social systems that define the social world, as well as the specific goals and achievement orientation of individuals. Communicative action is characterized by the interest in finding common ground with others, seeking to understand and be understood by others in the pursuit of shared interests and values. It is the foundation for the domains of intimacy, relationship, and the process of personal and public dialogue, regarding the values and principles that govern the "lifeworld" of individual and public life (Habermas, 1987).

Both of these modes of pro-active, engaged action are expressions of care (Heidegger, 1962). Individuals, by their very nature care about specific objects, people, events, beliefs, etc. Things, people, and ideas matter to individuals, from the child who is enthralled with a new toy to the politician who cares about world peace. The world of meanings and meaning contexts becomes significant to the individual by virtue of what she cares about or what matters to her. This process of caring-about-something is what invests an object, person, activity, or tradition with personal, emotionally significant value. It is also what directs the process of engagement in life, as individuals engage most fully in activities and relationships that personally matter to them.

Care is also a reflection of the inherent interpersonal and social nature of human beings. We cannot not care about our relationships with others – or at least not those significant others in relation to whom we define who we are. The process of identity formation is primarily a matter of interpersonal relationships, of defining who we are vis-à-vis how others view us and how we come to view ourselves through them. The whole gamut of processes identified by psychoanalysis, interpersonal psychology, and social psychology about identification, internalization, development of the generalized other, adoptions of social roles, the evolution of multiple self-identities, etc. are all testaments to the inherent interpersonal nature of self-development. Rogers' account of the relationship factors that facilitate personal growth and authenticity – unconditional positive regard, accurate empathy, and therapist transparency and congruence – continue to be recognized as among the most important therapeutic factors in all psychotherapeutic work (Carkhuff, 2009; Rogers, 1980).

To return to our discussion of presence as a principle, the moral opposite of presence is not absence, but rather semblance. Seeming to be someone that one is not involves withholding a part of one's self – either consciously or

unconsciously. The inauthentic individual in this respect chooses to present a persona or false self to the world, and even to themselves, as the self they want to appear to be. This involves a focus on managing impressions and controlling others, rather than on letting things emerge from a position of trust and mutuality. This tendency is inherent in the very nature of social existence that focuses on role conformity and fitting the individual into pre-defined patterns of social life (Goffman, 1959; Natanson, 1974). It is, in fact, an inevitable characteristic of the lifeworld, and sets the context for the individual's challenge in defining a unique, authentic identity (Natanson, 1974).

The motivations for this type of behavior are of course as varied as the cultural practices that encourage the development of personas and conventional role behavior. From an experiential perspective, acts of semblance and managed self-presentation involve a disconnection from the flow of experience, either holding on to a cherished view of the self from the past or projecting a desired representation of the self toward the future. Persons who are invested in semblance are thus not fully present to their own experience, and are usually disconnected from their own inner emotional states.

The fourth dimension of authenticity is autonomous, conscious choice. Being fully present and congruent in the here-and-now flow of experience, the authentic individual can consciously choose a course of action, within a given existential situation, as his/her authentic choice. The moment of conscious choice is the paradigm of human action, where the action proceeds from a sense of being the author of the action rather than a reactor to external circumstances. One is of course always reacting to external factors, but the conscious act of choosing a specific possibility to respond to from among the field of possible influences is the distinctly human existential act of conscious choice.

Conscious choice can be either autonomous or externally conditioned, proceeding from an internal versus an external locus of control. Deci and Ryan (2002) have distinguished a continuum of actions from those that are intrinsically motivated and truly autonomous and authentic, to those that are extrinsically motivated and represent varying degrees of personal integration or "ownership" (pp. 14-22). They then distinguish autonomy-oriented actions that represent the intrinsically or well-integrated motivations, from actions that are control-oriented based on social directives regarding how individuals should act or are supposed to act.

Recent writings about autonomy emphasize the point that autonomous action can conform to conventional roles and behavior patterns, so long as the individual reflects on the action and wholeheartedly affirms the action as an expression of their core sense of self (Dworkin, 1997; Ekstrom, 2005; Taylor, 2005). These processes of self-reflection and wholehearted affirmation define the action as autonomous, on this view (Frankfurt, 1988).

It is also interesting that autonomous action on this account is also equivalent to authentic action, in that it is based on the individual's sense of affirming a choice as an expression of his or her core sense of self.

This account suggests that how individuals appropriate particular roles or conventions or value-orientations and make them their own is what is important in defining them as authentic. If they do it consciously, and, upon critical reflection, affirm it for themselves, then to that extent their conduct is autonomous and authentic.

This account is consistent with the existential-humanistic account I'm presenting here, so long as it gives priority to the importance of consciousness over wholeheartedness. People can be wholehearted in their pursuits of addictions, fanaticism, and conformity to social practices, without necessarily being conscious of how they are avoiding the underlying anxieties and ambiguities that make up their existential situations. The reality of bad faith and self-deception needs to be considered in evaluating whether an action is truly autonomous and authentic, versus a wholehearted avoidance of uncomfortable and possibly threatening aspects of their experience and sense of self.

The moral opposite of autonomous, conscious choice is reactive behavior triggered either by defensive reactions to perceived threats or an excessive attachment to forms of pleasure. Addictions represent the clearest example of the latter type of reactivity, and prejudice an example of the former. What reactive actions have in common is that they are not conscious choices, but rather fixed, defensive or compulsive responses that are not in tune with the changing nuances of experience and interactions. They characterize behavior patterns that are impulsive, non-reflective, and fight-flight-freeze reactions to perceived threats.

The principle of autonomous, conscious choice reflects an important aspect of the existential-humanistic account of authentic selfhood and action. The authentic self is the product of the autonomous, conscious choices of the individual. This is the point of the famous maxim "existence precedes essence" (Sartre, 1965). The essence of the individual – the core sense of self – is the result of the choices made in specific existential situations in the course of life.

This sense of self is also defined by the individual's communicative interactions with self and others, whereby one clarifies the meaning of one's choices. Defining our authentic selves is not a solipsistic process. It is rather a dialogical process in which our choices and actions are observed not only by us but by others interacting with us, with whom we communicate our intentions, values, and interpretations. Through this dialogical process we arrive at a sense of who we are

and what we truly care about (Taylor, 1999). This process is validated ultimately by our internal sense of what matters to us as we experience it, but that experience includes the input and observations of others with whom we engage to be understood.

The sense of core self is thus grounded not only in our wholehearted affirmation of a specific meaning or value, but also in others' recognition and affirmation of that truth as they experience it. The authentic self is a process of dialogical communication, in which the individual's being-for-self and being-for-others converge into a unified sense of personal identity. As I've argued elsewhere (Medlock, 2012; De Beauvoir, 1967), authentic action more often proceeds from a sense of the inherent complexity and ambiguity of life, than from wholehearted affirmation of a specific preference or value-orientation (Medlock, 2012; De Beauvoir, 1967).

Other dimensions of authenticity could be further elaborated here, but in the interest of time I will make only a brief summary statement of these related character strengths. They include: a growth mindset with an orientation toward developing potentialities and expanding possibilities; responsibility and resolute commitment; and a sense of coherence of meaning and purpose.

The growth mindset recognizes that experience is an emerging field of potentialities, oriented toward evolving meaning contexts. The growth-oriented individual views the self as process rather than a fixed entity, and considers each personally significant choice as an opportunity to learn and grow. It involves the personal qualities of flexibility and openness discussed above, as well as the intellectual attitudes of being open minded and willing to re-examine one's current assumptions and ways of thinking in light of new possibilities. The growth mindset is oriented toward transformational learning, defined as a willingness to re-examine and alter one's fundamental assumptions about self and world in the interest of expanding one's capabilities for achievement, intimacy, and the discovery of and expanded sense of meaning and purpose in life (Mezirow, 2000).

The moral opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset that defines the self as a fixed entity with unchanging beliefs, values, and patterns of acting and being in the world. It is reflected either in arrogance and overweening self-assurance, or in a sense of victimhood and despair at not being worthwhile. In both cases the individual with a fixed mindset sees himself as unchanging – either because he knows he's right and others are wrong, or because he feels hopeless about ever changing and feeling better. The roles of know-it-all and victim are the familiar personas of the fixed mindset.

It is an interesting question to what extent the strengths model can unwittingly result in defining oneself in terms of fixed traits – desirable as those traits may be. From an existential perspective, it is important to consider strengths as preferences that lead to further growth and learning, rather than as traits that are used to define a fixed mindset and sense of personal identity.

The dimensions of responsibility and commitment reflect key aspects of the process of conscious choice and the orientation toward self-defining value-orientations. The principle of responsibility involves the recognition that we are ultimately responsible for the choices we make and the selves that we define, based on those choices. It includes the ability to look at long term consequences of one's actions and to take into account the impact of one's behavior on others. It also includes being responsive to these consequences and responses and to flexibly adjust one's actions based on the data of current experience.

The moral opposite to the principle of responsibility is self-deception or bad faith (Sartre, 1956). It involves denying that one is the author of one's actions and that one is ultimately responsible for the reality that one creates – including responsibility for the self that one becomes through one's choices. It is an escape from freedom and the responsibility for one's actions as a moral agent. The motivation for this escape has been described by existential philosophers and psychologists as an avoidance of the existential anxiety of being fully free and responsible for one's life, and seeking comfort in externally defined truths or norms (May, 1967).

Resolute commitment involves the promises and agreements that one makes to oneself and others to pursue a specific course of action, to follow through on promises, or to take stands in support of cherished values or principles. Commitments are choices that are self-defining, as Kierkegaard recognized in his account of authentic selfhood (Barrett, 1962). They represent the stands that we take in life and what we are willing to fight for. They are the expression of what truly matters to us.

The opposite of commitment is, in a sense, the avoidance of becoming a true self (Kierkegaard, 1954). It can be described as living in a state of alienation, where one really doesn't know who one is, what truly matters in life, and what one is willing to fight for. It is characterized by ennui or despair, and not being trustworthy.

Commitment defines the existential context for understanding the meaning of specific choices and actions. For example, the preference to experience positive emotions which Seligman identifies as a key element of well-being, means

very different things within the context of different life commitments. For a person who pursues pleasure for its own sake and avoids any commitments, that so-called life of pleasure can lead to the experience of despair. The pursuit of joy in the context of a committed relationship with a friend or intimate partner is experienced quite differently, and often leads to much deeper and lasting satisfactions. The defining issue is not the experience of positive emotion per se, but rather the nature of the overarching commitments that define the self who is experiencing the positive emotion. In other words, positive emotion per se may not be essential to well-being, but rather authentic emotion expressed in the context of a positive commitment.

Finally, authenticity appears to include the dimension of coherence of meaning and purpose. As we review the existential choices that ultimately define who we are and what we stand for, we tend to see some sort of coherence emerge regarding the nature of the self. Our life stories tend to have a kind of coherence, where each of the choices makes sense in the context of all the other choices and commitments the individual has made (McAdams, 1990).

That coherence is not defined simply in terms of consistency or predictability, but rather as an evolving narrative in which earlier choices are re-interpreted in the light of later and hopefully more mature or evolved choices. The coherence of meaning and purpose that evolves over the course of a life is in effect the individual's statement of his or her authentic self. It is ultimately like a work of art, exhibiting an emotional coherence that is typically not reducible to a set of analytic categories, principles, or values. Yet it does express a meaning which presumably has been sustaining for the individual, and which others can hopefully appreciate as a life worth living.

In contrast, the opposite of a life of coherence is one characterized by fragmentation. Various aspects of the self appear to have no connection to one another. One's work life is completely separate from one's family life. One's public life is split off from one's private life. In the most extreme form, incoherence leads to states of dissociation and a sense of having multiple selves with no connection to one another. There is no common core around which the individual can create an integrative sense of self and a coherent sense of meaning and purpose (Siegel, 2010).

Reframing the Normative Framework of Positive Psychology

This brings us to the implications of this interpretation of authenticity for the normative framework of positive psychology. There are three important implications I'd like to emphasize here. The first relates to the reframing of the virtues and character strengths framework as developed in *Character Strengths and Virtues* as a framework for guiding authentic self development. The second relates to how the virtues/strengths framework can serve as a valuable framework for structuring educational and clinical interventions to heighten an individual's sense of higher meaning and purpose. As a clinical tool, it can provide a structure for assessing to what degree a client's individual choices and goals are in alignment with their authentically held values. And as an educational tool, it can help lifelong learners appreciate and appropriate aspects of the world's spiritual, religious, ethical, and aesthetic perspectives into their experience of what ultimately matters and the value choices they make in life. Thirdly, I want to underscore the ways in which the existential-humanistic account of authentic action and selfhood contributes to the theory of well-being and suggests areas for further inquiry and research.

Character Strengths and Virtues is a landmark work in the psychological study of personal well-being and its relationship to lives of higher meaning and purpose. It is unquestionably an important contribution to have identified a set of virtues that are shared across all the major world traditions, and to identify related character strengths or traits which can be clearly defined, assessed, and developed. It is also useful to appreciate what strengths a person is drawn to, as a way of encouraging the development of those strengths as part of the process of authentic self development.

I have been presenting another way to look at this framework that I believe is ultimately more useful – an authenticity model rather than a strengths model that focuses on the process by which individuals appropriate and integrate “virtues” or values into their core sense of self. Peterson and Seligman suggest alternative ways of viewing their work which are consistent with the approach I've developed here (2004). They suggest two alternative ways of considering their work besides the traits model: (1) as it relates to a specific process – in this case, the process of authentic self emergence, or (2) a social constructionist view, which would consider these traits as social constructions which societies and individuals create in order to provide focus and meaning to their lives. The existential-humanistic theory of authentic action and self emergence provides these alternative perspectives. It provides a way to view the various virtues and related strengths as value-contexts created by societies and appropriated by individuals as they define their authentic value-orientations. In this context the term virtue can be understood to be an inspiring and uplifting meaning-context defined by established traditions across the world cultures, and the term character strength can be understood as a specific value-orientation within a given

meaning context. Thus the strengths model becomes less of a classification system for assessing traits and more of an educational tool for inspiring individuals to consider the moral, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions of their own life projects.

The process that I want to emphasize in this re-reading of the strengths model is how individuals appropriate – and thus own— a given value orientation in the process of making existentially significant conscious choices. The rubber hits the road, if you will, in the moment of conscious choice. And to the extent that the individual has been exposed to these value-orientations, they become part of the world of what matters to the individual as he or she makes current choices. If questions of justice and fairness, for example, have become important to the individual as principles that matter, then they will serve to orient the individual as existentially important choices are made.

These value orientations may in fact become habits or traits of the individual, as Peterson and Seligman characterize the process. This is in fact what Aristotle considered to be an important aspect of moral virtues, that they become habits that almost automatically guide individual conduct. But the point that gives these strengths moral import for Aristotle is not that they are unconscious habits or natural traits, but rather that they lead us to act rationally, and ultimately to fulfill our highest human purpose. Likewise here, what's important is not that these value orientations become well developed habits or deeply engrained traits, but rather that they facilitate more enlightened, conscious choices about what constitutes a good or right action in specific circumstances.

Viewed in this way, it is still useful to identify the value orientations or character strengths which the individual experiences as most authentically theirs – the ones they are most drawn to based on temperament and their most deeply held desires and preferences. For example, it would be a useful clinical intervention to have individuals identify the values/virtues that they consider to be most central to their sense of self, and then to review their current choices, actions, and goals in light of those values. Levels of alignment would presumably contribute to increased personal meaning and well-being (Kashdan, 2012).

It would be equally useful as a clinical or educational intervention to identify and explore the traits/values that may be more challenging and less comfortable for the individual, as potential areas for increasing a sense of higher meaning and purpose. Thus the individual who is naturally drawn to the exploration of wisdom traditions and perspectives, and who may be more contemplative, can benefit from exploring the challenges of personal courage and taking action, as important areas that they may be neglecting by over-investing in a more comfortable strength. The ideal would be to gain an appreciation of all these meaning contexts, as ways to deepen and broaden one's individual, authentic life project.

The character strengths framework can thus be considered as a guide for structuring educational or clinical interventions, rather than primarily a method of trait classification used to support psychological research and evidence-based interventions – useful as these may be. I believe the more powerful application of this model is as an educational and clinical tool to help individuals reflect upon and align their authentic choices and actions with these important value-orientations and meaning contexts.

This framework provides a way of integrating the disparate educational worlds of the academic study of the humanities and personal growth work. Too often these worlds have almost nothing to do with one another, making the humanities overly academic in the negative sense of that word, and personal growth work overly narrow in its scope. A truly positive-humanistic education would focus on how individuals engage with the subjects of history, literature, philosophy, religion, and the arts in ways that stimulate personal reflection on how one chooses to live and what ultimately matters in life. To some extent this is already happening – otherwise what would be the point of a liberal education. But to engage in this process in a more integrative and reflective way is one of the potential contributions of a positive-humanistic framework.

This reframing of the strengths framework also suggests a few changes in the model. The virtue of temperance is not only dated, as Peterson and Seligman (2004) themselves acknowledge (p. 431), but also reflects a very different notion of selfhood and psychology than the one provided from an existential-humanistic tradition. Temperance is defined historically, in classical Greek philosophy and in many religious traditions, in terms of an outdated psychology that focuses on the rational control of the emotions, rather than a psychology based on the insights of contemporary humanistic psychology and neuroscience research that view emotion as a source of integration and value-orientation in its own right (Siegel, 1999). The principles of conscious, autonomous choice and the related principles of responsibility and commitment would appear to be more relevant to account for the strengths of effective self-regulation and prudent action than the references to the outdated virtue of temperance.

The areas relating to our relationship with others (humanity and justice) could also be revised to reflect the fundamental ethical issue of how we transcend and ultimately integrate our self-interest with the interests and concerns of others. This issue is better framed in terms of the theory of communicative action discussed above, which focuses on how

individuals and groups seek to understand each other's interests and values in order to enter into mutually supportive relationships and communities (Habermas, 1990; Etzioni, 1996). Theories of justice, love, and care certainly play an important part in that process, as does the ability to transcend one's egocentric interests by establishing empathic connections with others as aspects of authentic interaction. There is an implicit ethic in authentically relating to others, that includes openness toward others, respect for other persons and points of view, and the willingness to re-examine and potentially change one's course of action based on emerging new perspectives (Medlock, 2012).

My interest, however, is not to provide a critique of how all the virtues and strengths are categorized—useful as that may be. It is ultimately more useful, I believe, to consider these categories in the virtues/strengths model as value-orientations which individuals need to consider when making existential choices and exploring what ultimately matters to them in their lives. The fact that individuals may have preferences to explore certain values rather than others is useful to know as an educator, life coach, parent, friend, or therapist. These preferences, however, should not be considered as defining specific traits, but rather as points of entry to helping individuals broaden and deepen their awareness and appreciation of these value-contexts as part of the choice-making process. A fully developed positive-humanistic education can serve to integrate the study of the world's cultural traditions with the individual learner's process of existential choice and authentic self emergence.

Finally, this analysis of the dimensions of authenticity and the related theory of human action and self emergence serves to underscore the contributions of existential-humanistic psychology to positive psychology's study of personal well-being. Seligman (2011) points out that one of the defining characteristics of the new theory of well-being is that the character strengths “underpin all five elements [of well-being], not just engagement: deploying your highest strengths leads to more positive emotion, to more meaning, to more accomplishment, and to better relationships” (p.24). This account attributes too much importance to the idea of strengths as the foundation of personal well-being, rather than recognizing the principles of authentic action as the foundation of engagement, meaningful relationships, accomplishment, and a sense of meaning and purpose. All authentic action is oriented by its very nature toward achievement of desired ends and/or the realization of effective connection and mutual understanding between persons. The importance of character strengths is that they provide a framework for helping individuals engage in life in ways that connect their “sense of ownership and authenticity (‘This is the real me’)” to broader cultural virtues and value contexts (p.38).

Areas for Further Inquiry and Research

This account of authentic action and self emergence suggests a number of directions for future inquiry and research. One important challenge is the need to operationally define the construct of being as presence and relatedness. This notion has not been sufficiently clearly defined to support empirical research on measures of presence as they relate to personal well-being and ethical conduct. This is especially important given how central this construct is to the notion of a positive-humanistic account of well-being. In this formulation of an authenticity model, the notion of presence becomes the positive component in positive psychology, rather than positive emotion or subjective measures of happiness. I understand that there is already a movement in the direction of exploring this question within positive psychology, centered on the notion of “halcyonic well-being” (Gruman & Bors, 2012).

Secondly, there is a need to more clearly compare the theory of authentic action and self emergence as presented here with the theory of autonomous action and self-integration as presented in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). There is considerable overlap between the two approaches, with the shared focus on autonomy, self-reflection, affirmation of choices as reflective of one's core values and sense of self, and the integration of choices and values into a coherent sense of self. The additional variables that are suggested by the authenticity model include the importance of presence and the expression of individuality as key factors in personal well-being. These factors are in fact what differentiate authenticity as a construct from autonomy. And while both approaches share a common focus on an integrative sense of meaning and purpose, the authenticity model raises questions about including a meaning-orientation as a fundamental need—something which is not called out as a separate variable in the autonomy model.

The existential-humanistic focus on self-defining choices and their importance to a sense of personal well-being is also an important area for further inquiry and research (Mruk, 2006; Wethington, 2007), particularly as these choices relate to the discovery of a more authentic sense of self and related sense of meaning and purpose.

Another area of research interest concerns the quality of personal narratives about life meaning and purpose as they relate to the dimensions of well-being—levels of engagement, relationship, achievement, and meaning. The level of narrative integration and coherence in parents' accounts of their own childhoods has been shown to be a predictor of the

quality of their children's attachment experiences and related sense of core self (Siegel, 1999). Similar studies of narrative coherence of one's life-stories and key existential choices may offer insights and educational strategies for elevating a person's level of experienced meaning and well-being.

References

- Aristotle. (1962). *Nicomachean ethics* (M. Ostwald, Trans.). New York, NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, The Library of Liberal Arts.
- Barrett, W. B. (1962). *Irrational man: A study in existential philosophy*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden city, NY: Doubleday.
- Berne, E. (1964). *Games people play: The psychology of human relationships*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Binswanger, L. (1967). *Being-in-the-world* (J. Needleman, Trans.). New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks.
- Carkhuff, R. R. (2009). *The art of helping*. Burke, VA: Possibilities Publishing, Inc.
- Cooke, M. (1997). Authenticity and autonomy: Taylor, Habermas, and the politics of recognition. *Political Theory*, 25(2), 258-288.
- Covey, S. R. (1990). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful lessons in personal change*. New York, NY: A Fireside Book, Published by Simon & Schuster.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
- De Beauvoir, S. (1967). *The ethics of ambiguity*. New York, NY: The Citadel Press.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2002). An overview of self-determination theory: An organismic-dialectical perspective. In Edward L. Deci & Richard M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 3-33). Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press.
- Dworkin, G. (1997). *The theory and practice of autonomy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ekstrom, L. W. (2005). Autonomy and personal integration. In J. S. Taylor (Ed.), *Personal autonomy: New essays on personal autonomy and its role in contemporary moral philosophy* (pp. 143-161). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Epstein, M. (2008). *Going on being: Life at the crossroads of Buddhism and psychotherapy*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Etzioni, A. (1996). *The new golden rule: Community and morality in a democratic society*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Frankl, V. E. (1973). *The doctor & the soul: From psychotherapy to logotherapy*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Frankfurt, H. G. (1988). *The importance of what we care about*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Freud, S. (1962). *Civilization and Its Discontents* (J. Strachey, Trans. & Ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Glasser, W. (1998). *Choice Theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Gruman, J., & Bors, D. A. (2012). Presentation at the first Canadian Conference on Positive Psychology. July 20-21, University of Toronto, Victoria College, Toronto, Canada.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action: Volume Two, Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1990). *Moral consciousness and communicative action*. (C. Lenhardt & S.W. Nicholsen, Eds.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hahn, T. N. (1991). *The miracle of mindfulness* (M.Ho, Trans.). New York, NY: Beacon Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Heidegger, M. (1966). *Discourse on thinking* (J. M. Anderson & E. H. Freund, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Hodgins, H. S. & Knee, C. R. (2002). The integrating self and conscious experience. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 87-100). Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press.
- Jaspers, K. (1957). *Reason and existenz* (W. Earle, Trans.). New York, NY: The Noonday Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1972). *Two essays on analytical psychology* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kashdan, T. (2012). Panel discussion on the role of meaning in well-being and resilience. The 7th Biennial Meaning Conference, Toronto, Canada.
- Keen, E. (1970). *Three faces of being: Toward an existential clinical psychology*. New York, NY: Meredith Corporation.

- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problems and process in human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kernis, M. H. & Goldman, B. M. (2006). A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity: Theory and research. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 38, pp. 283-357). San Diego, CA: Elsevier, Inc.
- Kierkegaard, S. (1954). *Fear and trembling and the sickness unto death* (W. Lowrie, Trans.). Garden City, NY: Princeton University Press.
- Lao Tzu. (1990). *Tao Te Ching: The classic book of integrity and the way* (V. M. Mair, Trans.). New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Mahrer, A. R. (1989). *Experiential psychotherapy: Basic practices*. Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press.
- May, R. (1967a). Contributions of existential psychotherapy. In R. May, E. Angel, & H. F. Ellenberger (Eds.), *Existence: A new dimension in psychiatry and psychology*. New York, NY: A Clarion Book.
- McAdams, D. P. (1990). Unity and purpose in human lives: The emergence of identity as a life story. In A. I. Rabin, R. A. Zucker, R. A. Emmons, & S. Frank (Eds.), *Studying persons and lives* (pp. 148-200). New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- Medlock, G. (2012). The evolving ethic of authenticity: From humanistic to positive psychology. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 40, 38-57.
- Mezirow, J., & Associates. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Company.
- Moore, R., & Gillette, D. (1990). *King, warrior, magician, lover: Rediscovering the archetypes of the mature masculine*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Mruk, C. J. (2006). *Self-esteem research, theory, and practice: Toward a positive psychology of self-esteem*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, Inc.
- Natanson, M. (1970). *The journeying self: A study in philosophy and social role*. Philippines: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.
- Natanson, M. (1974). *Essays on coherence and deformation of social reality*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher.
- Nietzsche, F. (1969). *On the genealogy of morals and ecce homo* (W. Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, Eds.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Parkes, G. (1987). Introduction. In G. Parks (Ed.), *Heidegger and Asian thought* (pp. 1-14). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Perls, R. S. (1976). *Gestalt therapy verbatim*. New York: Bantam Book, Real People Press.
- Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Rogers, C. R. (2004). *On becoming a person*. London, UK: Constable.
- Rogers, C. R. (1980). *A way of being*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Sartre, J. P. (1956). *Being and nothingness* (H. E. Barnes, Trans.). New York, NY: Philosophical Library, Inc.
- Sartre, J. P. (1960). *Anti-semitism and Jew* (G. J. Becker, Trans.). New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Sartre, J. P. (1963). *Search for a method* (H. E. Barnes, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Sartre, J. P. (1965). Existentialism is a humanism. In W. Kaufmann (Ed. & Trans.), *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (pp.287-311). New York, NY: Meridian Books.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14.
- Siegel, D. J. (1999). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Siegel, D. J. (2010). *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1999). *The ethics of authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, J. S. (2005). *Personal autonomy: New essays on personal autonomy and its role in contemporary moral philosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Tillich, P. (1966). *The courage to be*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Veatch, H. (1966). *Rational man: A modern interpretation of Aristotelian ethics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Watts, A. W. (1961). *Psychotherapy east & west*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Wethington, E. (2007). Turning points as opportunities for psychological growth. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Wright, J. (2005). *The one decision: Make the single choice that will lead to a life of more*. New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher /Penguin.
- Wright, R., & Medlock, G. (1995). Comprehensive developmental psychotherapy: An existential developmental paradigm. Appearing in *the 1995 Proceedings of the IAIEP, International Association of Integrative and Eclectic Psychotherapy*.
- Zimmerman, M. E. (1986). *Eclipse of the self: The development of Heidegger's concept of authenticity*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.