

SPORT & MEANING

Dr. Masucci
Department of Kinesiology, SJSU

Search for Meaning

- ▣ We seem to search for meaning in two important ways:
 1. Seek to identify our own uniqueness, measure oneself 'against the world' in an attempt to answer the question : Who am I? (p. 89)
 - Think about what we do and what we have done
 - Act in accordance with 'who we are'
 - Relies on *introspection*
 2. Finding the purpose to life or death
 - Often (as existentialists suggest) we seek out activities that provide a justification for life.

A Word about Existentialism

- ▣ A philosophical and cultural movement that developed in Europe in the 1940s
- ▣ Individual humans create meaning in their lives

A Word about Existentialism

- ▣ Was a move against more systematic philosophical frameworks like rationalism, or empiricism
- ▣ The starting point, according to Heidegger is "being in the World"
- ▣ Sartre's concept sums this up: *Existence Precedes Essence*: Basically implying that meaning is decided in and through (physical) existing itself

A Word about Existentialism

- ▣ Major concepts include:
 - **Transcendence:** person "goes beyond" what simply *is* toward *what can be*
 - **Alienation:** the world itself is not brought into being through my actions of meaning creation; it retains its otherness
 - **Authenticity:** defines a condition on self-making: do I succeed in making *myself*, or will who I am merely be a function of the roles I find myself in?
 - **Anxiety, Nothingness, the Absurd:** The world makes sense if we believe in the "order" supposed by it - however, if we relinquish that notion - how do we make sense of our existence?
 - undermines the taken-for-granted sense of things
 - like repeating a word until it loses meaning

Thomas: Sport & Meaning

- ▣ Potential for Self-Understanding
- ▣ Potential for achieving a sense of purpose
- ▣ Stages of Sport Participation (Thomas, p. 94-106)
 - Intent
 - Preparation
 - Involvement
 - Commitment
 - Resolution

Sport & Meaning (cont.)

- ▣ Possible Meanings found in sport:
 - The pursuit of excellence
 - Defining personal limits
 - Taking chances
 - Expression/creativity
 - “Altered states” & “Mystical unions”
 - Union of subject and object
 - Often called ‘flow’ ‘peak experience’ ‘inner game’ ‘oneness’