

Self-Identity Through an Existential Lens in Hesse's *Siddhartha*

Mingrui Shen¹

¹ Jiangxi Normal University, Jiangxi, China

Correspondence: Mingrui Shen, Jiangxi Normal University, Jiangxi, China.

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Abstract

This paper explores Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* through an existential lens, analyzing the protagonist's journey as a profound quest for self-identity and authentic living. By rejecting conventional paths such as asceticism, materialism, and even the teachings of the Buddha, Siddhartha embodies the existential struggle to define oneself through personal experience and individual choice. The novel delves into existential themes such as the rejection of conformity, the burden of freedom, the transformative power of suffering, and the fluid nature of self-identity. Siddhartha's repeated encounters with suffering serve as catalysts for self-realization, illustrating that identity is not a fixed state but a dynamic process shaped by lived experiences. The river, as a central metaphor, symbolizes the interconnectedness and continuous flow of life, reinforcing the existential notion that true wisdom lies in embracing the totality of one's journey. This analysis highlights *Siddhartha* as a profound reflection on the human condition, emphasizing that the search for self-identity is an endless and deeply personal pursuit, characterized by moments of clarity, despair, and ultimately, acceptance.

Keywords: existentialism, self-identity, authenticity, suffering

1. Introduction

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* is a profound literary work that delves into the existential quest for self-identity, exploring the intricate interplay between personal experience, individual choice, and the search for meaning. The novel, set against the backdrop of ancient India, chronicles the life of Siddhartha, a young man who embarks on a spiritual journey, rejecting traditional paths in his quest for a deeper understanding of himself and the world around him. Hesse uses Siddhartha's experiences to address fundamental existential questions: What defines the self? How does one find purpose in an indifferent world? And what does it mean to live authentically? Through Siddhartha's encounters with different philosophies and lifestyles—from asceticism and materialism to spiritual contemplation—Hesse illuminates the complexities of self-identity. Siddhartha's journey is not a straightforward path to enlightenment but a series of existential confrontations that force him to redefine his understanding of the self repeatedly. His choices to leave behind conventional teachings and forge his own way reflect existentialism's emphasis on personal freedom and the responsibility that comes with it. Hesse portrays Siddhartha's life as a constant negotiation between the external pressures of societal expectations and the internal drive to live in accordance with his authentic self. The narrative structure of *Siddhartha* captures the cyclical nature of existential exploration, where moments of clarity are often followed by periods of doubt and disillusionment. Siddhartha's journey is marked by a profound sense of restlessness and dissatisfaction with prescribed truths, echoing existentialist thought that posits the self is not a fixed essence to be discovered but a dynamic construct shaped by lived experiences. Hesse's portrayal of Siddhartha's relentless pursuit of self-understanding challenges the notion of identity as a static or easily attainable state. Instead, it suggests that self-identity is an ever-evolving process, deeply intertwined with the acceptance of life's inherent uncertainties and the courage to face existential despair. The existential themes in *Siddhartha* resonate deeply with the works of existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Søren Kierkegaard, who emphasize the individual's struggle to find meaning in a world devoid of inherent purpose. Siddhartha's rejection

of religious dogma and his embrace of personal experience as the ultimate guide align with existentialism's critique of conventional beliefs and the valorization of individual autonomy. Hesse's exploration of the tension between spiritual longing and worldly attachments further underscores the existential dilemma of seeking a coherent self in a fragmented and often contradictory reality. Through the character of Siddhartha, Hesse not only reflects the universal human quest for self-identity but also engages with existential questions about the nature of enlightenment, the significance of suffering, and the transformative power of personal choice. Siddhartha's journey serves as a mirror to the reader's own existential struggles, inviting introspection and challenging the boundaries of traditional narratives about identity and meaning. By examining Siddhartha's existential journey, this essay aims to illuminate the broader implications of Hesse's work, offering insights into the timeless and deeply human pursuit of understanding the self in an ever-changing world.

2. Existentialism and the Quest for Self-Identity

Hermann Hesse explores the existential quest for self-identity through a narrative that intricately intertwines personal experience, individual autonomy, and the relentless search for meaning. Existentialism, as a philosophical movement, emphasizes the individual's responsibility to define their own essence through actions and choices in a world that offers no predefined purpose. This philosophy forms the core of Siddhartha's journey, as he seeks self-realization not through adherence to external doctrines but through direct engagement with life's complexities. The novel embodies the existential idea that identity is not discovered in the abstract but actively constructed through the lived experiences that challenge, define, and ultimately transform the individual.

Siddhartha's quest begins with his early disillusionment with the teachings and rituals of his Brahmin upbringing, a setting that symbolizes the comfort of inherited beliefs and the security of established truths. However, Siddhartha's refusal to accept these teachings as the ultimate truth reflects an existential critique of conformism and blind faith. By rejecting the prescribed path of spiritual salvation, Siddhartha illustrates the existential belief that self-identity cannot be molded by external authorities or traditions. This is a recurring theme in existential thought, as seen in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, who criticized the uncritical acceptance of societal norms, urging individuals to become "what they are" through self-overcoming and the creation of personal values.

Hesse's portrayal of Siddhartha's departure from the Samanas, a group of ascetics, further deepens this existential critique. While the Samanas offer a path of self-denial and renunciation, Siddhartha quickly recognizes that their methods, though extreme, are still rooted in escapism and avoidance of the true self. Existentialism posits that self-identity is forged in the confrontation with reality, not in its avoidance. Siddhartha's decision to leave the Samanas and later reject the teachings of the Buddha, whom he deeply respects, highlights the existential assertion that no external system, no matter how enlightened, can provide the individual with authentic self-knowledge. Siddhartha's quest is intensely personal, underscoring the existentialist view that truth and self-identity are subjective and must be discovered through one's unique journey.

The existential quest for self-identity is also marked by the inherent tension between the desire for certainty and the acceptance of life's ambiguity. This tension is vividly portrayed in Siddhartha's experiences, where each encounter with different philosophies and ways of life serves to dismantle his preconceptions and push him closer to his authentic self. His time as a wealthy merchant and lover of Kamala, for instance, represents a period of immersion in the material world, contrasting sharply with his earlier ascetic life. This phase is not just a deviation but a crucial part of his existential exploration, reflecting the idea that identity is not static but fluid, constantly reshaped by new experiences and the choices made in response to them.

Siddhartha's immersion in worldly pleasures illustrates an existential paradox: the search for self often leads one away from the self. During this phase, Siddhartha becomes increasingly disillusioned, recognizing that his pursuit of wealth and pleasure has led him away from his true nature. This moment of crisis resonates with existential themes of alienation and self-deception, akin to what Jean-Paul Sartre described as "bad faith"—the denial of one's freedom and responsibility by conforming to societal expectations or self-imposed illusions. Siddhartha's eventual rejection of this lifestyle signifies an existential awakening, a return to the quest for authentic selfhood.

The turning point in Siddhartha's journey occurs when he encounters the river, which serves as a metaphor for the existential concept of becoming. The river's ceaseless flow embodies the continual process of change and self-renewal, reflecting the existential idea that self-identity is not a fixed destination but an ongoing journey. Siddhartha learns to listen to the river, recognizing the unity of all experiences—the joys, the sorrows, the successes, and the failures. This understanding aligns with the existential view that self-identity is a synthesis of all one's actions, choices, and moments of being, each contributing to the ever-evolving self.

Through Siddhartha's existential journey, Hesse portrays the quest for self-identity as a deeply personal and often solitary endeavor. Siddhartha's path is marked by a continuous struggle to find coherence in a fragmented world, reflecting the existential condition of being. His journey is not one of linear progression but of cyclic

learning and unlearning, where each experience—whether spiritual, sensual, or intellectual—plays an integral role in shaping his understanding of the self. Hesse’s narrative captures the essence of existential thought: that the search for self-identity is an endless and dynamic process, driven by the individual’s courage to confront uncertainty and embrace the full spectrum of human experience. In doing so, Siddhartha becomes a powerful representation of the existential quest to live authentically in a world that offers no easy answers, only the possibility of becoming through one’s choices and actions.



Figure 1. Existential Journey of Siddhartha

3. The Rejection of Conformity and the Embrace of Authenticity

Hermann Hesse delves deeply into the existential theme of authenticity, exploring how the rejection of societal conformity and the embrace of individual experience are crucial in the formation of a true self. Existentialism posits that authenticity is the highest state of being, where one’s actions align with one’s inner self rather than external expectations. This concept, central to the works of existential thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard, is vividly illustrated through Siddhartha’s relentless quest to live authentically, rejecting conventional paths in favor of a life guided by personal discovery and self-defined values.

Siddhartha’s journey begins with a conscious rejection of conformity, as he refuses to accept the spiritual teachings and rituals of his Brahmin upbringing. This early act of defiance symbolizes his refusal to allow societal expectations to dictate his identity. Siddhartha’s decision to leave his father’s home is not merely a physical departure but a profound existential statement: he will not be confined by the roles and identities others impose on him. This mirrors Kierkegaard’s concept of the “leap of faith,” where one must transcend societal norms to pursue a path that is true to one’s inner convictions, even at the risk of uncertainty and alienation.

As Siddhartha embarks on his spiritual quest, he encounters various philosophies and lifestyles that offer distinct paths to enlightenment. However, his repeated rejections of these paths underscore his commitment to authenticity. Siddhartha’s time with the Samanas, who practice extreme asceticism, initially appears to be a path toward self-discovery, but he soon realizes that their way is another form of conformity—an escape from the self rather than a true engagement with it. This echoes Sartre’s notion of “bad faith,” where individuals deceive themselves by adopting roles or beliefs that mask their true desires and fears. Siddhartha’s departure from the Samanas illustrates his recognition that even in renunciation, one can be trapped by external definitions of what it means to be spiritual or enlightened.

Hesse’s portrayal of Siddhartha’s encounter with the Buddha further emphasizes the existential tension between external wisdom and personal authenticity. While Siddhartha deeply respects the Buddha’s teachings and acknowledges their profound truth, he consciously chooses not to follow them. This decision is a pivotal moment in the narrative, highlighting Siddhartha’s understanding that true self-identity cannot be attained by imitating even the most enlightened figures. Siddhartha’s refusal to become a disciple reflects existentialism’s assertion that authentic living requires an individual journey, unbound by the doctrines or paths laid out by others, no matter how wise or revered.

Siddhartha’s subsequent immersion in the material world, particularly through his relationship with Kamala and his life as a wealthy merchant, marks another phase of his exploration of authenticity. This period, characterized by indulgence in sensual pleasures and worldly success, initially seems antithetical to his spiritual goals. Yet, it serves a crucial purpose in his existential journey. By fully engaging with the material aspects of life, Siddhartha confronts the totality of human experience, rejecting the binary opposition between spiritual purity and worldly desires. His embrace of this lifestyle, and his eventual disillusionment with it, underscores the existential belief that authenticity involves the totality of one’s experiences—the mistakes, the excesses, and the regrets—as integral components of self-formation.

This period of indulgence is marked by a growing sense of alienation, illustrating how the pursuit of external validation—whether through wealth, pleasure, or social status—can lead to a deeper disconnection from the self. Siddhartha's recognition of this alienation is akin to what existentialists describe as “the nausea of existence,” a profound awareness of the emptiness that accompanies a life lived inauthentically. His subsequent rejection of his luxurious lifestyle is not merely a renunciation of wealth but a deeper existential choice to reconnect with his true self, unburdened by societal definitions of success and happiness.

The existential journey toward authenticity reaches its climax when Siddhartha encounters the river, which serves as both a literal and metaphorical guide. The river represents the fluidity and interconnectedness of life, reflecting the existential idea that authenticity is not about achieving a fixed state of being but about embracing the continuous flow of experiences that shape one's identity. Siddhartha learns from the river that life's contradictions—joy and sorrow, gain and loss, love and loneliness—are all part of the same whole. This realization embodies existential authenticity: the acceptance of the self in its entirety, without the need for external validation or the illusion of a singular, unchanging identity.

Siddhartha's final transformation occurs as he embraces the simplicity and immediacy of the present moment, free from the constraints of past regrets and future anxieties. His rejection of conventional notions of enlightenment, along with his acceptance of life's cyclical nature, represents the ultimate existential triumph—the achievement of a self-defined existence. Hesse's depiction of Siddhartha's journey illustrates the profound existential truth that authenticity is not found in adherence to prescribed roles or external achievements but in the courage to live one's own path, shaped by personal experiences, choices, and the continuous process of self-discovery.

Thus, *Siddhartha* serves as a powerful exploration of the existential quest for authenticity, revealing that true self-identity emerges not from conformity but from the embrace of one's unique journey. Siddhartha's life, marked by moments of profound insight and deep despair, reflects the existential belief that authenticity is achieved through the rejection of societal pressures and the embrace of personal freedom, no matter how uncertain or challenging the path may be. In Hesse's narrative, the search for authenticity becomes not just a philosophical ideal but a lived reality, highlighting the transformative power of living true to oneself in a world that often demands conformity.

4. The Burden of Freedom and the Weight of Choices

Hermann Hesse intricately explores the existential theme of freedom and the heavy burden that accompanies it, emphasizing the individual's responsibility to navigate life's complexities without the comfort of predetermined paths. Existentialism, particularly as articulated by philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, asserts that humans are “condemned to be free,” highlighting the inherent tension between boundless freedom and the responsibility to make meaningful choices. Siddhartha's journey is a vivid illustration of this existential struggle, as his quest for self-identity is deeply intertwined with the consequences of his autonomy and the weight of his decisions.

Siddhartha's departure from the Samanas marks one of his earliest confrontations with the burden of freedom. The Samanas, with their rigorous ascetic practices, offer a life of rigid discipline that promises spiritual liberation through the denial of worldly desires. However, Siddhartha soon recognizes that this path, like his previous life as a Brahmin, imposes an external structure that confines rather than liberates the self. His decision to leave the Samanas reflects a profound existential realization: true freedom cannot be found in adherence to rigid doctrines, no matter how virtuous they may appear. Instead, it lies in the acceptance of one's responsibility to forge a personal path, unbound by the expectations of others.

The moment Siddhartha decides to part ways with his closest friend, Govinda, further exemplifies the existential burden of choice. Govinda, embodying the conventional follower, seeks security in established teachings, first with the Samanas and later with the Buddha. Siddhartha's choice to diverge from Govinda's path signifies his commitment to an uncharted journey, one that prioritizes personal experience over collective wisdom. This decision encapsulates the existentialist notion that each person's quest for identity is fundamentally solitary, defined by choices that cannot be outsourced or deferred. In choosing his unique path, Siddhartha embraces the solitude of freedom, accepting that he must bear the consequences of his decisions alone.

The existential weight of freedom becomes even more apparent during Siddhartha's descent into materialism and sensual pleasure, a period marked by his relationship with Kamala and his success as a wealthy merchant. Here, Siddhartha's choices reflect the existential dilemma of unanchored freedom: the absence of external constraints allows him to indulge every desire, yet this very freedom leads him to a profound sense of emptiness and alienation. His life of luxury and excess illustrates Sartre's concept of “bad faith,” where the individual's actions, rather than reflecting genuine self-expression, become a means of escape from existential responsibility. Siddhartha's immersion in this lifestyle reveals the darker side of freedom—when choices are made without a

deeper sense of purpose, they can lead to self-destruction rather than self-fulfillment.

Siddhartha's growing dissatisfaction with his hedonistic lifestyle culminates in an existential crisis, highlighting the weight of his previous choices. His realization that wealth and sensual pleasure have distanced him from his true self serves as a pivotal moment of self-awareness. This turning point aligns with the existential belief that freedom is not just the ability to make choices but also the capacity to confront and accept the consequences of those choices, including the pain of having strayed from one's authentic path. Siddhartha's disgust with his life and his decision to abandon his wealth and status represent an existential reawakening—an acknowledgment that freedom also entails the ongoing responsibility to correct one's course.

Siddhartha's existential burden is further exemplified in his relationship with his son, which mirrors his earlier struggles but from the perspective of a parent grappling with the limits of influence. Siddhartha's desire to guide his son, to shield him from repeating his own mistakes, is met with the painful recognition that his son, too, must bear the burden of freedom. This episode underscores the existential theme that each individual must navigate their own path, regardless of the wisdom or experiences offered by others. Siddhartha's inability to control his son's choices reflects the broader existential truth that freedom is inseparable from the inevitability of failure, loss, and misunderstanding.

The river, which becomes a central symbol in Siddhartha's later life, offers a metaphor for the continuous and often turbulent process of existential self-redefinition. The river's constant flow represents the unending nature of choice and change, capturing the idea that self-identity is not fixed but is continually shaped and reshaped by the decisions one makes. As Siddhartha listens to the river, he learns to embrace the totality of his experiences—the successes and failures, the joys and sorrows—as integral to his journey. This realization encapsulates the existential perspective that identity is not a static achievement but an ongoing project, marked by the freedom to choose and the necessity to endure the consequences.

Hesse's portrayal of Siddhartha's journey underscores the existential belief that freedom is both a gift and a burden, demanding courage, self-awareness, and the willingness to accept the uncertainties of life. Siddhartha's story is a powerful exploration of the existential struggle to live authentically in a world where freedom offers no guarantees, only the opportunity to define oneself through choices and actions. The weight of Siddhartha's decisions reflects the broader existential condition of humanity: the ceaseless effort to navigate the complexities of freedom, to bear the weight of responsibility, and to continuously strive toward a sense of self that is both true and ever-evolving.

5. Suffering, Self-Realization, and the River as a Metaphor

Hermann Hesse explores suffering as a transformative force, positioning it as a vital element in the existential quest for self-realization. Unlike traditional narratives that view suffering as a mere obstacle to overcome, Hesse presents it as an intrinsic aspect of human existence that shapes and deepens one's understanding of the self. This perspective aligns closely with existential philosophy, which often portrays suffering as a necessary experience that compels individuals to confront the truths of their existence, make authentic choices, and ultimately forge a coherent sense of identity. Through Siddhartha's journey, Hesse uses suffering and the river as powerful metaphors for the cyclical and interconnected nature of self-identity.

Siddhartha's path is marked by profound moments of suffering, each of which serves as a pivotal point in his existential awakening. His initial disillusionment with asceticism and subsequent indulgence in materialism illustrate the existential struggle to find meaning in extremes. These periods of disillusionment are not merely setbacks; they are essential phases of Siddhartha's self-realization, as each experience strips away false pretenses and pushes him closer to understanding his true nature. This mirrors the existential belief articulated by philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, who argued that suffering is an indispensable part of personal growth, famously stating, "That which does not kill us makes us stronger." Siddhartha's sufferings—his despair over his hedonistic lifestyle, his feelings of emptiness despite material success, and his sorrow over his estranged son—are all necessary trials that refine his understanding of the self.

A critical moment of suffering occurs when Siddhartha confronts the realization of his own profound alienation during his life as a wealthy merchant. The emptiness he feels despite his material wealth symbolizes the existential void that arises when one lives inauthentically, disconnected from one's deeper values. This phase of his life embodies the existential concept of "nausea," as described by Jean-Paul Sartre, where the individual feels overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of existence. Siddhartha's despair forces him to reevaluate his life choices, prompting a radical shift that leads him back to the river—a place of reflection and renewal. This turning point underscores the existential idea that suffering is not a deviation from the path but a crucial component that forces individuals to confront uncomfortable truths and make transformative choices.

The river, a central symbol in *Siddhartha*, serves as a profound metaphor for the existential understanding of self-identity. Unlike static representations of enlightenment, the river embodies the fluid, ever-changing nature of

existence, mirroring the ongoing process of becoming. Siddhartha's repeated return to the river throughout the novel reflects the existential notion that identity is not a fixed endpoint but a dynamic, continuous flow of experiences. The river's perpetual movement symbolizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of life—joy and suffering, success and failure—and suggests that true self-realization comes from embracing the totality of one's experiences rather than seeking to escape or transcend them.

Siddhartha's epiphany by the river represents a key existential insight: the understanding that life's opposites are interconnected and inseparable. As he listens to the river, Siddhartha perceives the unity of all voices, representing the existential idea that every aspect of existence, whether painful or joyous, contributes to the whole. This realization echoes the existential concept of "being-in-the-world," a term coined by Martin Heidegger to describe the human condition of being immersed in and shaped by the totality of one's experiences. Siddhartha's recognition of the river's wisdom—the merging of all sounds into a single harmonious "Om"—symbolizes the acceptance of life's contradictions as part of a greater, unified self.

The river also serves as a metaphor for time and the cyclical nature of existence. Siddhartha's observation that the river is at once everywhere—its source, its journey, and its end—reflects the existential view that life is not a linear progression but a series of recurring patterns and interconnected moments. This cyclical understanding of time challenges the conventional pursuit of a singular, ultimate enlightenment, suggesting instead that wisdom is found in the ongoing flow of life. Siddhartha learns that to understand the self, one must embrace the continuity of existence, acknowledging that each moment—past, present, and future—contributes to the evolving narrative of identity.

The river's symbolism extends to the concept of self-acceptance. In his final moments of reflection, Siddhartha recognizes that his journey has been shaped by every choice, every joy, and every sorrow he has experienced. This mirrors the existential belief that authenticity involves embracing the full spectrum of one's life, including the pain and mistakes that define the human condition. Siddhartha's acceptance of the river's wisdom—the understanding that he is not separate from the world but deeply interconnected with it—culminates in a profound existential realization: self-identity is not found in the rejection of suffering but in its integration into the broader tapestry of one's existence.

Through the metaphor of the river, Hesse encapsulates the essence of existential thought: that self-realization is an ongoing process shaped by the acceptance of life's inherent uncertainties, struggles, and contradictions. Siddhartha's journey teaches that suffering, far from being an aberration, is a necessary and transformative force that propels individuals toward a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world. In this way, Hesse's narrative transcends the search for enlightenment as a finite goal, instead portraying it as an endless engagement with the flow of life, where true wisdom lies not in the avoidance of pain but in the embrace of all that life offers.

6. Conclusion

Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* stands as a profound literary testament to the existential journey of self-identity, portraying the human quest for meaning as a deeply personal, complex, and never-ending endeavor. Through Siddhartha's life, Hesse dismantles conventional notions of identity as a fixed or externally defined state, instead highlighting the fluid, ever-evolving nature of the self. Siddhartha's rejection of traditional religious teachings, his immersion in the material world, and his ultimate realization by the river collectively underscore the existential assertion that self-identity cannot be attained through adherence to societal expectations, dogmas, or prescriptive paths. Instead, it emerges through the authentic engagement with one's experiences, choices, and inner conflicts. Hesse's narrative weaves together existential themes that resonate with the philosophies of thinkers like Sartre, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, each of whom emphasized the individual's responsibility to define their own essence in a world devoid of inherent meaning. Siddhartha's journey is a powerful illustration of Sartre's idea that existence precedes essence—his identity is not predetermined but is constantly shaped by his actions and decisions. Through moments of deep suffering, existential crises, and profound self-reflection, Siddhartha embodies the existentialist belief that the self is not a singular discovery but an ongoing creation, crafted through the continuous process of becoming. Siddhartha's life, marked by its cyclical returns and renewed understandings, reflects the existential belief that the quest for self-identity is inherently paradoxical: it involves both the freedom to choose and the burden of those choices, the embrace of authenticity and the confrontation with alienation, the joy of discovery and the inevitability of suffering. Each phase of Siddhartha's journey—from the spiritual austerity of the Samanas to the hedonistic allure of material wealth, and ultimately to the serene acceptance by the river—serves as a metaphor for the broader human condition, illustrating that the self is not a static endpoint but an ever-shifting dialogue between one's inner truth and the outer world. Hesse's portrayal of the river as a symbol of life's interconnectedness further enriches the existential discourse within the novel, presenting the self as part of a larger, unending flow of experiences and insights. Siddhartha's ultimate realization—that wisdom is not in the accumulation of knowledge but in the acceptance of life's totality—aligns

with the existential emphasis on living authentically in the present moment. The river's constant movement captures the essence of this existential wisdom: self-identity is not about reaching a final state of enlightenment but about embracing the journey itself, with all its contradictions, uncertainties, and transformations.

Siddhartha transcends the confines of a mere spiritual quest, offering a deeply existential exploration of what it means to be human. Hesse's narrative challenges readers to reflect on their own lives, questioning the societal constructs and external authorities that often shape our understanding of who we are. Siddhartha's story reminds us that the search for self-identity is not a linear or finite endeavor but a lifelong process of self-discovery, marked by the courage to live authentically and the resilience to face life's inherent struggles. Hesse's work ultimately reaffirms the existential truth that to know oneself is not to find a fixed answer but to engage fully in the unending journey of becoming, embracing both the light and the darkness within.

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