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THE EXISTENTIAL APPROACH TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

by

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A professional paper submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

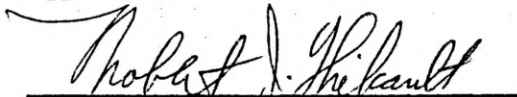
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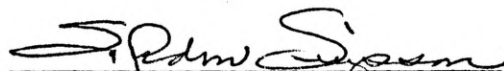
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ABSTRACT

The current interest in existential counseling has grown out of the humanistic revolution in psychology. This revolution is essentially a protest against the reductionistic approaches of the behavioral and Freudian schools in psychology and an attempt to broaden the study of man to include such intangible aspects of human existence as values and the meaning of life.

The existential approach to therapy is derived from the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology. A brief survey of the history of the development of existentialism revealed that the philosophy is in part a protest against the dehumanization and standardization of modern man and an attempt to reaffirm the dignity and importance of the individual.

The following concepts derived from the philosophy of existentialism which provide the basis for the existential orientation in therapy were discussed: (1) existence precedes essence, (2) Being, (3) Non-being, (4) Dasein, (5) the human condition, (6) dread, (7) guilt, (8) authenticity, (9) freedom, choice and responsibility, (10) meaning, (11) bad faith, (12) encounter, and (13) tragedy.

The existential approaches of the following men were examined: (1) Ludwig Binswanger, (2) Medard Boss, (3) Viktor Frankl, (4) Carl Rogers, (5) J. F. T. Bugental, and (6) Richard Johnson.

The existential approach to psychotherapy is an attitude rather than a school or a set of techniques. The approach begins with respect for the individual and attention to his experience as he conveys it. The goal of existential counseling is to make the real joy of living possible by means of confronting rather than avoiding the tragic and frightening aspects of life. The therapist participates by being genuinely present to the individual as he explores the meaning of his existence and the possibilities of existential freedom and authenticity.

I.

ORIGINS OF THE EXISTENTIAL APPROACH TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

The Humanistic Revolution

Existential psychotherapy is an orientation or an approach to therapy rather than a school or a technique. This approach is based upon the philosophy of existentialism and the "descriptive science" of phenomenology. Ludwig Binswanger, who worked with Eugen Bleuler in Zürich, was the first to apply concepts derived from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger to the understanding of man. He called his approach Daseinsanalyse which is usually translated "existential analysis." Several other European psychiatrists, among them Medard Boss, Roland Kuhn, F. J. Buytendijk, Eugene Minkowski, Viktor Frankl, and Nikolai Berdyaev, developed various approaches to psychotherapy based on existential concepts. The work of these men was virtually unknown in the United States until the late 1950's. (53:7) But while this movement was growing in Europe, American psychologists such as James Dewey, Gordon Allport, Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Rollo May were progressing along strikingly parallel lines of thought. Concern with problems of identity, values, meaning, and with the experiencing human being began to emerge.

The existential approach can best be understood as a part of a much broader humanistic revolution which is taking place not only in psychology but in all fields of knowledge. Abraham Maslow believes

that: "We are witnessing a great revolution in thought, in the Zeitgeist itself: the creation of a new image of man and society and of religion and science." (51:685) Humanistic psychology represents a protest against the limitations of the two major approaches to the understanding of man which have been utilized in the past by psychologists. The first of these, formulated primarily by Watson, Hull, and Skinner, is the behavioral interpretation of man which is essentially reductionistic in nature since it is based on physics as its model. The second major orientation consists of Freudian-based psychoanalytic theories. Third Force psychology is an attempt to develop a "more inclusive image of man" in which a place can be found for "higher-order elements of the personality such as altruism and dignity, or the search for truth and beauty." (51:686) In the light of this attempt, Joseph Wood Krutch's definition of humanism becomes meaningful. This definition states in part that "a humanist is anyone who rejects the attempt to describe or account for man wholly on the basis of physics, chemistry, and animal behavior" (68:xvii)

Some authors have presented the situation that now exists in psychology as a dichotomy between two forces. According to Sidney Jourard this dichotomy is made up of scientific psychologists who have conceptualized man as a machine, a rat, a computer, in fact "everything,

but what he is" (38:3) and humanistic psychologists who view man as a self-actualizer "rather than ... unwitting servants of the leaders of institutions, and who deserve to be and to be seen as recipients of the secrets of human being and possibility." (38:8) Another important writer who saw modern society as becoming increasingly polarized between two forces was Erich Fromm.

There is a growing polarization occurring in the United States and in the whole world: There are those who are attracted to force, "law and order," bureaucratic methods, and eventually to non-life, and those with a deep longing for life, for new attitudes rather than for ready-made schemes and blueprints. This new front is a movement which combines the wish for profound changes in our economic and social practice with changes in our psychic and spiritual approach to life. In its most general form, its aim is the activation of the individual, the restoration of man's control over the social system, the humanization of technology. It is a movement in the name of life, and it has such a broad and common base because the threat to life is today a threat not to one class, to one nation, but a threat to all. (28:5)

This dichotomy was already discernible in the lifetime of Sigmund Freud. In a letter to Binswanger, who was a friend of Freud and whom Freud respected despite their disagreements, Freud made this remark:

I have always confined myself to the ground floor and basement of the edifice. You maintain that by changing one's point of view, one can also see the upper story, in which dwell such distinguished guests as religion, art, etc.... I have already found a place for religion, by putting it under the category of "the neurosis of mankind" (54:32)

On the other hand, many writers have deplored this point of view that would set scientific methods in opposition to humanistic attitudes.

These writers see Third Force psychology as a synthesis of forces resulting in broadened insights through cooperation and the pooling of information. Abraham Maslow has expressed the hope that existential psychology will enrich and expand psychology rather than degenerating into "a new 'ism' that could turn into an antipsychology or into an antiscience." (50:15) Rollo May has also been deeply concerned about the anti-scientific and anti-intellectual trends in existential psychiatry. He pointed out that "one cannot be against science or reason as such." (52:180) To illustrate this he quoted Margaret Fuller's pompous statement: "I accept the universe," and Carlyle's rejoinder: "Gad, she'd better." (52:180) Eugene Minkowski also felt that his humanistic approach to psychotherapy, which he calls "anthropological psychology" is not anti-scientific. He did not undervalue the contributions of scientific psychologists but believed that there were other "modes of approach" that were capable of yielding valuable knowledge. (57:12) Minkowski has said that he often feels cheated after reading a book of psychology because it leaves him unsatisfied. He regretted that "nothing is said of the essential phenomena of our existence...." (57:15)

Most psychotherapists who use the existential approach want to improve their methods of scientific observation, explore new ways of understanding man, and broaden their concerns to include such things

as values, aesthetics and creative potential, but they are also aware of the contributions of technology, scientific research and theories developed by behaviorists and Freudian analysts. Even with the increased emphasis upon the immediate experience of the individual, which is the core of the existential approach, "essences" or concepts cannot be completely disregarded because, as Rollo May noted: "Concepts are the orientation by which perception occurs; without some concepts presupposed the therapist would not see the patient who is there or anything about him." (52:184)

According to Ludwig Binswanger, existential analysis began in Zürich as "a psychiatric-phenomenologic research method." (7:17) Binswanger called it a research method rather than a psychotherapeutic technique to emphasize the fact that existential analysis is a scientific study of man based on observation of phenomena. Observation is also the basic tool of the natural sciences: physics, chemistry, biology, etc. Binswanger explained that this existential approach:

arose from dissatisfaction with the prevailing efforts to gain scientific understanding in psychiatry; so that existential analysis owes its origin and development to an attempt to gain a new scientific understanding of the concerns of psychiatry, psychopathology and psychotherapy, on the basis of the analysis of existence (Daseinsanalytik) as it was developed in the remarkable work of Martin Heidegger: "Being and Time" (Sein und Zeit), in the year 1927. Psychology and psychotherapy, as sciences, are admittedly concerned with "man," but not at all primarily with mentally ill man, but with man as such. (7:17-18)

In the latter part of this explanation, Binswanger called attention to another important aspect of the humanistic movement: the attempt to transcend the dichotomy between sick and well, normal and abnormal in order to achieve a less restricting theory of human existence.

Definitions of Existentialism

Existentialism has been defined in terms of the humanistic protest:

Existentialism is not a philosophy but a mood embracing a number of disparate philosophies; the differences among them are more basic than the temper which unites them. This temper can best be described as a reaction against the static, the abstract, the purely rational, the merely irrational, in favor of the dynamic and the concrete, personal involvement and "engagement", action, choice, and commitment, the distinction between "authentic" and "inauthentic" existence, and the actual situation of the existential subject as the starting point of thought.
(26:3)

Ruitenbeek has echoed the cry of dozens of existentialist writers in the following statement: "In contemporary mass society, the individual feels depersonalized, alienated, detached, and unrelated." (63:xx) These feelings have led to a protest against modern man's "depersonalized technological society, where people are so much in danger of merely becoming things...." (63:xiv) It is in the light of this protest that the philosophy of existentialism and the concerns of the existential approach to psychotherapy must be comprehended.

A different definition of existentialism was offered by Rollo

May:

Existentialism, in short, is the endeavor to understand man by cutting below the cleavage between subject and object which has bedeviled Western thought and science since shortly after the Renaissance. (55:11)

This definition also placed importance upon whether man is seen as an object to be studied, predicted, and perhaps manipulated or whether he is understood as the subject who feels, makes choices, grows as an individual, and confronts problems of meaning and value. As an object, he is viewed from the outside, in which case only his behavior may be studied, perhaps in terms of response to stimuli, and the feelings of the person may be largely neglected. When man is treated as subject, the approach is client-centered as in Rogerian counseling. The individual is understood on the basis of what he says about himself and his feelings, rather than primarily within the framework of a theory. Existential psychology is an endeavor to understand the nature of this man who does the experiencing and to whom the experiences happen. (54:14)

Will Herberg has given a definition of existentialism which admirably clarifies the important aspects of the philosophy:

we can describe thinking as existentialist if it makes existence rather than essence the starting point of its ontological reflections. In the sense this term has acquired since Kierkegaard, it is human existence, the "human situation," that is the starting point; existential

thinking then becomes (to employ some of Kierkegaard's own expressions) the thinking of the existing subject about his existence as he "exists" his existence. Its notes are experiential concreteness, personal concern and commitment, the uniqueness of the existing individual, the primacy of enacted being (existence) over the mere concept of being. (32:3)

In this description the emphasis was again placed on the subjective experience of the individual. Rollo May has explained: "Existentialism means centering upon the existing person; it is the emphasis on the human being as he is emerging, becoming." (54:16) Eugene Minkowski has said that existentialism deals with man and his unique "mode of existence." (57:9) The importance of understanding man as a whole was expressed by Amedeo Giorgi:

Perhaps in its most succinct formulation we can say that psychology turns toward that type of modern philosophy known as existential phenomenology in order to provide itself with a foundation that will enable it to do justice to the whole human person. Or in other terms, we can say that existential phenomenological philosophy provides the basis and justification for conceiving of psychology as a human science rather than a natural science. (29:102)

This statement has reference to the fact that man -- although he is an animal -- is more than an animal and attempts to reduce him to an animal destroy his unique qualities, the "essence" of man. This is what Binswanger meant when he defined existential analysis as "the empirical-phenomenological, scientific analysis of actual ways and Gestalten of human existence." (39:204)

But definitions are often misleading or one-sided, and this is particularly true of existentialism. No attempt to define existentialism would be complete without the inclusion of a vital aspect of the philosophy -- freedom. The following definition given by Roger Troisfontaines placed emphasis on this very important concept:

For anyone who wants to enclose it within a definition, perhaps this one will be found convenient: existentialism is a passionate return of the individual to his own freedom, in order in the unfolding of its processes to extract the significance of his being. (70:25) ✓

Jean-Paul Sartre has particularly emphasized man's freedom even to the point of contending that we are our choices, and Karl Jaspers has said: "What man is, he ultimately becomes through the cause which he has made his own." (25:9) Man is always in the process of becoming, and he becomes through choice; therefore, what he becomes he has chosen to become. It is man's freedom and responsibility which provides the foundation for the existential approach to psychotherapy.

Phenomenology and Existentialism

Phenomenology provided the basis for the development of existentialism. Edmund Husserl, who is usually called the "fountain-head of phenomenology," believed that he had given a new foundation to philosophy. (22:12) In fact, phenomenology is considered "the

single most influential philosophic approach in the continent of Europe today, with significant ramifications in practically all intellectual and cognitive disciplines." (34:ix) It is impossible to understand any contemporary philosopher without understanding Husserl's work.

Phenomenology is essentially a method for obtaining knowledge about a particular experience by setting aside all presuppositions and suppressing all hypotheses. It begins by analyzing and describing various types of experience and attempts to get at the "essence" of the experience, that is "to get to the things themselves." (67:372) All obscuring preconceptions are set aside in order to allow the mind's intuitive powers to discover the "essence" of the experience.

The entire range of consciousness...all being becomes the subject matter of Husserl's investigation, but in a new mode: (the "world as experienced.") He calls this transformation from the world-as existing to the world-as-experienced the "phenomenological reduction." What remains is the inseparable combination ego-cogito-cogitatum. (67:372)

Thus phenomenology is primarily descriptive rather than explanatory in nature and for this reason has sometimes been called a "descriptive science."

In developing his philosophy of existentialism, Heidegger attempted to describe, without any preconceptions, what human existence is. The word "phenomenon" meant in Greek "that which reveals itself." Therefore

phenomenology was understood by Heidegger as the attempt to let the thing speak for itself. "It will reveal itself to us," he said, "only if we do not attempt to coerce it into one of our ready-made strait jackets." (2:214) So in applying the phenomenological method one must begin with the individual and his "stream of consciousness." (22:13)

Carlton Beck has listed what he believed are the basic pre-suppositions of phenomenology:

1. A real world exists independent of the knower. Its existence can be inferred, but not experienced directly.
2. Reason exists and is the tool whereby inferences can be made, on the basis of past experiences.
3. Inference from past experiences in one's own phenomenal field are the only source of knowledge, other than certain "raw sensations" obtained by sensory experiences. New knowledge is just the restructuring of knowns.
4. The pre-existent world of objects and the existent world of situations follow certain predictable "laws" and can be known by reason via inference.
5. One's phenomenal field at any given instant wholly determines his behavior.
6. Naturalism is the ontological concomitant of phenomenology, and supernaturalism is excluded as nonparsimonious.
7. The individual has "needs" which represent the actions necessary to maintain or enhance his phenomenal self. (4:73)

Presupposition number six does not always hold true since many people consider a supernatural Creator as a part of existence.

An examination of these presuppositions reveals one obvious conflict between the philosophy of phenomenology and existentialism concerning determinism and man's freedom of choice. Herein lies the major difference between the two disciplines. Phenomenology remains deterministic while existentialism makes man's freedom of choice central in its thinking. Existentialism does concede, however, in varying degrees the fact that quite a bit of human life is determined. This idea is contained within the concept of "contingency" and man's "finite condition." But within this determined situation, within biological and cultural limitations, man has freedom to choose what he will become.

Historical Origins

Existentialism has been described as "a timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in the past; but it is only in recent times that it has hardened into a sustained protest and preoccupation." (42:12) Man has always been concerned with the nature and meaning of his existence. This was beautifully expressed in the Biblical story of Job, a man who found no justification through reason but rather sought answers through a personal confrontation with God.

The theologian Bultmann has shown that the New Testament was written from an existential point of view. (71:27) It has been said: "Existential philosophy is a modern name and a modern consciousness of a very ancient mode of encompassing the world." (71:26) Perhaps this is the reason existentialism arose spontaneously and often simultaneously in different times and places, its themes appearing in literature, art, theology, and the writings of many philosophers, rather than being developed gradually through a straight line of progenitors. The philosophy is a popular one instead of purely academic because it expresses ideas which have the quality of seeming to have been already known by the individual. The truth of the existentialist position does not have to be argued: it can be experienced by each person in his own way. Bugental expressed this feeling so many have experienced in the following statement:

Existentialism feels right. Always when trying to test out the "goodness of fit" of other theoretical positions, there was the sense of the areas that could not be dealt with or the assumptions that were too tenuous. Perhaps another way of saying that it feels right is to say that so far as I can judge, the existential perspective accords with my own and with my patients' experiences. (12:17)

Because the roots of existentialism are so ancient and so universal, the emergence of the philosophy as a conscious discipline is often called "modern existentialism." Modern existentialism arose as a reaction against rationalism, which reached its zenith in the

work of Hegel. Søren Kierkegaard, (1813-1855) the father of existentialism, rejected Hegel's identification of the real with the rational and contended instead that "truth lies only in action and can be experienced only through action." (48:264) The origins of the existential movement has been brought to life in the words of Karl Jaspers:

Existentialism emerged from the despair of a radical Protestant thinker, Søren Kierkegaard, over the shallow and barren Christianity of recent times. It came into being with individual existence seemingly doomed by bustle, the struggle for life, the pace and tumult of the machine. It came with the gist of all existence -- the self-based and harmoniously unfolding personality which Goethe praised as "a mortal's highest bliss" -- Höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder ist doch die Persönlichkeit -- disintegrating before mass claims, mass assimilation, mass tastes and habits, before standardized propaganda, standardized work, standardized leisure, and standardized thinking. It came with organic forms of life everywhere reduced to mechanical and automatic ones, with everything spiritual turning animal, with free self-determination replaced by rigid coercion. (35:7-8)

In 1846 the book often called the existentialist manifesto, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, by Kierkegaard, was published. Kierkegaard's writings are of particular interest to psychotherapists because of his extensive work with the problem of anxiety. He was, in fact, the first person before Freud to write in detail about anxiety. Kierkegaard reacted not only against the identification of truth with abstract concepts, but also against the reduction of the individual to a cog in the machine of the State. This passage from Hegel has a

particularly sinister sound in the light of man's experience with this philosophy as it was practiced by the Third Reich:

The individual as an individual is unimportant; only the historically decisive actor, the hero, makes a significant difference in history; but whether a man be a conventional citizen, a courageous person, a hero, or a victim, he is nothing but the Spirit's instrument. The embodiment of the Spirit's freedom is the State; the State is the continuity of freedom and passion. (31)

In contrast to this doctrine, existentialism centers upon the individual and upon his unique creative potential.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was another who was in revolt against the extreme rationalism of Hegel and whose writings have had a great deal of influence, particularly upon Karl Jaspers.

(2:12) It was Nietzsche who first voiced the agony of modern man's loss of faith in traditional religious dogma in his parable of the death of God. (60:9-10)

Martin Heidegger (1889-), a pupil of Husserl, was one of the outstanding existentialist philosophers. Kierkegaard's writings had gone virtually unnoticed since they had been published in the 1840's. They were taken up again seriously in the 1920's by Heidegger and Jaspers. (3:20-21) Heidegger's most important work, Sein und Zeit (Being and Time) was published in 1927. He has been especially important to the development of existential therapy. Medard Boss based his approach upon the philosophy of Heidegger; Binswanger was influenced primarily by Heidegger, Buber and Kierkegaard (26:366);

and Viktor Frankl developed his most important technique, paradoxical intention, from a key idea of Heidegger's. In addition, the writings of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty were influenced mostly by Heidegger.

(3:114) Heidegger's writings are considered to fall in the atheistic existentialist forms of the philosophy.

Some misunderstanding of Nietzsche and Heidegger have occurred because of their popularity with the Nazi Regime. It is believed that Hitler borrowed his concept, the "Super Man," from Nietzsche. This was, of course, an obscene distortion of what Nietzsche really meant by the "Übermensch." If it seems strange that the Nazis could so twist the meaning of these existential writers, it is perhaps no less strange than the fact that Torquemada read the Holy Bible. Nietzsche's work has been criticized because he became insane, but this is hardly a sound basis for judging his writings. Semmelweis was also insane but this did not invalidate his discovery that "childbed fever" was due to tiny organisms too small to be seen.

The spontaneous and simultaneous nature of the development of existentialism has been mentioned. Notes from Underground, by Dostoevsky, was published in 1864, but Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky did not know each other. (42:14) Yet hardly a more existential statement could be found than the following passage from Notes from Underground:

And all that for the most foolish reason, which one would think, was hardly worth mentioning: that is, that man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may choose what is contrary to one's own interests, and sometimes ones positively ought (that is my idea). One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy -- is that very "most advantageous advantage" which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man wants a normal, a virtuous choice? What has made them conceive that man must want a rationally advantageous choice? What man wants is simply independent choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice. (18:71-72)

Choice, independent choice, is the most important theme of existential approaches to psychotherapy. Whether the idea of freedom arises from theology, philosophy, literature, or psychology it is clearly of central importance to man.

Another simultaneous appearance was the work of Ortega Y Gasset, who published in 1924 ideas very similar to those of Heidegger. Being and Time did not appear until 1927, and Ortega Y Gasset was not familiar with Heidegger's philosophy. (55:17) While existentialism was being developed in Europe, pragmatism was being developed in the United States by William James. Because the philosophies are so similar in many ways, William Barrett contended that James should be called an existentialist. (2:18) William James stressed the concepts of free will and choice. It was, in fact, this concept of free will

that saved William's sanity and restored his mental health after he had suffered for many years as a victim of "melancholia." (40:22-28) William James stated this idea later in his life: "Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact." (58:91) Pragmatism was published in 1907.

Karl Jaspers, a major figure in the existential movement, placed particular emphasis upon the danger of the loss of individuality in a dehumanizing technology. Eugene Minkowski credited Karl Jaspers with introducing the term "phenomenology" into psychopathology. Jaspers wrote:

Phenomenology has for its object the study of states of soul experienced by those who are ill; it would have us represent them in concrete form and consider their relationships to one another. All the confidences of the sick person noted as carefully as possible... in the course of a conversation contribute more than anything else to this understanding. (56:294)

Although he is better known for his writings in the area of philosophy, Jaspers was also a psychiatrist. He published an important work, General Psychopathology, in 1913. Interestingly though, he does not consider himself to be an existential therapist. He explained in General Psychopathology that building a therapeutic approach upon a philosophy would be too restricting. He does say, however:

So too, although the philosophy of Existence itself is not a field for psychology, every psychologist becomes in practice a philosopher illuminating Existence whether he knows it or not and whether he wants it or not. (36:776)

Karl Jaspers has a particular relationship to the idea of authenticity which is so important in the existential approach to therapy. The mass man -- the standardized consumer, who is not distinguishable from any other mass man -- is not living an authentic life or becoming what he has the potential to become as an individual.

Reviewers of the history of the development of existentialism have given varying degrees of credit for influence to various philosophers, but most would find themselves in substantial agreement with the following statement by Walter Kaufmann:

It is entirely proper to consider the writings of these four men as the hard core of existentialism: Kierkegaard introduced the "existential"; Jaspers entitled one of his main works Existenzerhellung and another, smaller volume Existenzphilosophie; Heidegger's Sein und Zeit is widely taken for magnum opus of this movement; and Sartre is the only major writer who admits he is an existentialist. (42:21)

Because of the popularity of Sartre, whose version of existentialism is atheistic in nature, there has been some confusion about the Christian existentialists. Unfortunately, it is often believed that existentialism is an atheistic philosophy. But the atheistic position is not the only possible one. Bugental has said that existentialism "restores our divinity." He continued: "I am not content to see man as mechanism or robot or even as organism. Man must partake in whatever he means by the concept of God." (12:20) Many of the best existential insights have come from theologians

who have used existentialism as a means of enriching theology. Among them are Martin Buber, Paul Tillich, Gabriel Marcel and Jacques Maritain. "What is common, and central, to all these philosophers is that the meaning of religion, and religious faith, is recast in relation to the individual." (2:17) Martin Buber's conception, "I and Thou," forms the basis of the existential encounter and replaces to a great extent the framework of Freudian transference and counter-transference phenomena. Paul Tillich has been credited with introducing existentialism to America. While this may be an oversimplification, it is true that his powerful book, The Courage to Be, has been extremely influential in this country.

Another atheist existentialist, Albert Camus, is wellknown for his Myth of Sisyphus in which he presented his concept of the "absurd." This concept has also been a source of confusion to many people who have apparently interpreted it to mean that nothing really matters. Robert Carkhuff made this error when he said in his book Beyond Counseling and Therapy:

A fearful thought strikes us that the therapist is both restrained from intervention and freed to intervene out of his deep awareness that life as he and the client both live it is ridiculous: his intervention does not, after all, matter. (14:82)

This type of error may result from either a superficial study of the existential approach or from a limited acquaintance with a few

representatives of the movement. The idea that life is absurd is more accurately a starting point of the existential thinking from which ethical positions are worked out that involve commitment, communion, and ultimately, meaning. Sartre himself moved from the idea of the absurdity of existence to a deep commitment to Marxism. Sartre and Camus both felt that life has no given meaning but one must create his own meaning. Herein lies the significance of Sartre's remark that man is condemned to be free. (64:277) No major existentialist would contend that nothing matters. Existentialism arose as an effort to put meaning back into a way of life which was rapidly losing significance by finding a way through which man could reaffirm his dignity.

There are several reasons for the confusion about and misinterpretation of existentialism. The writings are quite extensive and varied, ranging from Sartre's atheistic position to the primitive Christianity of Kierkegaard. Terms like "Being" are defined somewhat differently than they are in everyday usage. In addition, the basic writings are in languages other than English and translation is "impossible", as Paul Tillich remarked. (55:vii) Inaccuracies tend to creep into the literature because of the problems surrounding exact rendition of the words. Much of the confusion results from the popularization of the philosophy by people who had only a

superficial knowledge of it. Sartre has complained that existentialism "no longer signifies anything at all." (49:3) Medard Boss has also expressed concern about the "shocking intellectual confusion which has come to prevail under the blanket term 'existentialism.'" (10:3) He chose the word Daseinsanalyse to describe his therapy because he felt the term "existential" had become so general. Boss recommended going back to the sound base of Heidegger's philosophy in order to correct the misinterpretations and corruptions which have crept into the existential approach to psychotherapy. W. Van Dusen made a very valid point when he said:

An understanding of the philosophy is essential to the clinical application of the method. For this reason, one's study has to cover not only the few books and articles on existential analysis, but also the whole field of existential philosophy. The analysis grows out and is a part of a philosophy or a particular way of viewing the world. (71:25)

The philosophy of existentialism cannot be separated from the practice of psychotherapy. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to be aware that the intellectual gymnastics of the philosophers is not the same thing as the vital, human relationship between an individual and the therapist. The concerns of psychotherapy are primarily those that involve the welfare of individuals while philosophers expend more energy in defining terms accurately and in constructing logical systems.

II.

BASIC CONCEPTS

Existence Precedes Essence

The basic premise of existential thinking is that existence precedes essence. "The essence of a thing is what the thing is; existence refers rather to the sheer fact that the thing is." (2:102) Existence is the "given of all experience." (12:27) Essences are abstract concepts such as time, weight, force, the greenness (of wood), or a circle. The idea of essences as conceived by Plato has been dominate in Western thought. An excellent clarification of this basic premise was provided by Edith Weigert:

Idealism, since Plato, has regarded the essence of ideas as the real metaphysical truth in comparison with the imperfections of the "shady" reality which we observe with our senses. In contrast, Existentialism focuses on these so-called imperfections as the essence of existence. Husserl liked to refer to mathematical symbols in his exposition of the ideal. For the idealist the circle is the mathematical symbol of perfection in contrast with the impurities of the empirically experienced round things of reality. For the empiricist only observable round things exist, with the circle at best an abstract term used for classification purposes. Existentialism focuses neither on the ideal of a perfect circle nor on things as merely empirical observations. It focuses in each case on the deviations from roundness as existential characteristics of round objects. The degree of roundness changes with the meaning given to things by their usage. The roundness of the wheel of a wheel-barrow differs from the roundness of a compass. The shape of the wheel is not merely an imperfect shadow of the true idea of roundness; the deviation from roundness belongs to the essence of the existence of a wheel as a particular thing shaped for use

in connection with a wheelbarrow. A compass could not fulfill its functions if it had the same [roundness]. This explains the meaning of the sentence (actually formulated in these words later by Sartre) that existence logically precedes essence. (72:2-3)

Science and mathematics are based on abstract "truths" that always hold true even when "existence" changes. For example, three apples plus three apples equals six apples. This proposition would be true if acorns were substituted for apples so that "a proposition can be true without being real." (55:13) In psychotherapy the emphasis on essences can lead to explaining the individual in terms of concepts such as drives or complexes to the extent that the person may be left out of the theory. In other words, the existentialist is attempting to describe man in terms of his experience while the essentialist puts man into a framework of concepts. According to Medard Boss this is the fundamental difference between the natural sciences and the existential science of man. Boss cited a quotation from the works of Sigmund Freud which clarifies this point:

Our purpose is not merely to describe and classify phenomena, but to conceive them as brought about by the play of forces in the mind, as expressions of tendencies striving towards a goal, which work together or against one another. In this conception, the trends we merely infer are more prominent than the phenomena we perceive. (9:60)

It then follows that the person is treated as an object. He is analyzed, classified into the appropriate category, and his illness is treated according to techniques based on preconceived ideas about his complexes.

The human being is so obscured by theory and statistical averages that his reality is lost. Methods are developed for treating the psychoses and neuroses rather than for helping people who are suffering. This treatment of the person as an object can be observed in analytically-oriented testing using projective techniques such as the Thematic Apperception Test. For example, if the person places the story at a point distant in space or time, one likely assumption is that he has a tendency to cope with his problems by attempting to escape, so a flight from reality may be deduced. Thus the individual is forced onto a Procrustean bed of sterile theory. This reaches its extreme in Skinner's S-R model of behavior in which man as a suffering, loving, experiencing, and transcending human being is omitted entirely from the formula.

In contrast to this treatment of the person as an object, the existential approach is client-centered. That is the approach begins and stays with the person -- what he is feeling -- and attempts to understand what this feeling means to the person experiencing it. Testing, if it is done, is for the client or student if he requests it for his purposes. Testing is not done to provide information to the counselor. The simpler but more efficient and human process of listening to what the patient himself says about what he is experiencing is used. Binswanger has explained it in this way:

existential analysis tries to understand the patient's life history, but it does not explain this life history and its pathological idiosyncrasies according to the teaching of any school of psychotherapy, or by means of its preferred categories. Instead, it understands this life history as modifications of the total structure of the patient's being-in-the-world..." (63:xvii)

The emphasis on the "here and now" rather than the past causes of symptoms is attributable to the idea that existence precedes essence. The immediate experience of the individual is dealt with in preference to analyzing his problems in the restricting terms of theories based on preconceived ideas (essences) about him.

Being

Martin Heidegger set out to explore the problem of Being which had been the central problem of Western philosophy for twenty-five hundred years. In the words of William Barrett:

he proposed no less a task than a "repetition" of the problem of Being; a repetition in the sense of a radical renewal, a fetching back from the oblivion of the past the problem as the first Greek thinkers confronted it. (2:211)

Although "Being" is a rather abstract concept, Heidegger overcame part of this abstract quality by discovering "the meaning of Being from the analysis and description of human being." (3:50) In existentialist literature the term "Being" is sometimes used to mean "authentic living."

Being has two meanings and in many languages two different verb forms. In English the two meanings are (a) a thing which is, that is, a being or object and (b) the to be of whatever is. In English the first use of the verb is more common. This means that thinking becomes tied to objects and this eventually leads to man's being seen as an object. (2:212) When the emphasis is shifted from the object to the becoming of the object, which was Heidegger's contribution to philosophy, a whole new world of possibilities is opened up. When the first meaning of the verb is assumed and man is regarded as an object, his behavior can be predicted as to the statistical probability of its occurrence under given conditions. Seeing man as reacting to stimuli is an unfortunate result of this use of "to be." When the second meaning of the verb is understood, man's creative powers begin to emerge. Various terms have been employed to describe the creative personality as opposed to a merely reactive personality. Bonner discussed the "proactive personality" (8:61-66), Maslow spoke of "self-actualization," and Carl Rogers preferred "fully-functioning person."

Being is always conscious of itself. It is self-aware existing. (12:27) Bugental has expressed this clearly in a passage based upon Paul Tillich's book The Courage to Be:

The choice to be means that each of us is born alive but not born into being. Being requires a self-aware act

of faith. Being requires a world-aware moment of actualization. (12:26)

The second meaning of being is used in the title of On Becoming a Person, by Carl Rogers. In a discussion of the good life, Rogers has this to say:

"What I will be in the next moment, and what I will do, grows out of that moment, and cannot be predicted in advance either by me or by others."

One way of expressing the fluidity which is present in such existential living is to say that the self and personality emerge from experience, rather than experience being translated or twisted to fit preconceived self-structure. (61:188-189)

One who is living authentically is always in the process of becoming what he has the inherent potential to become rather than conforming to a self-image or a social image. He is free to live subjectively and fully instead of having to see himself as others see him or being overly dependent upon how others see him.

Non-being

Just as it was necessary to understand existence in reference to essence, so is it necessary to understand Being in relation to Non-being. Non-being is the most difficult of all existentialist terms and it is usually considered the most important. Paul Tillich used the term as meaning death -- the nothingness after we cease to exist. (69:38) He also felt that non-being was related to the concept of the "demonic" or anti-divine principle in religious experience.

(69:33-34) Other existentialists use "non-being" to mean "a diminished awareness or reduced actualization of a person's potentialities."

(12:27) Bugental, and many others, prefer to call this diminished awareness "inauthenticity." This can cause confusion unless the writer explains how he is using the term. Ruitenbeek used it to mean "diminished awareness" when he said that people who come to therapy are frequently no longer suffering from such illnesses as hysterical paralysis, but from a feeling that "life does not live up to its billing for themHeidegger's non-being or Nothingness]." (63:xix) This state of reduced capacity for living is related to the absurdity or meaninglessness of existence. Many authors have portrayed this condition of non-being with great power and eloquence: among them, Kafka, Dostoevsky, Sartre, Nietzsche, and Rilke, but the classic statement of this condition was provided in Camus' The Stranger in the character of Mersault. Mersault finds life meaningless and boring:

Nothing, nothing had the least importance, and I knew quite well why. From the dark horizon of my future a sort of slow, persistent breeze had been blowing toward me, all my life long, from the years that were to come. And on its way that breeze had leveled out all the ideas that people tried to foist on me in the equally unreal years I then was living through. What difference could they make to me, the deaths of others, or a mother's love, or his God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he thinks he chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to "choose" not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people who, like him called themselves my brothers....All

alike would be condemned to die one day; his turn, too, would come like the others'. (13:152)

Salvatore Maddi considered Mersault the perfect example of the existential neurotic. He described the apathetic state in which Mersault existed as a state of non-being. (46:314)

Dasein

Dasein is usually translated "existence," but there is no completely accurate translation. Eugene Minkowski considered the term to be broader than "being" and more significant since it has becoming at its core. (57:8, 12) Eugene Kahn, a psychiatrist Houston, Texas, explained that Dasein means "the individual mode of human existence" in the way that Heidegger used it. (39:195) According to Barrett, Dasein as used by Heidegger meant "man" or "consciousness" but its meaning transcends the usual subject-object dichotomy which occurs as soon as words like "man" or "consciousness" are introduced. Furthermore, Dasein implies a field, a being-in-the-world, a condition in which one is not imprisoned, as Leibniz contended, in a monad with no windows, but is free to exist in a state of involvement in the world. (2:217-218)

Dasein also implies self-awareness. Since man knows that he exists, he becomes responsible for his existence. It has been noted that existentialism is a protest against man's estrangement from

himself and others in a dehumanizing technology. Dasein implies the potential for overcoming that estrangement, for transcending the subject-object split by becoming connected to others through care and concern. Care (Sorge) is a fundamental aspect of Dasein. Care has been considered as a sort of gradient from the ordinary daily cares and preoccupations of life to the deepest anxiety. (70:vii)

The Human Condition

The human condition is often referred to in existentialist writings as man's "thrown" condition. It is as if man had been thrown into this "eternal silence of infinite space" (Heidegger) with no idea of why he is here -- with only the factness of his being here. Pascal's poignant cry expressed this mystery of man's existence:

"When I consider the tiny span of my life, which is swallowed up in the eternity which precedes and follows it, when I consider the tiny space that I occupy and can even see, lost as I am in the infinite immensity of Space which I know nothing about and which knows nothing about me, I am terrified and marvel to find myself here rather than there, for there is no reason at all why 'here' rather than 'there' or why 'now' rather than 'then.' Who put me there? By whose command and under whose direction were this time and this place destined for me?" (59:24)

The word "contingency" is often used in connection with this thrown condition. Contingency has reference to man's finiteness, his

biological, social, or other limitations. Contingency means uncertainty and leads to frustration and anxiety.

Dread

The original German word Angst is sometimes translated as "dread," but more frequently as "anxiety." One of the major problems in understanding the existential philosophy lies in the difficulty of communicating the original meaning of the terms as they were conceived by the philosophers and theologians. In our often superficial, comfortable society words like "anxiety" seem to convey something related to whether the stock market is up or down rather than the deep, passionate feelings of a man confronting the awesome nature of his being-in-the-world. Jan Ehrenwald has captured one aspect of this semantic problem:

Such crucial terms of Dasein, of being-in-the-world -- of the existential presence -- are esoteric concepts shrouded in mystery. Whatever their meaning, the metaphors used to bring them within the grasp of ordinary mortals hark back to the ancient myth of the struggle between Chaos and Cosmos, between darkness and light, between Ormuzd and Ahriman. (20:100)

Perhaps our words, like our modern life, have been depleted of the power to express passion. "Anxiety" has taken on a detached, "clinical" atmosphere which may be a result of our tendency to consider man as object and to rob him of his dignity and importance. Angst, as

Ruitenbeek has pointed out, "embodies that fear, total and indefinite, which encompasses alienation, isolation, despair, and death." (63:xv) The depth and power of this feeling which the English word "anxiety" fails to fully convey is inherent in the existential concept.

Dread arises from the fact that man is always faced with the possibility of death and with the certainty of eventual death.

The 'dread' is the deep-down, restless, questioning element in man's self-consciousness which is aware of freedom, contingency, and the awful terror of annihilation. (70:vi)

This kind of anxiety comes about naturally as a result of the awareness of this possibility of non-being and the subjective experience of contingency.

The second sort of dread is a result of the threat of meaninglessness, an existence which is really a living death, the kind of life endured by Camus' character, Mersault. Paul Tillich has identified a third kind of anxiety: the anxiety of guilt and condemnation.

(69:51-54) This occurs because of man's freedom to choose what he becomes and therefore his responsibility for what he is. The real basis for this type of anxiety is the realization of freedom.

Kierkegaard called dread "the dizziness of freedom":

Thus dread is the dizziness of freedom which occurs when the spirit would posit the synthesis, and freedom then gazes down into its own possibility, grasping at finiteness to sustain itself. (44:55)

Anxiety and fear are not the same thing: anxiety is much more difficult to tolerate. Fear is more concrete: it is fear of something definite. Anxiety is a nameless dread -- the fear of the Unknown -- the threat of Nothingness. (69:37)

One way in which man attempts to escape existential anxiety is by occupying himself with diversions and distractions. Unfortunately, this also distracts him from himself and prevents him from becoming. In the Christian tradition, this is known as the worldly life, the life of "dispersion" as opposed to the religious life in which man confronts and resolves existential anxiety. (3:59)

Existential anxiety occurs naturally because of man's sense of helplessness in the world into which he has been thrown. Neurotic anxiety, on the other hand, is due to attempts to escape existential anxiety by distorting reality. This distortion of reality may range from simple defense mechanisms like rationalization to a psychosis such as schizophrenia. In addition to the distortion of reality, many other ways of reducing contingency or lessening responsibility may be employed: science, magic, religion, or superstition. In many cases these methods may be very constructive, depending upon the situation. But they may also represent attempts to escape from the reality of the human condition. (12:24)

Guilt

Guilt may be considered a form of anxiety and like anxiety it points the way to authentic being. Guilt results from failing to realize one's potential. Erich Fromm has made a useful distinction between the "authoritarian conscience," which is shaped by society and which is concerned with conformity to the demands of that society, and the "humanistic conscience," which enables us "to become what we potentially are." (27:163) Guilt then becomes a means of realizing the authentic life.

Thomas Hora has defined psychopathology in terms of guilt:

From an ontological point of view, psychopathology can be understood as a complex set of reactions elicited by the silent voice of the existential conscience reminding man of the fact that he has separated himself from the authentic ground of existence and that he has usurped for himself the right to live in opposition to the world; that he abuses his thinking capacity in the direction away from the world rather than fulfilling his existential task in using his gift of consciousness to come into harmony with the fundamental Order of Things. (33:74-75)

Guilt is considered a reality rather than being reduced to a feeling of guilt. One is guilty of failure to be authentic.

Authenticity

Bugental sees authenticity as the central concern of psychotherapy. He defined authenticity as "a way of being in the world in which one's being is in harmony with the being of the world itself."

(12:33) This value is self-evident, a priori. Authenticity does not mean conformity. It refers to a kind of living that recognizes adjustment in the form of "acceptance of the values of competitive striving, accumulation of material 'goods,' secrecy and separateness" as "limited and distorted expressions of experience...." (12:33-34) Neither does it mean "rejection of familiar values and activities, but has to do with the perspective or awareness with which one participates in them. (12:34) Salvatore Maddi made this somewhat more clear by explaining that it is possible for the individual to view himself as "nothing more than a player of social roles and an embodiment of biological needs." (46:315) If one is living an authentic life, one is able to transcend the biological and social spheres and move into the spiritual sphere, the Eigenwelt, in which one finds meaning in his existence. Heidegger spoke of three "worlds": (a) Umwelt or man in relation to his environment, which corresponds to the somatic or biological aspect of man; (b) Mitwelt, the social realm; and (c) Eigenwelt, the spiritual realm and the source of identity. If one lives only in terms of the biological and social aspects of himself, he is reactive, but when he transcends these limitations he becomes creative and the process of self-actualization begins. Bugental called attention to the Biblical quotation: "He was in the world but not of the world" as meaning this kind of transcendence, authenticity. (12:34) Christ partook of man's

biological and social existence, but at the same time moved in the spiritual realm, transcendently.

Therefore, adjustment and conformity, or even "success" and popularity may be a result of an inauthentic life just as much as "emotional illness." (12:32-33) Indeed, emotional illness may be the beginning of a struggle from a life of meaningless adjustment toward the possibility of authentic being in the world. This is why William Barrett said: "Anxiety thus gives us the first clue to authentic existence possible for the human person." (3:59) Barrett placed the blame for this loss of authenticity upon the social conditions that now exist: "Authenticity could not become such a compelling concept if modern society did not make it more and more difficult, almost impossible, to live a human life." (3:100)

Freedom, Choice and Responsibility

Without freedom man's acts would have no ethical significance. In a completely deterministic universe life would be absurd. The existentialist viewpoint is that man is free. External influences are limiting but not determining. Although Sartre's writings are usually quoted because of his emphasis on freedom, choosing what one becomes was also a central theme of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Man's task is simple: he should cease letting his "existence" be "a thoughtless accident." Not only the use of the word Existenz, but the thought which is at stake,

suggest that this essay is particularly close to what is today called Existenzphilosophie. Man's fundamental problem is to achieve a true "existence" instead of letting his life be no more than just another accident. In The Gay Science Nietzsche hits on a formulation which brings out the essential paradox of any distinction between self and true self: "What does your conscience say? -- You shall become who you are." Nietzsche maintains this conception until the end, and the full title of his last work is Ecce Homo, Wie man wird, was man ist -- how one becomes what one is. (41:140)

Walter Kaufmann made this memorable statement about freedom:

All man's alibis are unacceptable: no gods are responsible for his condition; no original sin; no heredity, and no environment; no race, no caste, no father, and no mother; no wrong-headed education, no governess, no teacher; not even an impulse or a disposition, a complex or a childhood trauma. Man is free: but his freedom does not look like the gift of God. Once again, man stands alone in the universe, responsible for his condition. (42)

Out of this freedom, however, arises a great sense of anguish when one realizes his responsibility for what he has become and will become. This was Kierkegaard's original conception of "anguish," but later Heidegger spoke of "anguish" as "apprehension of nothingness." There is no real contradiction in these ideas, but it is less confusing to employ Kierkegaard's description of anguish in connection with freedom in psychotherapy because this provides a basis for understanding resistance to the giving up of neurotic protective mechanisms. Freedom is uncomfortable. Man seeks excuses because it is easier to pass the responsibility for himself or his behavior to someone or something outside of himself. If one accepts, along

with the idea that man is really free to choose, the existentialist idea that ultimately man cannot know what his choices should be, one must feel anguish in the face of this awesome responsibility. Abraham Maslow has said:

The beauty and the terror of our plight is to be responsible without being able to know enough to discharge our responsibility perfectly. (12:45)

The person who seeks to overcome his neurotic restrictions must choose between this anguish -- this dizziness of freedom -- and the comfort of his neurotic defense mechanisms.

Peter Koestenbaum delineated four stages, which are distinct and progressive, in the self-disclosure of free will. (45:323-337)

[The first stage is repression which represents an escape from freedom.]

Koestenbaum cited the example of the wife who, although she had previously known of her husband's infidelity, justified herself in being angry by surprising her husband with his paramour. She then felt that her anger was socially acceptable and so she did not have to decide whether it was moral for her to express this feeling. She had in effect denied responsibility.]

[The second stage is insight into the fact that one is free to make choices. This leads to anxiety. The third stage is the emergence of a sense of being in control, of having integrity and self-confidence. This occurs because one can now face the real

causes of his feelings and can decide how these feelings are to be expressed. This is no longer decided for him on the basis of social expectations.]

[The fourth stage is, in Koestenbaum's words:

the experience of the Miracle of Being in my own person, it is the realization and appreciation of the fact that I exist, it is the experience of the concretion, mystery, wonder, and marvel of my existence. That experience goes beyond the goals of traditional psychotherapy. By the exercise of free choice the individual ceases to be a disembodied consciousness and becomes the rich and full man of passion, or, in the words of Unamuno, the "man of flesh and bones." This is a profoundly religious and aesthetic experience. (45:337)]

The transcendent quality of choice is apparent in this conception of free will.

In contrast to Sartre's presentation of freedom which becomes his when one realizes that he exists and that there is no external Power to provide him absolutes of values, meaning or direction, Roger Troisfontaines wrote of freedom in a way which is in harmony with traditional Christian doctrine:

For it is up to us. Our choice is all-decisive -- to the extent, once more, that we are free, and we become so only in the course of our earthly life. It is of the utmost importance that we should be aware of it, for morality and religion can be summed up in this choice: Whether we are going to smash the links that bind us to God, to others, to the world, and to our own deepest personality, by isolating ourselves in a haughty atheism, egotism, disdain, disrupting introspection, or pure distraction; or, on the other hand, whether we are going to open ourselves to universal charity, to unite ourselves to freely with God in a child's love and adoration, with

our brothers in comradeship, with the universe in eager self-offering and delighted service, with our own selves in a rich recollection. Jesus Christ has told us that there is but one great commandment which sums up the whole law: "Love" -- that is to say, "freely choose union, communion." (71:72)

Meaning

Since meaning is not given it is man's responsibility to create meaning. It is the failure to choose that leads to a state of meaninglessness. The existential neurosis, discussed by Viktor Frankl, results also from a failure to choose, to accept one's responsibilities for one's situation. In an article about the existential neurosis, Salvatore Maddi said that the cognitive component of the neurosis is "meaninglessness, or chronic inability to believe in the truth, importance, usefulness, or interest value of any of the things one is engaged in or can imagine doing." (46:313) The emotions that result are boredom, blandness, or depression. One feels alienated from both self and society. This alienation or estrangement from Being was Heidegger's central theme. (2:207) And, of course, when man robs himself of choice by espousing a deterministic philosophy of life or when his society robs him of choice by providing a comfortable, materialistic framework in which nothing but conformity is required of him, he will ultimately and inevitably suffer this sense of meaninglessness, of estrangement from Being.

Meaning is created by or grows out of man's choices. One must decide whether something has meaning for him or whether it lacks meaning. Meaning is thought of often as a given purpose. In the Christian world, God's plan for mankind and the promise of salvation and eternal life gave hope and courage for centuries to face suffering and death. But the faith that the long centuries of suffering, war, disease, poverty, and human greed were somehow all according to God's "plan" failed at some point in time. The resulting condition was despair. But out of this despair grew the realization that man was free to create his own heaven or hell, to find salvation or by fleeing confrontation with death, lose his soul. It is man who must find meaning in the sacraments, or in a commitment to some transcendent facet of existence. Man is not content to merely exist. It is his nature to transcend himself. Without meaning the human dimension is lost.

Bad Faith

Bad faith is a concept that was offered by Sartre. Like Binswanger and Boss, he rejected the idea of "unconscious." His reason for this rejection lay in the fact that anything can be explained by saying it is due to unconscious processes. (66:15) In fact, if the patient denies having feelings which, according to the theory he should have, this denial may be considered evidence

that these feelings are very strong and threatening and have therefore been repressed. In the existential orientation this concept is considered unnecessary if not actually misleading.

Bad faith occurs when one lies to himself. Sartre also explained: "To be sure, the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth." (66:157) An example of bad faith was given in Sartre's Being and Nothingness of the case of the woman who interprets a man's compliments as admiration and respect and "removes all sexual connotations from them." But when he holds her hand she leaves her hand in his "not noticing" she has done so and talks of intellectual things. In effect she has given up her freedom by distorting the reality of the situation. (16:96)

Bad faith results from using an excuse for what one does and thus denying freedom of choice. These denials are often given in terms of social roles, that is, certain things are expected of one because of his occupation or social status. The condition of bad faith comes about when one defines himself primarily in terms of social expectations or his biological nature.

Encounter

Encounter implies something more than empathy. Martin Buber has captured the spirit of encounter in his book, I and Thou:

When Thou is spoken, the speaker has no thing for his object. For where there is a thing there is another thing. Every It is bounded by others; It exists only through being bounded by others. But when Thou is spoken, there is no thing. Thou has no bounds. (11:4)

Encounter, which is related to confirmation, engagement, or dialogue, means this I-Thou relationship. In encounter, the person is recognized as a being in his own world rather than as an object in one's own world. (12:29) But neither participant loses his own identity. If there is identification, therapy ceases and the non-judgmental attitude is lost. (17:14) But neither does the therapist hold himself aloof and detached from the patient. He is with the patient at all times. Rollo May commented on this when he said:

Unlike the Freudian analyst, the existential analyst does not hold aloof from the patient, but rather he approaches the patient as an existential partner with whom he must share the totality of existence. He must be-in-the-world with his patient, i.e., be together with him in all phases of his total experience. Martin Buber has called this the "sharp edge of existence" which is experienced in the encounter with the patient. (63:xxi)

Encounter is important because it is only through others that we come to know ourselves. It was Heidegger who said: "Human existence always has the existential mode of being together." (39:198) Authentic living involves communication with others, but this sharing does not mean the loss of individuality. Some psychotherapists, particularly those interested in group encounters, seem to see the individual as reaching his highest peak of potential in the process

of communion with others, for example, in a transcendent group experience. This kind of experience, however, falls within Mitwelt, the social realm, rather than within Eigenwelt, the spiritual realm. Man ultimately lives and dies alone. His supreme experience, like that of Job, is the moment of confrontation with his God.

Psychotherapists naturally emphasize the experience of encounter since for many people the only way to find a sense of identity is in a therapeutic situation. The individual often needs an atmosphere in which he feels safe and accepted in order to have the courage to face his conflicts and to give up his self-defeating defense mechanisms. But it remains for the individual himself to do this. It has been said: "The trademark of existence is ambiguity; to exist is to be in the middle between finite and infinite, meaning and meaninglessness, time and eternity, hope and despair." (43:274) This ambiguity exists in one's relationships to others. It would seem that here too, one must tread the middle way between the Scylla of submersion in the masses and the consequent loss of one's identity and the Charybdis of isolation and sterile, lonely living. In therapy identity and dependency must be avoided but there must also be a meeting in order for the release of human potential to occur.

Tragedy

Existential philosophy has been criticized for over-emphasizing suffering and death and for being unduly pessimistic and gloomy. Viktor Frankl emphatically denied this and contended that, on the contrary, existentialism is optimistic: "even dying and suffering are potentially meaningful." (25:87) Only the authentic life can be really worthwhile and this authentic life can only be realized in a joyful acceptance of life as it is, full of hardships and tragedy as well as joy and love.

In Thomas Hardy's novel, The Return of the Native, first published in 1878, he said:

The new Vale of Tempe may be a gaunt waste in Thule:
human souls may find themselves in closer and closer
harmony with external things wearing a sombreness distaste-
ful to our race when it was young. The time seems near,
if it has not actually arrived, when the chastened sub-
limity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of
nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of
the more thinking among mankind. (30:9)

It is more accurate to describe the existentialist philosophy as serious or thoughtful rather than as gloomy or pessimistic. But a more serious approach to life is frightening and more difficult than the maintenance of a standard gaiety.

So while existentialism is not, as it is often said to be, a philosophy of despair and nihilism, it is concerned with questions that arise only after one has undergone "the crucial experience

of human finitude." (2:10) For Americans the need for an examination of the more fundamental meaning of human life came about as a result of disillusionment with material and superficial values as well as anxieties about threatening political ideologies, annihilation by the bomb, and the loss of power and prestige as a nation. America, with its expanding frontiers, its seemingly limitless possibilities, had to experience "human finitude" before it could come to grips with existential anxiety, meaninglessness, and the necessity for communion.

The subject of death is often very nearly a taboo topic in our society, but the key to Heidegger's analysis lies in his analysis of death. It is only when one faces the possibility of death that he can achieve authentic existence. (3:62-63) Herman Feifel has said that life is not really our own until we can renounce it. (23:71) It is when one attempts to evade the fact of death that he becomes inauthentic or neurotic. Bugental has presented a most interesting idea that the meaning of the ancient legend of selling one's soul to the devil is this attempt to protect oneself from the fear of non-being. (12:44) An excellent summary of the problem of the tragic dimension in life was given by Abraham Maslow:

Another preoccupation of existentialist writers can be phrased very simply, I think. It is the dimension of seriousness and profundity of living (or perhaps the "tragic sense of life") contrasted with the shallow and

superficial life, which is a kind of diminished living, a defense against the ultimate problems of life. This is not just a literary concept. It has real operational meaning, for instance, in psychotherapy. I (and others) have been increasingly impressed with the fact that tragedy can sometimes be therapeutic, and that therapy often seems to work best when people are driven into it by pain. It is when the shallow life doesn't work that it is questioned and that there occurs a call to fundamentals. Shallowness in psychology doesn't work either as the existentialists are demonstrating very clearly. (50:13)

Tragedy is more than an art form. It is a way in which man can experience life and come to understand himself. The concept of tragedy is intimately bound up with the realization of man's dignity, of the affirmation of his humanity as he struggles heroically in the face of inevitable annihilation. Man's greatness lies in this struggle and in this reaffirmation of his transcendent nature.

Cornelis Bakker said this about the place of tragedy in therapy:

Yet we need the tragic perspective most because in our therapy we are to recreate in our patients that experience of identity, that feeling of personal integrity which allows the patient to become his own center, the maker of his own destiny or at least the one who assumes the responsibility for the fate that befalls him. (1:165)

The experience of identity is one of the major concerns of existential psychology. It is the task of the therapist to help the patient discover his identity within this tragic perspective.

If one allows the patient to appear in the mode of a tragic being, a person who is hopelessly enmeshed in the struggle with conflicting forces, fighting to somehow become or remain a person of integrity, then one's

relationship with that patient attains a number of special characteristics. (1:166)

It is these "special characteristics" that result in encounter.

III.

SOME EXISTENTIAL APPROACHES TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

Ludwig Binswanger

Ludwig Binswanger (1881 - 1966) served as Psychiatric Intern under Eugen Bleuler in Zürich. In 1911 he succeeded his father, Robert Binswanger, as Chief Medical Director of the Sanatorium Bellevue at Kreuzlingen. (7:17) He was an early follower of Freud, and in the 1920's one of the first proponents of psychiatric phenomenology. In the 1930's he began to develop his existential analysis, Daseinsanalyse. Freudian theories are incorporated into and understood in the light of his underlying existential philosophy. (21:120) It was his criticism of Freud that he dealt primarily with Mitwelt and Umwelt, omitting Eigenwelt. Binswanger felt that his own analysis of the individual's world-design was more comprehensive. He was the first psychiatrist to systematically interpret psychotherapy in terms of Heidegger's Daseinsanalytik, the analysis of being. He began with the subjective experience of the individual, thus applying Husserl's method of obtaining knowledge by suspending all preconceptions. He believed that the person's experience would then unfold and reveal itself in all its uniqueness.

Several major trends of Daseinsanalysis have been outlined by Binswanger:

1. The life history of the patient is not explained in terms of any school but is understood as "modifications of the total structure of the patient's being-in-the-world."
2. The patient is not merely shown where he has "failed to realize the fullness of his humanity," but is helped to experience his lost condition as completely as possible. He is led from his "ethereal worlds of fantasy" back to the world which is presented as "being the only mode of existence in which the fullness of human possibilities can be realized."
3. The therapist always stands on "the plane of common existence" as a partner in the therapeutic endeavor in the spirit of relatedness and love.
4. Dreams are not explained theoretically, but used as a tool to help the patient understand the "structure of his being-in-the-world in an overall manner," and to free himself for the "totality of existential possibilities of being."
5. Traditional psychotherapeutic methods are employed if they effectively open up "to the sick fellow man an understanding of the structure of human existence and allow...him to find his way back from his neurotic or psychotic, lost, erring, perforated or twisted mode of existence and world, into the freedom of being able to utilize his own capacities for existence."
(7:17-23)

It can be seen from this brief summary of major trends as Binswanger saw them that this approach is, first and foremost, client-centered. Traditional methods of therapy are employed if they are applicable or helpful to the person. But he is never treated as an object or his feelings interpreted within the dictates of a theory. The patient is always treated as Thou, a partner in this philosophic venture

in which the therapist risks "committing his own existence in the struggle for the freedom of his partner's." (7:23) Binswanger, who was strongly influenced by Martin Buber, considered encounter very important to therapy:

He will therefore not consider the bond between the two partners to be as that of two electric batteries -- a "psychic contact" -- but as an encounter on what Martin Buber calls the "sharp edge of existence," an existence which essentially "is in the world," not merely as a self but also as a being-together with one another -- relatedness and love.... For encounter is a being-with-others in genuine presence, that is to say, in the present which is altogether continuous with the past and bears within it the possibilities of a future. (7:21)

The transcendent quality of authentic existence, which has to do with relating to things and people in a different way, was clarified by Binswanger. The German word for transcendence is Ueberstieg which means climbing over or above, mounting. (6:193) Transcendence can be understood then as the process of moving toward goals, of maturing or of becoming rather than in the somewhat mystical sense which is often vague.

Binswanger concentrated his efforts on the problem of schizophrenia. Psychoses did not have to be seen only as diseases of the brain, but could be understood as "modifications of the fundamental or essential structure and of the structural links of being-in-the-world as transcendence." (6:194) The important implication of this was that the fundamental problems of anxiety,

authenticity, and becoming are the same for the sick and the well, if indeed, any division can be made. The psychotic has different, often bizarre, ways of coping with these fundamental problems. But because all men have the same basic problems, the therapist can understand and participate in the being-in-the-world of the disturbed patient.

Besides understanding the psychosis as a form of being-in-the-world, the "content of meaning" of words is explored. The historical content of language is not so important: it is rather the "world-design" or "world-content" which is revealed. (6:201) The first task of the therapist is to find out what the patients really mean by the words they use.

An example of the difference between the psychoanalytic and the existential approach was given by Binswanger in the case of a young girl who developed a phobia about the heels of shoes, particularly in connection with losing a heel. This was not explained only as an overly strong "pre-oedipal" attachment to her mother, as a psychoanalyst would diagnose it, but rather "that such overly strong filial tie is only possible on the premise of a world-design exclusively based on connectedness, cohesiveness, continuity." (6:204) This served to illustrate how traditional Freudian concepts could be incorporated into existential analysis while at the same time broadening the understanding of the person who suffers from the phobia.

The world of the girl was greatly restricted and reduced to this one "design" -- fear of separation. It was vital to her that everything remain as it had been, that is, connected. If there was change, experience was then exposed suddenly to "the Dreadful, to the naked horror." (6:204) In saying this Binswanger intended to equate "the Dreadful" with Nothingness. Change results in anxiety because it creates a condition of insecurity which is one form of "dread of non-being." This anxiety occurred for the girl whenever her world was threatened by change.

Phobia is always an attempt at safeguarding a restricted, impoverished "world," whereas anxiety expresses the loss of such a safeguard, the collapse of the "world," and thus the delivery of the existence to nothingness -- the intolerable, dreadful, "naked horror." (6:205)

This dread of non-being was more pronounced in the case of Lola Voss who replaced a phobia by delusions of persecutions. She felt in imminent danger that her world would be invaded by "the unspeakably Uncanny and Horrid." Her concrete fear of "enemies" could be more easily dealt with by her than the faceless dread of the "bottomless Uncanny (Unheimlichen)." (6:208)

The fascinating case of Ellen West allowed Binswanger to explain not only a form of being-in-the-world but also a way of being-beyond-the-world. Part of this complex analysis was done in terms of Umwelt, Mitwelt, and Eigenwelt. Ellen was described

as having a rift between Mit- and Eigenwelt based on the fact that as a child she was stubborn, defiant, and violent. A rift between Mit- and Eigenwelt also occurred in the form of her resistance to her fate of being "thrown" into the world as a girl instead of a boy. In her resistance to this feminine role she replaced being by illusion. (5:270-271)

Another way of understanding Ellen was through seeing how she related to people, her existential modes. One possible mode is the anonymous mode in which one lives in an "anonymous collectivity" such as in military life. The singular mode involves one's relationship to himself, and the plural mode is the area of formal relationships, the group. The dual mode corresponds roughly to Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship. (21:121-122) Binswanger explained that Ellen's Mitwelt consisted of mere physical proximity rather than the authentic or dual mode of love relatedness which would have transformed her stubbornness and defiance. (5:273) It is through love that being-beyond-the-world (transcendence) is achieved, but this did not occur for Ellen. Instead she sought a return to Nothingness through suicide. (5:278)

Ellen's tragic conflict was between "light and rising life" as symbolized by a slim, young body and "dark and descending life" in the form of a fat, aging body. (5:280) Ellen's life eventually became narrowed to a terrible conflict between a craving to eat

voraciously and a fear of getting fat. Binswanger stressed the fact that Ellen became totally dependent upon how others saw her: fat or slim. (other-directed) This was another restriction of her existential freedom.

In commenting on Ellen's death, Binswanger was not content to accept it as a way she ended her suffering. He felt that it should be viewed as "the necessary fulfillment of the life-meaning of the existence." (5:295) Ellen's existence was ruled by the past and "encircled in a bare, empty present and its being cut off from the future." (5:295) This deprived her of meaning and of a future. "Existential aging had hurried ahead of biological aging, just as the existential death, the 'being-a-corpse among people,' had hurried ahead of her biological end of life." (5:295)

Ellen's death was interpreted in an intriguing way by Binswanger when he spoke of "the tremendous positiveness which can inhere in Nothingness in a human existence." (5:296) What she feared was not death, but living, being-in-the-world. (5:280) Ellen wished to be herself, but she conceived of herself as thin, which was different from what fate had wanted her to be, that is fat. This led to her "sickness unto death." But her decision to commit suicide restored her to authenticity and thus took on "a desperately positive meaning" because in death she did "find herself and choose herself." (5:298)

Medard Boss

Medard Boss is Professor of Psychotherapy and Head of the Training Department of the Psychiatric Clinic at the University of Zürich. He is also President of the International Federation for Medical Psychotherapy. Medard Boss called his approach to therapy "Daseinsanalysis" to distinguish it from Binswanger's approach which is usually translated "existential analysis." His approach is based on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, whose work Boss feels is more helpful in understanding man than the concepts which have been introduced by natural science. Boss does not translate "Daseinsanalysis" or Dasein because in doing so the words lose their special meaning and tend to become "object."

Boss said that his approach, like all existential approaches, begins with the experience of the individual rather than a preconceived explanation about the person. The therapist must, therefore, have the kind of openness which allows the other person to reveal himself as he really is. Being, according to Boss, is not an attribute of man but man is the awareness of Being -- he "luminates whatever particular being comes into the realm of its rays." (10:37) This Being-in-the-world exists in different modes of behavior. Man does not exist alone, however. He becomes what he is through his encounters with others.

Boss also used the idea of "existential spatiality" which refers to the fact that "closeness" is not measured by distance but by love. Time too in the existential framework is determined by caring rather than the passage of the seasons. This is what Binswanger meant by saying that Ellen had aged more rapidly existentially than physiologically.

Boss saw man as having a responsibility to become an authentic self rather than narrowing himself down to an anonymous mass man. "Man's freedom consists," said Boss, "in becoming ready for accepting and letting be all that is, to let it shine forth in the world-openness as which he exists." (10:48) Bugental characterized this "letting be" or "letting go" as "an acceptance of all things human, and then a finding of more encompassing ways of being in relation to all such things." (12:35)

A basic aspect of the therapist's attitude toward his patients is respect for the "intrinsic value and essential content of everything that shines forth and comes into its being in the light of a Dasein." (10:234) Everything the patient feels is considered to be real. In one case described by Boss, the patient suffered from an obsessional-compulsive need to be clean and to wash himself. The Freudian analyst whom he first went to interpreted his recurring dreams of church steeples as phallic symbols, and his Jungian analyst

interpreted them as religious symbols. They both talked about his guilt feelings and attempted to explain why he had them. Boss stressed the fact that the patient was guilty -- guilty of failing to actualize both the physical and the spiritual possibilities of his being. In one recurrent dream the patient had, he approached a lavatory door which was always locked. Instead of explaining the dream, Boss kept asking him why the door needed to be locked thus leading him to the "locked up" aspect of his own potentialities. (55:53-54)

Boss uses both the techniques of free association and dream interpretation, but he does not distort what the patient tells him by fitting it into a theory. In his interpretation of dreams, Freud used standard symbols and by so doing he usually reduced and destroyed the meaning of the dream. As Samuel Dunkell noted, a cross cannot be understood as two sticks placed at right angles to each other, but must be understood in relationship to Christ and Christianity. If a patient were to dream about having a tooth pulled, Freud would have considered the tooth to symbolize a penis, thus reducing the world "to one special relationship which may or may not at this moment have a central role for the patient." (19:520-522) What Boss does instead is to consider the dream as having meaning to the patient, a meaning which is related to his present concerns and which could change if his concerns were to change. Because of his deep

respect for the patient the therapist cannot destroy what the patient tells him by replacing it with theories of his own. Boss quite clearly regarded psychoanalytic interpretation and theory as obstacles to understanding and encounter. He has said that it will only confuse the patient to explain his feelings and wishes as, for example, reaction formation to what he really feels and wishes.

The therapist accepts all the possible ways of being of the other person. He can do this because any way of behaving is regarded as being as real and fundamental as any other way. If transference occurs, it is assumed that the feelings of the patient are really directed toward the therapist and are accepted as such. This relationship is then allowed to unfold in its own way which will prevent fixation from taking place. Boss also pointed out the danger of replacing a neurosis with what he has aptly called "psychoanalytism."

This syndrome (by no means rare) leads its sufferers to ritualistic thinking and talking in psychoanalytic terms and symbols.... Instead of staying close to the immediately observable appearances of the world, they disregard them and speculate about what is "behind" them, unaware that their observations do not support their deductions. Instead of dwelling in openness toward the things and people they encounter, they "interpret" these same phenomena, human and material. (10:236)

This inability to become authentic indicates that their freedom is restricted.

Viktor Frankl

Viktor Frankl was born in Vienna, Austria and was trained in neurology and psychiatry there. From 1942 to 1945 he was imprisoned in German concentration camps, including Auschwitz and Dachau. His mother, father, brother, and wife died in German prisoner of war camps. Frankl is professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Vienna, head of the Department of Neurology at the Poliklinik Hospital in Vienna, and president of the Austrian Medical Society of Psychotherapy.

Viktor Frankl felt that his logotherapy would fall under the category of "existential psychiatry." In the thirties, Frankl called his therapy Existenzanalyse, but later to avoid confusion with "existential analysis" he changed the name of his approach to "logotherapy." (25:viii, ix)

Frankl identified three dimensions of man: the somatic or physical dimension, the mental or psychological dimension, and the "noetic" or spiritual dimension. These dimensions correspond to Umwelt, Mitwelt, and Eigenwelt. One characteristic of the noetic or noölogical realm is man's ability to reflect on himself which enables him to develop a conscience. Conscience is specifically human and involves much more than the anticipation of punishment that even an animal might come to learn. (25:3) In calling man "a creature of distances," Heidegger meant this capacity of man to

stand outside himself, to transcend himself. Man can be "defined" as transcendence since he is always reaching toward the future, always in the process of becoming. (3:158) Out of this capacity for transcendence, for self-detachment, Frankl developed the technique of "paradoxical intention" which is a fundamental aspect of his logotherapy. The technique simply consists of intending the very thing one fears so that if a patient has a great fear of having a heart attack, he is instructed to try hard to have one. Frankl commented:

A sound sense of humor is inherent in this technique. This is understandable since we know that humor is a paramount way of putting distance between something and oneself. One might say as well, that humor helps man to rise above his own predicament by allowing him to look at himself in a more detached way. So humor would also have to be located in the noetic dimension. After all, no animal is able to laugh, least of all at himself. (25:4)

It is easy to see a parallel between this technique and the idea in existentialist thought of confronting the tragic aspects of life in order to be able to live fully. When one accepts what he fears, he becomes open to experience freedom from that fear. Men of faith throughout the centuries have known that when one seeks happiness as a goal of life, happiness flees, but when one becomes committed to alleviating human suffering and accepts for himself a life of humility, happiness which transcends ordinary human pleasure becomes his. As Max Scheler said: "pleasure does not loom up before

us as the goal of an ethical act; rather, an ethical act carries pleasure on its back." (24:35) In the technique of paradoxical intention something of the same sort of misdirection is employed so that one seeks that which one fears in order to be free of it.

A major contribution of Frankl was his special interpretation of the nature and importance of meaning. The will to meaning was considered by Frankl to be the most fundamental motivating force in man. Both Freud's "will to pleasure" and Adler's "will to power" are derivatives of the "will to meaning". (25:71-72) Frankl accepted psychoanalytic theory to a large extent, but his concept of motivation is the point at which he departs from Freudian theory.

The emphasis upon meaning is also the major difference between logotherapy and other forms of existential psychiatry. Both, Frankl explained, strive for "something like the illumination of existence (Existenzerhellung, Karl Jaspers)," (25:133) but Daseinsanalyse understands existence in terms of Being, while logotherapy emphasizes meaning as being more central. "Meaning sets the pace for being. Existence falters unless it is lived in terms of transcendence toward something beyond itself." (25:12) Frankl is fond of Goethe's remark: "If we take man as he is, we make him worse; if we take him as he ought to be, we help him become it." (25:2)

Values aid man in finding meaning. In a sense they pull him toward meaning. There are three kinds of values: creative, experiential, and attitudinal:

Sometimes life demands of us the realization of creative values; at other times we feel it necessary to turn to the category of experiential values. At one time we are called upon, as it were, to enrich ourselves by our experiences. Sometimes the demands of the hour may be fulfilled by an act, at another time by our surrendering to the glory of an experience. Man can be "obligated" to experience joy. (24:45)

The greatest importance is placed on attitudinal values. Because of his experiences in the concentration camps Frankl was very well aware that man's freedom can be limited by environmental conditions, but he believed that man is nevertheless always free to choose his attitude toward these conditions. This is the ultimate expression of freedom. It was while attempting to survive under the inhuman conditions of the prison camps that Frankl fully realized the meaning of Nietzsche's statement: "He who knows a 'why' for living, will surmount almost every 'how.'" (25:103)

Frankl distinguished between psychogenic neuroses which originate in the mental dimension and noögenic neuroses which are caused by conflicts between values and arise in the spiritual dimension of a person. (25:43) These existential neuroses are the result of failure to find meaning in life. Thus man is confronted with meaning, with what he should become. It is the task of the therapist to help him

find this meaning and a way to carry it out. (25:10-11) Statements like this imply that Frankl's therapy is quite directive. For example, he says:

How often one of our patients bewails his life, which he says has no meaning since his activities are without any higher value. This is the point at which we must reason with him, showing that it is a matter of indifference what a person's occupation is, or at what job he works. The crucial thing is how he works, whether he in fact fills the place in which he happens to have landed. The radius of his activity is not important; important alone is whether he fills the circle of his tasks. (24:42-43)

Frankl often sounds deterministic and directive as well as judgmental and moralistic. Other existential therapists try to "stay with" the feelings of the patient. Frankl's approach seems to involve some direction of the patient which is not consistent with the existential orientation.

Salvatore Maddi elaborated upon the idea of the existential neurosis. The neurosis comes about, Maddi said, as a result of a person's finding his identity only as a player of social roles or as an embodiment of biological needs. This makes his life overly concrete because it is restricted and determined by these roles, while at the same time, he is "fragmented" by conflict between physiological needs and social demands. He becomes "other-directed," that is, overly-concerned about what others think of him. This makes his relationships sterile, devoid of real sharing and intimacy. At

the same time he loses his freedom. This condition of "bad faith" describes the premorbid personality. Stresses that can produce the morbid personality are such things as disruption of the social order, extreme tension between different roles, or confrontation with the limitations with this kind of existence. What has happened is that the spiritual realm or Eigenwelt in which man finds meaning for existence has been neglected. (46:311-325)

Other Existential Approaches

Many existential approaches to therapy do not adhere quite so closely to the terminology of the existentialist philosophers as do those of Binswanger, Boss and Frankl, but the underlying concepts of existentialism are apparent. All existential approaches begin with the experience of the individual and thus they are, first and most essentially, client-centered. It is strange that Carl Roger's client-centered approach is often treated separately from other existential approaches, since Roger's orientation is the very essence of existentialism. The fact of freedom is foremost in his thinking. Prior to his development of what was originally called "non-directive" technique, most counseling was similar to that of Edmund Williamson. This point of view assumed that the counselor, as a representative of an institution, had the responsibility to diagnose the student's

problems and help him reach the most socially desirable decisions about his vocation, education, or personal life. This fitting of the "object" into the proper social niche parallels the early psychoanalytic procedures of fitting the patient into the correct theoretical category in order to "adjust" him to the demands of society. In both cases there were standard procedures for everybody and the individual was not trusted to grow in the proper direction.

Carl Rogers revolutionized the field of counseling and psychotherapy with his radical idea that the forces within the individual were forces that could lead to health and growth if these forces could be freed from restrictions placed on them because of fear. Rogers visualized the client or student as being in the process of "becoming a person." Once it was clear to the person that he had the freedom to accept himself as he really was, with desirable as well as undesirable qualities, once he dared to express himself as he really was and trust his own growth potential, he would be free to become. But it was important that the individual himself become aware of his existential freedom and accept or reject this freedom for himself. Karl Jaspers summed up this essential aspect of therapy in this way:

In counseling and instructing the patient how to look at his real situation, at his personal world and at himself, the important thing is that he should implement a decisive yes and no. It is no help to him just to learn

something; there has to follow a certain vision of things and, if they are to be mastered, a recognition and taking over of them. It is the individual's responsibility to decide what he will assimilate and what he will reject. His own existential decision ultimately determines his actual way of life. It is beyond any psychotherapist to make him achieve this. The most he can do in his communication with the patient is to develop possibilities in the conversational interchange which may afford unpredictable opportunities for an awakening. (36:839)

This statement, written in 1913, referred to the same ideas of choice, responsibility, and freedom which are basic in Rogerian counseling.

Rogers feels that encounter is the most important facet of therapy:

The essence of therapy, as I see it carried on by myself and by others, is a meeting of two persons in which the therapist is openly and freely himself and evidences this perhaps most fully when he can freely and acceptantly enter into the world of the other. (62:88)

In some ways Rogers' ideas reflect the deterministic position of phenomenology. His conception of self-actualization follows a natural science model of growth forces which, once set in motion, push toward the fully functioning stage unless impeded by an external limitation. He has compared this force to the life force in a tenacious seaweed. (47:73) This does not really conflict with the existential aspects of his therapy, but it might present some problems for those attempting to classify his approach. Rogers does not adopt an anti-scientific attitude toward research. He welcomes objective research on the results of different approaches to therapy, and feels

that this in no way interferes with the warm, human encounter that takes place in the counseling situation. (62:92)

Rogers' acceptance of all that is human -- hate, envy, fear, dependency, as well as love, trust, courage, and self-reliance -- was echoed by Hanna Colm. She felt that Binswanger was too idealistic and moralistic in his elevation of love as the ultimate value of living. "Wholeness" must include the negative as well as the positive forces in life. The aim of therapy as Hanna Colm sees it is to help the patient to free his courage, which has been buried under neurotic defenses, to accept all of life and to live it fully. Only in this way can he really affirm himself. (15:180-181)

Rollo May, who is the leading proponent of the existential approach to psychotherapy in America, has outlined six ontological principles or characteristics that he uses in his work as a therapist. The first principle is that any attack on the neurosis is an attack on the existence of the patient because the neurosis is the way in which he protects his existence. (53:76, 77) What this means is that one must be careful not to push the patient beyond where he is ready to go. Interpretations should be made only when the client is ready for that degree of insight.

The second principle is that "every existing person has the character of self-affirmation, the need to preserve its centeredness." (53:77) This is essentially the same as Tillich's "courage to be."

This characteristic leads May to emphasize any expression of willing, choice, or decision on the part of the patient and to call attention to any statement of indecision.

The third principle that "all existing persons have the need and possibility of going out from their centeredness to participate in other beings." (53:78) In Freud's day human development was often blocked by inhibition and rigidity, but May believed that today people may have gone too far in the opposite direction, that is, by too much participation and identification with others the self tends to become dispersed and centerless. It is this possibility of going out from centeredness that allows the therapist to encounter his patient as a real person.

The fourth principle May presented was: "the subjective side of centeredness is awareness." (53:78) May made the interesting suggestion that this awareness on the animal level is vigilance while in humans it becomes anxiety. The fifth principle is distinctively human: "The uniquely human form of awareness is self-consciousness." (53:79) Awareness means knowledge of external events while consciousness is the capacity to know oneself as a subject who has a world. This is similar to transcendence and provides the basis of man's becoming as well as his freedom to become. The task of the therapist is then to "transmute this awareness into

consciousness." (53:81) The sixth characteristic is anxiety, "the state of the human being in the struggle against that which would destroy his being." (53:83) The individual will experience anxiety when he confronts the choice of "letting be" and becoming the person he can become or of accepting non-being and destroying his freedom.

This choice of holding on to the neurosis or accepting existential freedom is usually called the existential crisis. Bugental, whose book The Search for Authenticity is an outstandingly clear and comprehensive exposition of the fundamental aspects of the existential approach to psychotherapy, has described the existential crisis as a weighing in the balance one's whole being. This crisis means renunciation, the death of some possible ways of life so that other ways may grow. Bugental thought it is probable that the crisis comes about when the neurotic distortions used to avoid existential anxiety are threatened. The patient then "comes up against the very meaning of his life in one of its basic dimensions." (12:171) This crisis involves much more than a choice between two alternatives since obviously this kind of choice is made several times every day. The existential choice is a choice involving one's whole way of being in the world. Most important of all it is a choice of an unknown and uncertain future. The comfort of the known, that is the neurotic, restricted life, must be given up in favor of a rebirth into a richer but, at the same time, more terrifying future. This

choice was therefore called by Kierkegaard "the leap of faith." In making this leap one must also accept the guilt for his past failures to fulfill his potential and responsibility for his future. It is extremely vital that the therapist recognize the magnitude of this crisis and respond to it by being genuinely present in the I-Thou sense of encounter. (12:166-181)

An important facet of existential counseling is participation by the therapist. Richard E. Johnson, whose therapy is based on existential concepts, called his approach "disciplined congruent participation" and explained that it was developed in the context of client-centered therapy. (37:1-32) He made it clear that he not only reflects the feelings of the client but also expresses his own feelings. For example, he told a female client that he wanted to attack her sexually. This real, concrete communication moved the relationship into a deeper and more open therapeutic encounter. Johnson gave other examples of this kind of participation in statements such as "'you feel very unreal to me right now'" and "'you do seem a little crazy to me right now.'" (37:2) "These statements," he said, "were encompassed and communicated in the deeper subjective tone of 'let us be experientially open to each other.'" (37:2) The purpose of this personal communication by the therapist is to let the other person know that he is there, that he is real, and that he is deeply committed to the client. The therapist must not pretend

to understand if he does not, since he must first remain personally congruent before he can become congruent with the client. (37:1-32) Congruence is simply a kind of being in harmony with oneself or with someone else in which there is no conflict or dishonesty.

The existential approaches of Rogers, Colm, May, Bugental, and Johnson represent only a few of the many therapists who either consider themselves as existential in their orientation or who make use of some existential concepts in their therapy.

IV.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Existential philosophy has so permeated the life of modern man that many of the fundamental ideas have become part of our way of thinking. While few people could give an adequate explanation of the subject-object split in Western thought, many are becoming increasingly aware that something more is needed than has been provided in the past by behavioral or analytical approaches which reduce man to the level of an animal or a mere player of social roles and neglect the "meaning" dimension of existence.

Although it is easy to misunderstand the philosophy of existentialism or employ it superficially with no real insight because it is popular, properly understood it can provide a solid philosophical foundation for an attempt to understand man in a more humanistic, comprehensive, and appropriate way. The attitude of respect for the person and his perception of reality prevents reduction and objectification of the individual. The existential approach is often thought of as something rather obtuse and abstract, but in reality the opposite is true. Since it is based on phenomenology, concrete and individual human experience becomes the primary concern of all existential views. What is felt, what is expressed is taken for what it is, as real rather than as something to be interpreted and distorted by awkward classification into preconceived categories.

Existential counseling cannot be viewed as a school of thought or as a set of techniques but rather as an underlying attitude. All existential approaches begin with respect for the individual and attention to his unique experience as he conveys it. Techniques emerge as they become relevant to the needs of the client or student.

The existential approach attempts to make the real joy of living possible for the individual by means of confronting rather than avoiding the tragic and frightening aspects of his personal existence. The person is always seen as a whole being and his choice is seen as a "leap of faith" into a total way of being in the world. By being genuinely present to the person, the therapist can participate in the philosophic venture into the unknown. Because he finds himself accepted and cared for, the person may choose to give up the defensive distortions of awareness and accept the freedom and responsibility to realize his potentials and live in a more satisfying, authentic way. He may find the courage to transcend cultural and personal limitations and become what he has the potential to become.

There are many variations possible in the existential approach for each therapist places different emphasis upon the various facets of the underlying philosophy. This flexibility is one of the greatest strengths of the existential approach to psychotherapy. While existentialism provides a solid philosophical basis, it also allows

for the incorporation of many techniques and ideas from many sources. This philosophical base does not rest primarily on the natural science orientation, although it does not neglect the contributions of natural science, but it is grounded in a kind of thinking which is more applicable to the study of man as a vital, experiencing being and to his concerns with feelings, values, and the meaning of his life.

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