



***Methods of Analysis***  
**Existential Analysis**

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In general terms, existential analysis involves an apprehension of the reality of human existence. More specifically, existential analysis developed through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries simultaneously as a framework or method of philosophy and psychotherapy (e.g., daseinanalysis, logotherapy, etc.). Existential analysis is similar to experiential analysis in attending to concrete experience but the former bears on distinct awareness of one's felt, lived, personal situation. For example, one can analyze an experience without pausing on or reiterating one's awareness of being-in-the-world or existence. Similarly, one can analyze the essence of a sense of being (e.g., anxiety) without confronting the base existence of one's situation, day in, day out (e.g., chronophobia, time scarcity). Indeed, Tillich (1956, p. 38) advises distinguishing existential analysis from "essential analysis" or phenomenological analysis.

The purpose of existential analysis in both psychotherapy and research is to give *unique* meaning to being and existence. There are various similarities and differences between this method in psychotherapy and in research. In both, distinctions are drawn between authentic and inauthentic existence or between what is meaningful versus superficial, as May suggests (1958):

Existential analysis is a way of understanding human existence, and its representatives believe that one of the chief (if not the chief) blocks to the understanding of human beings in Western culture is precisely the overemphasis on technique, an overemphasis which goes along with the tendency to see the human being as an object to be calculated, managed, "analyzed." (p. 76)

Existentialists tend to be critical or wary of "techniques," "technologies," "cultures," "designs," "machineries," "media," "styles," "virtualities," etc., assuming or claiming that these generally corrupt or distort authenticity or human existence. For instance, in *Social Acceleration*, Rosa (2005/2013) describes how the "introduction and entrenchment of the new technology" generate an "uneventful boredom of modern life" and "feeling that life 'flies by' faster and faster" (pp. 15-16, 41). New, "accelerating technologies" distort temporal perception and one's sense of existence. Rosa observes that the "existential situation of scarce time resources" generates a demand for relief through time-saving technological devices which invariably accelerate time instead, therein creating a cycle or routine (p. 156). An existential analysis of this phenomenon would aim to make it concrete by describing how it manifests in and dehumanizes particular human beings. An alternative or comparative analysis might address cases of humans choosing to remove the blocks—the accelerating devices and applications—from their lives to feel and exist with an authentic, humane sense of time and freedom.

Rather than provide an explanation, the goal is to describe experiences, including the experience of making choices. Existential analysts emphasize what particular humans make of their experiences or existence under given conditions. Fearing determinism, in *Search for a Method* Sartre (1960/1963) reiterates Marx's (1845) *Theses on Feuerbach* ("changed humans are products of changed circumstances") and reminds analysts that if humans could not make something of prior conditions, they "would be merely the vehicles of inhuman forces" (p. 87).

1. Two questions are herein begged: What is analysis? *and* What is meant by existential?
  - a. What is analysis?
    - i. Leavis (1948, p. 70): Analysis is not a dissection of something that is already and passively there. What we call analysis is, of course, a constructive or creative process.... It is a re-creation in which, by a considering attentiveness, we ensure a more than ordinary faithfulness and completeness.
    - ii. Ryle (1954, p. 129): What is often, though not very helpfully, described as ‘the analysis of concepts’, is rather an operation—if you like a ‘synoptic’ operation—of working out the parities and the disparities of reasoning between arguments hinging on the concepts of one conceptual apparatus and arguments hinging on those of another. The need to undertake such operations first makes itself felt only when some dilemma shows its horns.
    - iii. Stevenson (1958, p. 42): An analysis normally attempts to disclose unsuspected complexities; and for the present sense we may be tempted to say that the complexities are somehow secretly present in "the" experience that we have of a work... [An analyst] can, to be sure, attempt to tell us about the felt aspects (which are in no sense "hidden" from him [her or them], however hard they may be to name) of a complex experience; but that is not an analysis in the sense I have defined and is best referred to, in general, not as an "analysis" but rather as a "description" of experience, or as an "introspective report" about it.
2. Etymology
  - a. Existence precedes Essence
    - i. Heidegger (1927/1996, s. I.42, p. 39): The "essence" of this being lies in its to be. The whatness (*essentia*) of this being must be understood in terms of its being (*existentia*) insofar as one can speak of it at all.
      1. Heidegger (1927/1996, s. I.43, p. 40): The two characteristics of Da-sein sketched out— on the one hand, the priority of "*existentia*" over *essentia*.
    - ii. Sartre (1966, p. 15): The how (*essentia*) of this being [*Dasein*], so far as it is possible to speak of it generally, must be conceived in terms of its existence (*existentia*).
  - b. Tillich (1944, p. 47): The philosophy of "Existence" derives its name, and its way of formulating its critical opposition to rationalistic views of Reality, from the traditional distinction between "essence" and "existence." "Existence" — which comes from *existere*, meaning *heraustreten* or "emerge"— designates in its root meaning "being" within the totality of Being, in distinction from "not being." *Dasein*, a word which has received a pregnant meaning in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, adds the concrete element of "being in a special place," being da or "there." The scholastic distinction between *essentia* and *existentia* was the first step toward giving a more significant meaning to the word "existence." In that distinction, "essence" signifies the What, the *τί ἐστίν* or *quid est* of a thing; "existence " signifies the That, the *οὗ ἐστίν* or *quod est*. *Essentia* thus designates what a thing is known to be, the non-temporal object of knowledge in a temporal and changing thing, the *οὐσία* of that thing which makes it possible. But whether a thing is real or not is not implied in its essence: we do not know whether there is such a thing by knowing its "essence" alone. This must be decided by an existential proposition.
3. Conceptual History
  - a. Sartre (1945/1965, pp. 33-4): What is meant by the term existentialism? Most people who use the word would be rather embarrassed if they had to explain it... Yet it can be defined easily. What complicates matters is that there are two kinds of existentialists; first, those who are Christian, among whom I would include Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both Catholic; and on the other hand the atheistic existentialists among whom I class Heidegger, and then the French existentialists and myself. What they have in common is

that they think that existence precedes essence, or, if you prefer, that subjectivity must be the starting point.

- b. Wahl (1946/1949, pp. 1, 2): The subject of existentialism, or philosophy of existence, has begun to receive as much attention in New York as in Paris. Sartre has written an article for *Vogue*; a friend informs me that *Mademoiselle*, a magazine for teen-age young ladies, has featured an article on existentialist literature; and Marvin Farber has written in his periodical that Heidegger constitutes an international menace. The philosophy of existence has become, not only a European problem, but a world problem. It is no less of a problem to define this philosophy satisfactorily. The word "existence," in the philosophic connotation which it has today, was first used by Kierkegaard. But may we call Kierkegaard an existentialist, or even a philosopher of existence? He had no desire to be a philosopher... So that it seems only right to restrict our application of the term "existentialism" to those who willingly accept it, to those whom we might call The Philosophical School of Paris, i.e., Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty.
- c. Tulloch (1952, p. 32): b) Existentialists are thus interested in what are characteristically *human* situations, and they may be said to take their point of departure from what is *the* human situation, i.e. the situation of being a self in the world. This leads to emphasising the significance of the fact that the self is an embodied self, and that it is as such that the self is in contact with the world in space and time. (c) Hence the importance given to the elucidation of the ultimate relationship which the self bears to the world. Here the most fundamental difference between theistic and atheistic existentialists may be said to take root. For the latter this relationship is such that no sort of transcendence is possible. The human being is necessarily and ultimately linked to the material universe. For the theist the fundamental human situation reveals itself as open beyond the material universe.
- d. Frankl (1946/1984, p. 121): Let me explain why I have employed the term "logotherapy" as the name for my theory. *Logos* is a Greek word which denotes "meaning." Logotherapy, or, as it has been called by some authors, "The Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy," focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such a meaning. According to logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man.
- e. Frankl (1958, p. 28): "Logotherapy" and "Existential Analysis" are two names designating one and the same thing. The latter name has also been used as an English translation of Binswanger's *Daseinsanalyse*. However, "Existential analysis" in this paper stands for *Existenzanalyse*— a school of thought different from the one originated by Binswanger.
- f. May (1958, pp. 76-77): Existential analysis is a way of understanding human existence, and its representatives believe that one of the chief (if not the chief) blocks to the understanding of human beings in Western culture is precisely the overemphasis on technique, an overemphasis which goes along with the tendency to see the human being as an object to be calculated, managed, "analyzed." Our Western tendency has been to believe that *understanding follows technique*, if we get the right technique, then we can penetrate the riddle of the patient, or, as said popularly with amazing perspicacity, we can "get the other person's number." The existential approach holds the exact opposite; namely, that *technique follows understanding*.