



Basic Principles of Existential Psychotherapy

Alfried Längle

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www.existential-analysis.org + ww.ieapp.ru/

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Abstract:

The paradigm of existential psychotherapy encompasses those approaches which consider the human being as builder of their life, trying to take over responsibility and search for meaning. Humans are not just adapting to the world (by better learning) or reacting to conflicts or systems. Psychic problems are therefore seen in their interactions/.



Abstract - continuation:

...with one's own performance of life (which is called „existence“) within the challenges and possibilities of one's world. Psychic disorders are therefore characterized by inhibiting the dialogical exchange and limiting one's decidedness in life which produces a suffering of alienation in a reduced life. **Therapy** intents to help to understand and to exercise decided, own behavior which must be trained by little steps in actual life.

. . . . / .



Abstract – (end):

This means that in existential therapy unconscious conflicts being or false determining learning which drive the human as well as system influences are more in the background. Instead the experience of values that attract and their committed and decided realization is in the center of attention.

Psychodynamics, learning processes and psychopathology are to be treated with the “resources of the person”.



Audio recording with Russian translation at

<http://laengle.info/index.php?&page=aktuelles>

in the English and Russian section of the hp



1. Existential Psychotherapy – a short profile





1. Existential Psychotherapy

Philosophical background:

Nietzsche – Kierkegaard –
Heidegger – Scheler – Jaspers -
Camus – Sartre – Merleau-Ponty
– etc.




1. Existential Psychotherapy

Founders:

- L. Binswanger – W. Blankenburg
- – J. Bugenthal – M. Boss – G.
- Condrau – V. Frankl – K. Jaspers
- – H. Tellenbach – R.D. Laing –
- R. May – I. Yalom etc.

Existential Psychotherapists today:



Alexander Barranikov – Ludovico Berra –
Betty Cannon – Emmy van Deurzen –
Stephen Diamond – Bo Jakobson – Alice
Holzhey-Kunz – Christoph Kolbe – Svetlana
Krivtsova – Alfried Längle – Dmitry
Leontiev – Ernesto Spinelli – Simon du Plock
– Vladimir Shumsky – Lilo Tutsch – Paul
Wong – etc.



1. Existential Psychotherapy

Existential Psychotherapy =

a special section of the

Humanistic Psychology



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy





2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

2.1 Being-in-the-World

2.2 Humans are not fully determined

2.3 The essence of life is existence



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

**2.4 Existence = not being
forced → free dealing with
what is there**





2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

2.4 Existence = not being forced → free dealing with what is there

**2.5 subjective experience is the appropriate access to existence
→ work with subj. experience**



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

2.6 existence also claims clarity with its **basic themes** like groundlessness, death, loneliness, meaning (absurdity) (Yalom)



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

2.7 psychopathology: lack of clarity, decisiveness and/or dealing-potentialities - life is not „responded“ (responsibility) because of a blocked „dialogue”



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

Basic principle of Existential Psychotherapy:

**Dialogical exchange
with the world, and
with oneself**



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

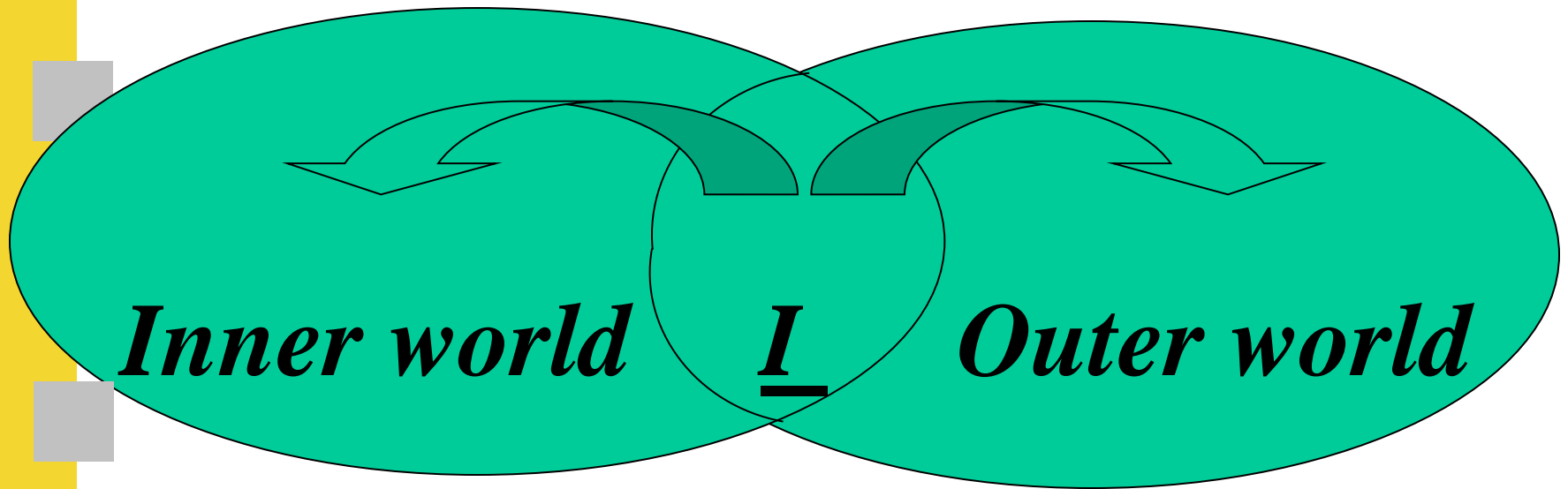
**Without dialogue with the world
and with oneself**

→ **one cannot find *oneself***

→ **one cannot find one's
*meaning***



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy





2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

**Without dialogue with oneself
and with the world arises**

**→ emptiness + feelings of being
lost →**

▶ alienation



2. Basic assumptions of Existential Psychotherapy

To Exist...

= Being.

Real Being ...

to really be as a human being –

What is that?



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy and the basic activities





3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

**Being human = Being-in-the-
World
(Dasein)**



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

Being human = Being-in-the-World

i.e. each human being has his/her world!

→ to deal with the *other* and with *oneself* = Existence



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

Fundament:

The freedom of the Person

→ The human being is always challenged to live his freedom



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

Being-in-the-World and being free

■ **requires 3 basic activities**

■ from the therapist and patient:

■ → **openness**

■ → **positioning**

■ → **commitment**



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

3.1 Openness

Phenomenological attitude:

= let oneself be asked by the actual situation [V. Frankl]

= „**Existential turn**“



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

Instead of **asking** for the meaning
of your life...

**See yourself as the decisive
center
of your world!**



“It is life itself that asks questions of man. (...) it is not up to man to question; rather he should recognize that he is questioned, questioned by life;

(Frankl 1973, 62)



“It is life itself that asks questions of man. (...) it is not up to man to question; rather he should recognize that he is questioned, questioned by life;

he has to **respond by being responsible**;
and he can answer *to* life only by answering *for*
his life.”

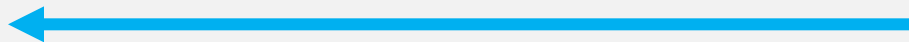
(Frankl 1973, 62)



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

questionning, asking...dialogue towards me

(= demand, requirement(s) of the situation)



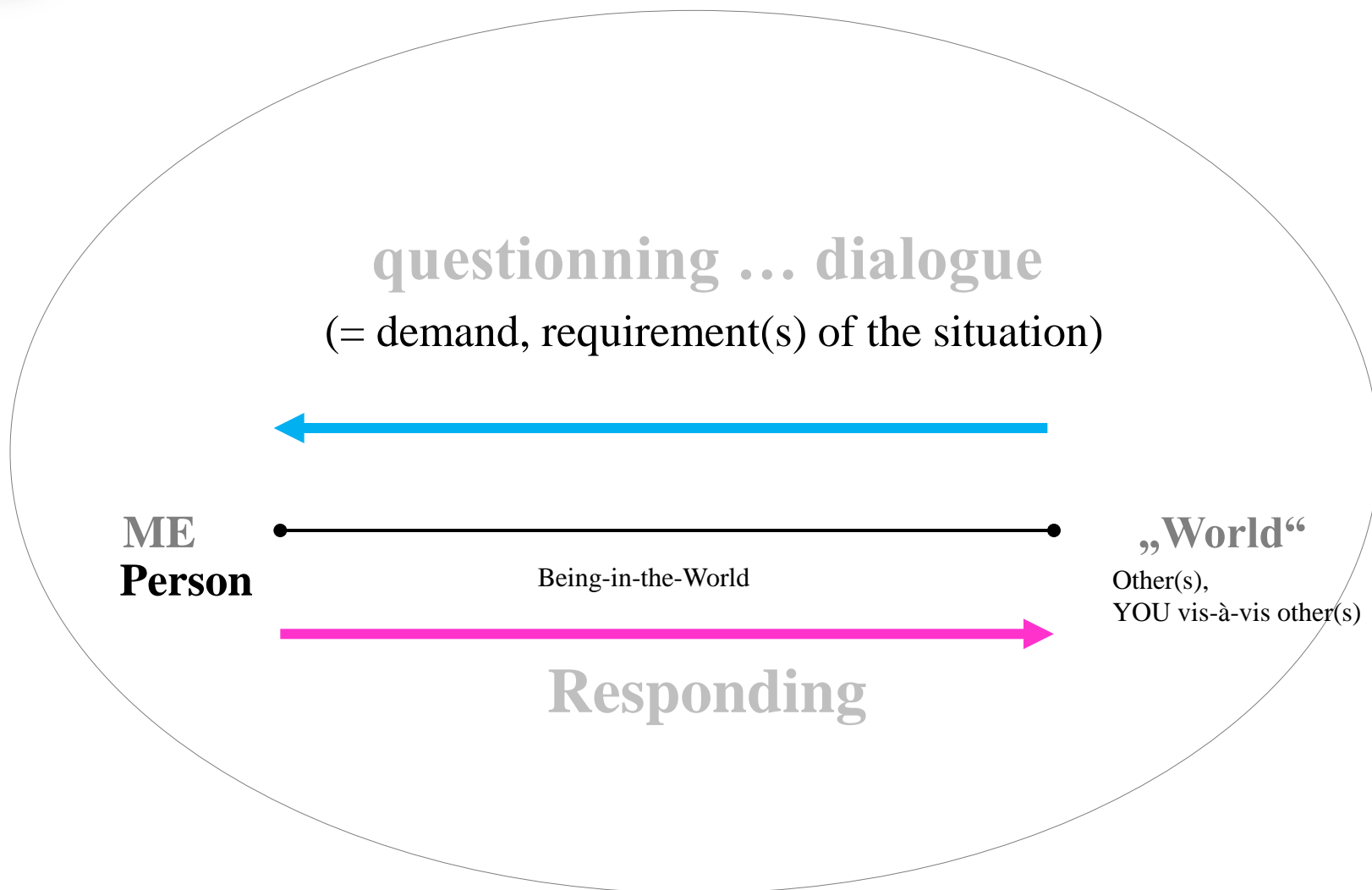
ME
Free Person

Being-in-the-World

„World“
Other(s),
YOU vis-à-vis other(s)



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy



Dialogical reality of existence



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

In other words...

Being human means:

⇒ **being questioned**

to live means:

⇒ **giving answers**



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

The therapist is asked: what needs the patient and what requires his/her situation now, and what from me?

And teaches the patients to also look similarly at their situation.



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

3.2 Positioning in harmonizing with oneself

= Inner consent

needs continuous inner and
outer DIALOGUE



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

Task of existential Psychotherapy:

to help human beings to live

with **inner consent**

to what one does



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

The inner consent am I!

Therapist gives his/her personal inner resonance (position) in the therapy.



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

3.3 Commitment

To be present with one's heart =
to be totally there.



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

The therapist should be felt by the patient as person – by his/her personal endeavour and accompaniment.



3. The Paradigm of Existential Psychotherapy

**Without commitment – no
existential therapy.**

**Without commitment – no
inner fulfillment.**



4. The four Principles of Existential Psychotherapy





4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

The therapy → focusses own decision,
i.e. **inner consent**

→ **to bring oneself to the world**

➤ **presence**

➤ **relationship**

➤ **inner dialogue**

→ **to live the meaning of one's
life**

➤ **commitment**



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

**=> The 4 „pillars“ of
Existential Therapy**

**They are structuring,
helping to be „really there“**



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

1. Principle:

Being-in-the-World = dealing with the *reality*.

→ work on **being able to accept** what is given



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

1. acceptance:

Perception, looking at – instead of keeping up expectations, wishes, interpretations.

Development of power, courage, support for being able to **trust**.



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

2. Principle:

Being-in-the-world = to come to *live* in it.

Work at the **turning towards** the given.



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

2. Turning towards:

Absorption, *let come inside* all what nurtures life (like food, water, air) – instead remaining cold, untouched, functional, without relation.



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

2. Turning towards:

Develop and caring of relationships, pleasure, closeness, to make life **valuable**.



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

3. Principle:

**Being-in-the-World = to be
oneself in it.**

→ work at the **looking at** the
person



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

3. Looking at:

Delimitate, sensing the essence (the own) – instead prejudices, sham, manipulation.



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

3. Looking at:

Development of decisiveness,
genuin, responsibility,
appreciation, to be able to
encounter authentically.



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

4. Principle:

Being-in-the-World = to deal with the *future*.

→ work at the **tuning with** the situation



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

4. Tuning:

Openness for the situation, for the needed, for the offered – instead of looking at programs, fixe aims and rigid plans.

Developing flexibility, orientation, for finding **meaning**.



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

Practical consequences:

1. Taking seriously the subjective reality → work with the **experience** (not with what is just hoped, thought, imagined, dreamt)



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

Practical consequences:

2. Phenomenology is the tool for detection of the personal in the experienced



4. The 4 principles of Existential Psychotherapy

Practical consequences:

3. To proof the behaviour of the patient and the therapist if be **authentic, responsible participation** in the own life and in the world.

Life is not “something” —

it is the *chance* for
something.

(V. Frankl)



Thank you for your attention!

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