

Harmony or Disharmony?

Bridging the Divide Between Religion and Science

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Contents

The Meaning Seeking Animal by Jonathan Sacks

In Two Minds by Jonathan Sacks

Divergent Paths by Jonathan Sacks

How Fit is Your Faith? Do You Need a Spiritual Checkup? (from internet)

What is Existentialism?

Harmonizing Religion and Science

Title of book: The Great Partnership

Two Views:

1) Is the human being a self-created fiction? Human beings come—go and it's like we had never been.

The answer to why we are here is: We just are.

Meaning is not a phenomenon of nature but of culture.

Meaning has little to do with the physical properties of things and everything to do with the way they symbolize and ritualize aspects of the human condition.

This view asserts that life is meaningless

2) the universe was called into being by One – outside the universe—and with the desire to bring things into being—what we call love.

We learned to communicate— create a culture—civilizations—stories—rituals—it began with Abraham—Moses-- and other religions developed from Judaism called Christianity and Islam.

This view asserts that life is meaningful.

This view focuses on human self-consciousness, imagination, freedom, choice, existential loneliness—in search of an Other.

Question: Why would a being independent of the universe wish to bring a universe into being?

Answer: out of the selfless desire to make space for otherness—for want of a better word: love.

The search for G-d is the search for meaning.

The discovery of G-d is the discovery of meaning.

To be human is to ask the question: Why?

What does this mean: There is an internal logic of the system? The meaning of the system lies elsewhere—and it can only be understood through some sense of the wider human context in which it is set.

Since the meaning of the system lies outside of the system --- the meaning of the universe lies outside the universe.

Is G-d beyond the universe?

Can you prove life has meaning?

We cannot prove that life is meaningful and that G-d exists?

Science provides explanations and not interpretations.

Meaning is a matter of interpretation.

Einstein said: "G-d does not play dice with the universe" In other words—it can't be proved but we know it works.

Can one live without meaning? It might be a strange kind of life—

The Epicureans were Greeks who believed that the material world was the only reality—that the many G-ds had no interest in humankind. They argued there was no soul, no life after death, no meaning to history.

For the Epicureans --- the formula for happiness was to maximize pleasure and minimize risk.

Here's what the Epicurean would advise you to do:

- 1) Live for the moment
- 2) Don't make any emotional commitments
- 3) Don't get married and have children
- 4) There's only one life—don't spend time raising another generation because you won't be around to see what happens
- 5) Don't get involved in public life
- 6) Don't spend too much time with others—because they don't repay your favors
- 7) Let others solve their own problems
- 8) Don't ask what life is for—live it day to day and if it becomes burdensome—you can end your life whenever you want to.

The above are sane responses to a universe without meaning

In the end—we choose how to respond to our predicament in life.

What is so fascinating about life is that you choose how to respond.

Remember—life is a task.

To find meaning in life is to find something we are called on to do – something no one else can do.

The word responsible is related to response. It is an answer to a question posed by another.

Responsibility is not something that comes from within—but is a response to something outside of us.

Responsibility affirms: Richard Niebuhr in his book "The Responsible Self" says "G-d is acting in all actions upon you So—respond to all actions as to his action. We are most aware of our existence in the moment, in the now, when we are radically acted upon by something from without, when we are under the necessity of meeting a challenge with an action of our own, as is the case in every important decision"

The responsible life is one that responds. G-d is the question to which our lives are an answer.

Science is the search for explanation – science doesn't yield meaning and it doesn't prove the absence of meaning

Religion is the search for meaning – the meaning of a system lies outside the system

The search for meaning begins with science – but must go beyond it.

Chapter 2: In Two Minds

Do you agree that:

- 1) science takes things apart
- 2) religion puts things together to see what they mean

Can you offer any examples of both?

Do both views offer a full expression of our humanity? How?

Brain functioning:

The left hemisphere tends to be:

- 1) linear
- 2) analytical
- 3) atomistic
- 4) mechanical
- 5) breaks things down into component parts
- 6) sequential

The right hemisphere tends to be:

- 1) integrative
- 2) holistic
- 3) sees things as whole
- 4) gives an overview of a situation
- 5) strong en empathy and emotion
- 6) deals with social intelligence, understands ambiguity, irony and metaphor

Differences between the East and West --- in terms of thought patterns

The Chinese see the world as a circle and West see the world on a line

The East look for relationships between things – you can't understand the part without understanding the whole.

Westerners live in a simpler, more deterministic world, they focus on salient objects or people instead of the larger picture, and they think they can control events because they know the rules that govern the behavior of objects.

If you ask American and Japanese students to look at fish in a tank with plants, rocks and bubbles—this is what you get:

American and Japanese students both say they see a fish.

The Japanese made 60% more reference to the background objects

If you show the American and Chinese students a chicken, cow and a clump of grass and ask them which two go together this is what you get:

- 1) the American students say the chicken and cow because they are both members of the same class – which is animal
- 2) the Chinese students say the cow and the grass – because where there are cows there is grass.

If asking about jobs --- ones where you can show individual initiative versus a job where you work as a member of a team:

- 1) the Japanese prefer to work on a team
- 2) the Americans prefer jobs where they can achieve – independent

If asked to tell me about yourself:

- 1) the Chinese, Korean or Japanese are more likely to talk about themselves in the context of relationships, family and friends
- 2) the Americans will tell you about themselves

Americans tend to think in terms of individual rights

Chinese find the concept hard to understand; they see the self as part of the whole

Americans think of resolving conflict by universal principles of justice

Chinese prefer mediation by a middleman whose goal is not fairness but animosity reduction.

Westerners tend to think in terms of either/or

Chinese in terms of both/and yin and yang, passive and active

Carol Gilligan wrote a book titled "In a Different Voice" which came out in the 1970's

She studied differences between men and women --- and concluded the following:

Men found their identity by separation and women by attachment

Men likely to feel threatened by intimacy women by isolation

Men played competitive games regulated by rules

Women were less rule oriented and formed small and closer groups and had fewer resources for conflict resolution.

In terms of thinking about moral dilemmas:

Men were more likely to analyze situations in terms of rights and women in terms of responsibilities

Men's moral thinking tended to be formal and abstract and women's was contextual and based on telling stories.

Men spoke about justice and women about relationships

Men valued detachment and achievement and women valued attachment and care.

For men, morality was primarily about the public world of social power and for women it was more about the private world of interpersonal connection.

Men saw morality as a set of rules for the avoidance of violence.

Women were more likely to think of it as a style of relationship based on empathy and compassion

Notes from Chapter 3: Diverging Paths

from book titled:

The Great Partnership (religion & science)

by Jonathan Sacks

The West owes its development to two cultures:

Ancient Greece -- science Ancient Israel – monotheism

Universality

The G-d of Israel is the G-d of all humanity but the religion of Israel is not—and is not intended to be the religion of all humanity.

Judaism is a principled and unusual combination of universality and particularity.

The universality of G-d and the particularity of the ways in which we related to G-d.

The Pauline reinterpretation of what occurred in the Garden of Eden – The Fall

The Fall is seen as a tragic view of the human condition.

The Hebrew Bible does not see this story as tragic or a Fall.

According to Judaism—we are not destined to sin.

Genesis 4:7 says “Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you can dominate it”

The collective forgiveness of humankind occurs, after the Flood.

In Christianity—tragedy is avoided by salvation, but salvation in this sense----→ the existential deliverance of the human person from the grip of sin. This does not exist in Judaism. In Judaism--- we choose and sometimes we choose wrongly. We then atone for our sins.

Faith and Works ----→ In Judaism—the two go hand in hand.

Faith is how you behave and not what you believe.

Believing and doing are the same.

We are what we choose to be and it is in the realm of choice, decision and action that the religious drama takes place.

Christianity that emerged from the tradition of Paul, Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas had strong, Judaic elements.

It spoke of:

- 1) faith
- 2) hope
- 3) charity
- 4) love
- 5) righteousness
- 6) forgiveness dignity of the human being
- 7) sanctity of life

It valued humility and compassion. It spoke of a G-d that loved his creatures.

G-d is to be found in relationships—and in the meanings we construct out of our experiences of the presence of G-d in our lives, we create bonds of loyalty and mutual responsibility known as a covenant.

People have sought in the religious life the kind of certainty that belongs to philosophy and science—but it is not to be found.

Between G-d and man there is moral loyalty not scientific certainty.

Faith is a relationship in which we become G-ds partners in the work of love.

How can an omniscient, omnipotent G-d need a partner? There is surely nothing He cannot do on His own. This is a left brain issue.

The right brain answer is that there is one thing G-d cannot do on His own—namely have a relationship.

G-d on His own cannot live within the free human heart.

Faith is a relationship of inter-subjectivity—the inwardness of G-d. G-d is the personal reality of Otherness. Religion is the redemption of solitude.

Faith is a mode of listening. Listening is an existential act of encounter.

Religion, faith and G-d is about meaning. Meaning is made and sustained in conversation; relationships, marriage, family, community and society.

The left brain is ineffective in dealing with people—but with things; doesn't understand inner life of people; their hopes, fears.

Religion consecrates our humanity.

Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. After teaching theology and philosophy at various German universities, he came to the United States in 1933. For many years he was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Tillich believes the essence of religious attitudes is what he calls "ultimate concern". Separate from all profane and ordinary realities, the object of the concern is understood as sacred, numinous or holy. The perception of its reality is felt as so overwhelming and valuable that all else seems insignificant, and for this reason requires total surrender.

... "Man, like every living being, is concerned about many things, above all about those which condition his very existence...If [a situation or concern] claims ultimacy it demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim...it demands that all other concerns...be sacrificed."

Tillich further refined his conception of faith by stating that

... "Faith as ultimate concern is an act of the total personality. It is the most centered act of the human mind...it participates in the dynamics of personal life."

An arguably central component of Tillich's concept of faith is his notion that faith is "ecstatic". That is to say that

... "It transcends both the drives of the nonrational unconsciousness and the structures of the rational conscious...the ecstatic character of faith does not exclude its rational character although it is not identical with it, and it includes nonrational strivings without being identical with them. 'Ecstasy' means 'standing outside of oneself' - without ceasing to be oneself - with all the elements which are united in the personal center."

In short, for Tillich, faith does not stand opposed to rational or nonrational elements (reason and emotion respectively), as some philosophers would maintain. Rather, it transcends them in an ecstatic passion for the ultimate.

For Tillich-- faith is "the state of being ultimately concerned," the dynamics of which are "the dynamics of man's ultimate concern"

While faith may certainly involve rationality and emotion, for Tillich it transcends them both without destroying either, thereby overcoming the gap between subjectivity and objectivity

Likewise, faith also involves the risk or wager of existential courage, i.e., the acceptance of uncertainty within the element of certainty.

The first and most pervasive distortion of faith is the penchant to identify faith as an act of knowledge with little evidence. When this occurs it is almost certain that one is referring to cognitive belief rather than faith itself.

Here Tillich explains that any expression of ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically "because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate"

God functions as the most fundamental symbol for ultimate concern. Regardless of whether one accepts or rejects "God," the symbol of God is always affirmed insofar God is a type of shorthand for what concerns humanity ultimately (52-53).

Myths in this view serve as the language and narrative through which ultimate symbols are communicated or transmitted. Through symbol and myth faith is tangibly manifest in the life of the individual ontologically and morally. Ontologically, that which grasps a person ultimately is experienced as being present, here and now, and in the act of faith one "see[s] in a concrete piece of reality the ultimate ground and meaning of all reality" (66).

Drawing a distinction once again between the structure of faith and its determinate content, Tillich claims that this ontological type of faith is universal, sacramental, and present in all formal religions.

Conversely, the moral type of faith "demands moral obedience," conceiving of God as the one who "gives law as a gift and as a command" (74).

Truth of Faith

For Tillich, faith and reason are not incompatible nor are they mutually exclusive.

Faith is "the act in which reason reaches ecstatically beyond itself" such that reason rises above its own finitude within the conditions of subjective existence.

Likewise, the truth of faith is not contradictory to the truth of science, history, or faith — and vice versa. Since faith is the religious structure of that which grasps a person ultimately, its truth cannot be completely confirmed or validated by the truth of history or science, nor can it be denied.

Faith asks questions of ultimate meaning and is therefore in no position to pass judgment upon the validity of historical investigation or scientific experimentation.

Finally, the life of faith is one marked with various tensions — between doubt and courage, estrangement and wholeness, individual and community — and the attempt to maintain balance such that faith, hope and love are concretely present within the totality of the human personality.

Faith then, in Tillich's view, is eternally present within the life of the human being insofar as it is the symbolic apprehension of that which concerns one ultimately.

Tillich argues that faith is a state of being ultimately concerned about something unconditionally.

Faith is "the state of being ultimately concerned.....If it (the object of faith) claims ultimacy it demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim, and it promises total fulfillment even if all others have claim to be subjected to it or rejected in its name" Tillich goes on to explain that this unconditional concern can take religious or non-religious form.

He gives the example of Jewish faith in the Lord God as a form of ultimate concern expressed religiously, and the concern for money and social status as a non-religious form of faith.

For the individual faith is concern with what is considered to be of infinite importance.

He goes on to further develop the theme by stating that faith is a centering act of the entire personality. Tillich states "Faith as ultimate concern is an act of the total personality. It happens in the center of the personal life and includes all its elements "

Therefore to Tillich, faith is something integrative to the life of the person. He says that includes all elements of the personality, both conscious and unconscious, although it is a conscious act, it is because the unconscious elements of the personality are taken into the center of the personality and they transcend themselves.

This integration even takes on doubt.

Doubt is integrated with all other elements of the personality. An element of doubt is important to faith because it gives a "in spite of" character to faith.

The individual continues to have faith although they do not have total surety as to whether or not their faith is misplaced. This makes faith an act of courage.

How fit is your faith? Do you need a spiritual check-up?

If you sense something might be wrong in your spiritual life, perhaps it's time to examine your Christian walk. Here are 12 signs of a healthy faith-life.

12 Signs of a Healthy Faith-Life

Your faith is based on a relationship with God, not religious obligations and rituals. You follow Christ because you want to, not because you have to. Your relationship with Jesus flows naturally out of love. It is not forced or driven by guilt. (1 John 4:7-18; Hebrews 10:19-22.)

Your sense of security and significance is centered on God and who you are in Christ, not on others or your accomplishments. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-6; Ephesians 6:6-7.)

Your faith in God is strengthened as you walk through life's troubles, trials and painful experiences, not weakened or destroyed. (1 Peter 4:12-13; James 1:2-4.)

Your service to others flows out of genuine love and concern for them, not from compulsion or a need to be recognized. You offer your service as a joy and a pleasure and not an obligation or a heavy burden. (Ephesians 6:6-7; Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 12:10.)

You value and respect the unique differences and individual gifts of your brothers and sisters in Christ, rather than expecting conformity to one Christian standard. You appreciate and celebrate others' gifts. (Romans 14; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31.)

You are able to give and receive trust and allow others to see you—and themselves—in a state of vulnerability and imperfection. You allow yourself and others the freedom to make mistakes. (1 Peter 3:8; Ephesians 4:2; Romans 14.)

You can relate to real, everyday people with a non-judgmental, non-legalistic attitude. (Romans 14; Matthew 7:1; Luke 6:37.)

You thrive in an atmosphere of learning, where free thinking is encouraged. Questions and doubts are normal. (1 Peter 2:1-3; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; Luke 2:41-47.)

You prefer balance over black and white extremes in your approach to the Bible, its teachings and the Christian life. (Ecclesiastes 7:18; Romans 14.)

You do not feel threatened or defensive when others hold to a different opinion or perspective. You can agree to disagree, even with other Christians. (Titus 3:9; 1 Corinthians 12:12-25; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.)

You are not afraid of emotional expressions from yourself and others. Emotions are not bad, they just are. (Joel 2:12-13; Psalm 47:1; Psalm 98:4; 2 Corinthians 9:12-15.)

You have the ability to relax and have fun. You can laugh at yourself and at life. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4; 8:15; Proverbs 17:22; Nehemiah 8:10)

Harmonizing Religion and Science

By Elie Levy, Ph.D.

Let's begin by defining religion as an institution with sociological and psychological functions. I am not writing a persuasive paper, meaning I'm not assuming a position for or against religion or science. I am a mature adult and I know better. Is mature a euphemism for know better? Just read with an open, expansive mind.

So, let's start with a definition of religion. In sociological terms, religion is an institution that provides meaning to our lives through adherence to beliefs, morals, rituals, and practices. Now some of these things are treated as sacred. It appears that these beliefs and practices were created by human beings in response to social forces that they could not comprehend. It was mostly about believing in a reality beyond the perceptible facts in our ordinary life and human experience. I call it a sort of intuitive knowledge or faith because it cannot be verified by conducting an experiment leading to empirical evidence. Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology defined religion as:

"a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, ... which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those that adhere to them."

I suspect that humans created the institution of religion, much like the institution of family, out of a need to impose meaning in their life. If enough mysteries exist in our lives, we need to respond to this unknowable reality. So, religion provides us with ways for dealing with the unknown, invisible reality. Religion can create a sense of certainty in an otherwise uncertain reality. The uncertain reality could be things in our lives we cannot explain, such as the untimely loss of loved ones and the certainty of death. Religion also enables us to give up our despair, fear, and anxiety to a transcendental supernatural deity. This understanding ultimately contributes to our life orientation, or faith consisting of a world beyond what we can see. I call this the ineffable.

Now, let's examine what science does for us. The realistic, objective assessment of our reality is what science so nicely provides for humanity. Science, as an enterprise, allows us to achieve a great understanding of the physical world, the world we can all see, touch and smell. As a model for creating predictability in our lives, science is wonderful. Science is the practice of gathering objective data and facts and generating theories to help us control and predict the outcome of our lives, and the occurrence of social events in the world. Science is an experimental process, a rational, methodical practice for understanding the mysteries of the world. I believe that what we do not understand suggests that there are limits to science or limits to man's intelligence. It's that ineffable thing again. With regard to science and religion, I think this matter needs to be approached in a way that harmonizes both disciplines. In other words, the compelling thing is to assume a view that accommodates revelation and science. Now wouldn't that be a real nice goal? I think some of us will resist integrating both because we have a need to polarize things in the world; meaning it has to be one or the other. In our culture some individuals rely less on religion to create meaning in life while science and rationalism makes great discoveries in our world. Let me summarize this issue with the following: science teaches and explains how the world works and religion teaches us how to act, how to be moral, kind and loving human beings, how to determine what is and isn't important and what to pray for in the world.

I suspect that all religions, from the Western to the Eastern world represent man's search for meaning in life. The majority of the world's faiths attempt to understand a new spiritual reality which they named G-d,

Allah or any other sacred name. I like the theory that the creation of religion is a universal phenomenon. An anthropologist named Bronislaw Malinowski, about 80 years ago studied the tribal customs of the Trobriand Islanders, in addition to other tribes on a South Pacific Island. He noticed that different religious activities were performed by the tribes. For example, one tribe practiced lots of magical rituals while others performed little magic. Malinowski realized that one of the tribes was near a calm lagoon where lots of fish were caught. So, his explanation for why this tribe performed fewer magical rituals was because of the plentiful fish and there was no need for rituals to protect the fishermen when they went out to sea. The other tribe, sadly enough, sent out their fishermen only to return with no fish. Malinowski concluded that the tribe having difficulty catching fish performed magical rituals to help them gain some control over uncertain natural forces. So, what's all of this interesting stuff supposed to mean for us? I think it suggests that when life is safe and predictable we are less anxious, fearful and there is less of a need for magic. In other words, as humans become more knowledgeable and develop and master skills to predict the outcome of their life, there is less reliance on magic.

So, it looks like religion or faith provides humans with ways of dealing with the unknown. Do you think religion is essential for human survival? Think about it now. You don't have to agree with me of course. Think about the functions of religion again. The most important ones are the social conformity and identity functions. Social conformity refers to honoring norms, values and morals of society. You know, the virtuous behaviors like not lying, stealing and harming others. I think research demonstrates that individuals who are religious are less likely to violate laws. In other words, they are not likely to commit crimes and get into trouble with the law because religion encourages it's followers to be kind, moral and to obey the Golden Rule. The identity function enables us to feel connected to a faith that defines who we are as people united by common, shared beliefs and values. The identity function is a real important one because in today's modern society you can easily be identityless. I made up that word. Everyone needs an identity that they can strongly connect with to draw inspiration, meaning and purpose in life. Now there is a supportive function religion plays in our lives. This type of support refers to the consolation, and relief from fear and anxiety at times in our lives. I notice that I become less worrisome and anxious when I pray. How about you?

Alright, well I hope this article enriched your understanding about the functions of religion and science, and how they can be harmonized rather than polarized. As a discipline, science has enabled us to enjoy great advances in medicine, technology and various other fields. In addition, science lets us exercise increased control and predictability in our lives. Religion is just as essential as science for human survival, providing us with purpose and meaning in life, in addition to obligating us to adhere to beliefs and morals to create a more loving and kind world.

What is Existentialism?

Elie Levy, Ph.D.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement emphasizing individual existence, choice and freedom. It was given birth to in Europe by writers in the 19th and 20th centuries. The themes that most existentialist writers subscribe to include the individual's subjective experience and freedom in the world. Essentially, existentialists assert we are what we consciously have chosen to be. The founding of modern existentialism in the late 19th century is generally attributed to a Danish philosopher named Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Kierkegaard's existentialist philosophy was a reaction to Plato's writings on the highest ethical good being the same for everyone—that all needed to strive for moral perfection. Kierkegaard, in contrast insisted that each individual needed to define for himself the highest moral good, to pursue and define his truth leading to a liberated, meaningful life. For Kierkegaard, honoring objective, universal truths based on absolute morality was a contradiction to the major existential premise of denying a rational basis for moral decisions. Kierkegaard objected to the reigning absolute, idealistic German philosophy of the time being promoted by Hegel. Hegel proposed a total, well reasoned rational and systematic explication of humanity and history. Kierkegaard's thinking deemphasized the rational basis of understanding the human condition, and in contrast, focused on the absurdity and ambiguity of life. Kierkegaard professed it was each individual's responsibility to commit to leading a life of truth which may require one to defy the norms of society, thereby transcending what might be the good for all and honoring what is the good for me. In this situation, Kierkegaard proposes one take a "leap of faith" to avoid experiencing further despair.

The majority of existential writers stress that one must be passionate and maximize individual choice leading to individual action. It is only when one acts on their freely chosen desires that they arrive at truth—or approximate truth. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche stressed that there exists no rational or logical premises which derive from a systematic analysis of nature. They and other existentialist writers explicate this existential principle in many of their parables and aphorisms. The denial of rationality is not absolute though, for they understand that under certain conditions rationality is necessary to deepen our understanding. In the final analysis, the existentialists will claim that to answer the most compelling, significant questions in life, reason and science are insufficient. The bold Nietzsche asserted that no order exists in the universe and that the assumption that it does is an illusion.

Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), considered the leading existentialist philosopher of the 20th century, lived and worked in France. In his classic work *Being and Nothingness* (1943) he expounded his premise that existence precedes essence, meaning that one's biological, physiological or material being exists before one's awareness of innate factors such as reason and consciousness. Sartre, an atheist further asserted that life is not sacred theologically; that human beings were not created in the image of G-d or any other supreme deity. For Sartre, human beings enter a materialistic world and are condemned to make choices which define their true nature. Thus, each individual represents the sum of their choices and actions, and all human beings are "condemned to be free."

One of the most prominent themes in existentialism is choice. Choice means that each unique individual can create his own nature. For Sartre, existence precedes essence and choice is inexplicably part of humanity. It defines and validates one's existence. Choice is inescapable and in every moment of existence, we make choices. Invariably, the refusal to choose represents a choice and with this choice comes responsibility. Individuals then come to accept responsibility for the consequences of their choices.

Additional themes in existential philosophy emphasized by Kierkegaard are dread and anxiety. Dread characterizes a general apprehension, a conscious knowing that G-d obligates each of us to define and lead a meaningful life. Anxiety naturally leads one to confront awareness of his nothingness and that he may discover emptiness when searching to justify the choices he makes. Sartre uses nausea to refer to the individual's awareness of how the universe is devoid of moral absolutes, and the word anguish refers to the absolute freedom of choice all of us are presented with in life and which is a burden for human beings.

Sartre's model is atheistic, suggesting that there exists in the universe no compass for moral guidance, a G-d for divine inspiration and no moral absolutes. For some individuals, this recognition creates despair, acknowledging that one lives in a meaningless world, and that it is each individual's responsibility to impose meaning in a meaningless world. It is in this condition of pure nothingness that generates anxiety and awareness of the inescapable inevitability of death.

Existential Psychology represents a synthesis of philosophy and psychology. The philosophical bases were formed by Kierkegaard and Heidegger. The most popular one-sentence summary is "existence precedes essence".

Core of Personality

- I. Core Tendency: To achieve authentic being. Being signifies the special quality of human mentality (aptly called intentionality), that makes life a series of decisions, each involving an alternative that precipitates persons into an unknown future and an alternative that pushes them back into a routine, predictable past. Choosing the future brings ontological anxiety (fear of the unknown), whereas choosing the safe status quo brings ontological guilt (sense of missed opportunity). Authenticity involves accepting this painful state of affairs and finding the courage or hardiness to persist in the face of ontological anxiety and choose the future, thereby minimizing ontological guilt.

II. Core Characteristics:

A. Being-in-the-world: This concept emphasizes the unity of person and environment, since, in this heavily phenomenological position, both are subjectively defined. Being-in-the-world has three components:

1. Umwelt ("world around") - the natural world of biological urge and drive.
2. Mitwelt ("with-world") - the social, interactive, interpersonal aspects of existence.
3. Eigenwelt ("own world") - the subjective, phenomenological world of the self

B. Six ontological principles:

1. Every person is centered in self and lives life through the meaning he or she places on that center.
2. Every person is responsible for mobilizing the courage to protect the self, to affirm it, and to enhance its continued existence.
3. People need other people with whom they can empathize and from whom they can learn.
4. People are vigilant about potential dangers to their identities.
5. People can be aware of themselves thinking and feeling at one moment and may be aware of themselves as the person who thinks and feels in the next moment.
6. Anxiety originates, in part, out of a person's awareness that one's being can end.

1. The Daimonic: This is defined as "any natural function that has the power to take over the whole person". Sex, anger, and power can become evil when they take over the self without integration. We are capable of both good and evil.

2. Power: Life can be seen as a conflict between achieving a sense of significance of one's self on the one hand, and the feeling of powerlessness on the other. Violence has its breeding ground in impotence and apathy. As we make people powerless, we encourage violence, rather than control it.

3. Intentionality: Intentionality underlies any decision. It is "the structure which gives meaning to experience". It is the capacity to participate in knowing. How a piece of paper is perceived will differ depending on whether one intends to write on it or to make a paper airplane. May holds that we cannot know the truth until we have taken a stand on it.

4. Freedom and Destiny: Freedom is the capacity to pause (and make a choice) between a stimulus and a response. In the debate between dispositional and situational factors, there is a third alternative - human beings can choose when and whether they are to be acted upon or do the acting. To the extent that one is unaware of one's responses, then determinism may be the appropriate term. The shift from determinism to destiny occurs when a person is self-conscious about what is happening to him or her. To accept one's destiny is to accept personal responsibility.

5. Courage: Courage is the capacity to move ahead in spite of despair. Courage is necessary in order to make being and becoming possible. The paradox of courage is that we must be fully committed but at the same time aware that we might be wrong.

Development

I. Early Development. The period during which the child is dependent and requires parental guidance in order to develop courage. Ideally, parents (1) expose the child to a richness of experience, (2) freely impose limits expressing their own views, (3) love and respect the child as a budding individual, and (4) teach the value of vigorous symbolization, imagination, and judgment directly and by example. Experiencing these things, the child develops courage, or the willingness to consider what is facticity (given) and what is possibility, and the tendency to choose the future rather than the past, tolerating ontological anxiety (fear of unknown) rather than building up ontological guilt (sense of missed opportunity).

II. Later development. Begins when courage has been developed (presumably sometime in adolescence, if conditions have been ideal). This period, which continues throughout life, involves self-initiated learning from failure experiences. There are two transitional stages to go through before authenticity or individuality can be reached. The first is the aesthetic phase, which takes place as soon as the person leaves the family. It is characterized by living in the moment (without regard for past or future) and failing to form deep relationships. The loneliness and aimlessness of this orientation teaches the person its shortcomings. Thus, the idealistic phase begins, characterized by undying commitments and uncompromising principles. Sooner or later the person recognizes, through failures, that commitments cannot be made forever and that the relationship between principles and any particular persons or events is problematical. With this learning, the phase of authenticity or individuality begins.

Existential Psychology

As a movement— developed in Europe and gradually spread to America. Its background steeped in existential philosophy and in America, it represented a revolt against the scientific psychology and behaviorism.

A central concept in existentialism is Existence and the Essence of things. In particular— to the existence of human beings.

Essence means “that which makes things as they are”

The existentialist deny that essence is primary and prefer to see Existence as the only primary thing: the rest is mere abstraction.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

A religious philosopher and an existentialist and saw human beings as wanting a desire to have eternity with G-d while at same time realizing our existence was temporal— while wanting immortality. So—a conflict arose between one’s desire for eternity and recognizing one’s own temporal and finite existence. As a result— one experienced anxiety, dread and torment.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

For Heidegger— one’s existence was closely tied to the world (being in the world) and with other human. Unlike animals— human beings are conscious of their existence. He considered human beings to be in conflict— in the world with other strange people and threats; inescapable death which created anguish and dread. One overcame thjs realization by behaving in conventional ways which was “unauthentic”

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980)

One of the most well known existential philosophers. For Sartre the central question is the meaning of one’s existence. Sartre argues that one’s existence in the world has no meaning. There is no reason why the world and man should exist at all. G-d cannot be the reason because there is no G-d. For Sartre— consciousness is the main reality and yet it is incomprehensible with regard to its origin and continuity. Man does have freedom and choice. However— we are constantly plagued with making decisions. If man tries to escape this freedom— he is only left with anxiety and despair.

Basic Tenets of Existential Psychology

Existential Psychology deals with man as an individual— who exists as a being in the world.

Each of us has a unique inner life with various perceptions and differing valuations of the world.

The aim is to understand man in his total existential reality; dealing with problems peculiar to each person rather than generalizations about humans.

We are concerned with man's consciousness; feelings, moods personal experiences as they relate to his existence in world of other people.

The themes are human values, meaning of life, suffering, anxiety, death, relationships.

Man has freedom to choose; responsible for own existence; not under control of environment; he alone decides what to do