

SUMMARIES

*Phenomenology of existence**By Bjarne Sode Funch*

In order to become confident with human living conditions, the aim of phenomenology is to describe the structure of consciousness and what appears within. In this article, human existence is considered within the former aim with a point of departure in Søren Kierkegaard and William James' conception of "Existence" and "pure experience" respectively. Existence is defined as a process in which the individual's life experience is reflected in the experience of everyday life and where current spontaneous consciousness finds resonance in the individual's life experience. The argument is that the emotional life shapes human existence in a living relationship between the present and the individual's emotional world of experience. Existence is constituted as a feeling of being oneself, similar to what James calls "I" or "pure ego" and Kierkegaard calls "Spirit" or "Self". In special circumstances, this everyday existence transcends into an intense emotional experience, whereby a fleeting emotional experience is constituted in a sensate form with increased personal integrity.

Keywords: existence, phenomenology, pure experience, emotion, self

*The notion of existence in phenomenology**By Casper Feilberg and Kurt Dauer Keller*

Since the 19th century, the existential problems in which we are situated as a *personal* existence have been thematised in the works of Søren Kierkegaard and others. With the formation of existential phenomenology – in Martin Heidegger and French phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty – a distinctive experience-based approach is offered for analysing existence. We outline notions of existence that have been asserted in existential phenomenology. They are about *authenticity versus alienation* in modern life, and they ultimately converge in uncovering a universal, bodily form of reason, the so-called 'intentionality'. An in-depth analysis of psychosocial and socio-cultural conditions in the modern lifeworld cannot occur without

thematising how these conditions are involved with the bodily basis of human existence. We highlight aspects of human existence that are very often overlooked today, namely the collective aspects and the anonymous aspects of existence. These aspects call for theoretical and empirical attention, just as personal existence does. Guiding works could be Hannah Arendt's account of the basic natural conditions for human existence, Jan Patocka's focus on existence as the realisation of significant potentials in human life, and Paul Ricoeur's discussion of the identity-creating relationships between experienced history and narrative history. In an anthropological conception of the being of the human, the article summarises existential phenomenology's understanding of existence. Finally, the relevance is outlined of this understanding to applied psychology, especially social psychological and clinical-psychological areas.

Keywords: existence, person, organisation, anonymous corporeality, psychosociality

Guilt and Existence
– *Guilt as an ethical-existential boundary experience*

By Joachim Meier

Sartre famously claimed that man is “condemned to be free”. In the existentialist tradition and discourse, freedom – and the anxiety that accompanies it – is often perceived as the central ontological characteristic. However, through the phenomenon of guilt, the purpose of this article is to challenge the primacy of freedom in the existential discourse by demonstrating its ethical-existential boundaries. Using fictional material from Fyodor Dostoevsky's authorship, as well as qualitative interviews from an ongoing research project dealing with young people's experiences of bad conscience, I argue that prior to man's reflexive and autonomous relationship with himself, a pre-reflexive bondedness exists of which the individual is not in sovereign control. On this basis, guilt is determined as an ontological characteristic that refers to fundamental boundaries (basic conditions) in the form of the Other, finitude, but also freedom. These boundaries, I argue, cannot be isolated from man's ethical-existential life but form the basis of an ontological ethic. This means that questions concerning the human condition (ontology) are inextricably linked to questions of how man ought to live and relate (ethics). In the end, I point to how the existential boundaries may be used to understand the background of the increasing mental discomfort in late modernity.

Keywords: existence, ethics, freedom, ontology, late modernity, guilt

We are the life we do not live
– a hopeful outline of the psychology of daydreaming

By Alfred Sköld

Contemporary existential thought must consider the fact that the climate crisis, to an increasing degree, is affecting all life on planet Earth without reacting with nihilism or despair. Today, debates concerning the emotional consequences of the climate crisis are dominated by negative emotions such as anxiety, grief and even depression. In light of the intensified warming of the Earth's surface and linked climate changes, hope is often considered improper and naïve. In this article, I aspire to revitalise the existential, ethical and political significance of hope and argue that it comprises a vital part of our struggle for more sustainable ways of living. With a point of departure in the intimate relationship between hope and daydreams in Ernst Bloch's thought, I aspire to formulate a notion of hope that is equally founded in a confrontation with limitations and an open horizon of possibilities. Hope and daydreams are intimately related since they are both positioned in between – in between fantasy and reality, necessity and possibility. In this opening, which simultaneously exhibits the chains of historicity and the radical contingency of existence we will locate a form of hope that neither can be reduced to optimism nor desire – a hope aptly considered as a relationally anchored virtue, intimately related to our ability and willingness to act.

Keywords: hope, daydreams, climate crisis, grief

Vita Activa, Hannah Arendt and existential psychology

By Mette Vesterager

Existential psychology is often based on the works of philosophers who regard the human being as a lonely individual who, in their search for meaning, faces a free choice, and emphasis is placed on abstract, unchanging existential basic conditions. There is a need to incorporate an understanding of the human being as fundamentally more relational and grounded in communities and which emphasises the concrete, lived life and the societal conditions structuring it. The philosopher Hannah Arendt has investigated our practical life together, *vita activa*, which consists of *labour*, *work*, and *action*. She describes the changes that modern human life has undergone in working life, in patterns of consumption, and our interactions with each other and has particularly highlighted the *alienation* they have brought about. We have become alienated from our

subjective, biological needs because the activities that are supposed to fulfil them are no longer connected to them. Instead, we work until we become exhausted. Work has been reduced to an unnatural form of repetitive, high-paced labour, just as interpersonal action has been replaced by labour and consumption. Based on her descriptions of active life, she also points to other basic conditions as the most important ones, including *worldliness*, *plurality*, and *natality*, and this becomes crucial for understanding human beings and for the practice on which existential psychology can be based. Her concepts and descriptions can be interpreted into a contemporary and psychological context and applied advantageously in existential psychological interventions within psychotherapy, coaching and work and organisational psychology. Arendt can thus make a significant contribution to existential psychology.

Keywords: existential psychology, Hannah Arendt, Existential philosophy, Psychotherapy, Organisational psychology

The basic moods of existence
– *the resonance of being in the human mind*
An outline of natural existence psychology

By Henrik Høgh-Olesen

An overview is provided of the psychological constituents of the emotional register, and particular focus is given to the longer-lasting existential moods – our being-attuned to being – as we as humans experience it. The classic concepts of existentialism (Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre) are reviewed and challenged. Moods, such as emptiness, meaninglessness, existential anxiety for freedom and nothingness, have not always been dominating aspects of human existence, nor are they today. These moods primarily stem from urbanity and modernity, but worldwide the majority of people do not know what autonomy, freedom and relativity mean. The outer as well as the inner nature of humans and human existence have been underexposed in the field of classical and modern existential thinking. The aim here is to remedy this shortcoming by presenting an empirically anchored outline of natural existential psychology, which, based on modern neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, comparative psychology and phenomenology, provides further knowledge about our basic existential moods and our species-specific resonances of a human being.

Keywords: anxiety, arousal, existential moods, emotion, core affections, neophilia, ontology, OSN, mental unrest, existence

Meaning, existence and psychological needs

By Jan Tønnesvang and Sanne Schou

The concept of meaning is among the concepts from psychology and philosophy that most people know of but still have difficulties explaining if asked what it means. The article will uncover the cognitive, conative, and emotive components of the concept of meaning, relate these to the importance of existential meaning and argue that meaning is a basic psychological need (on the same terms as, for example, the need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence). Man's search for meaning is a fundamental existential condition that corresponds with the need for meaning. It is argued that a distinction between meaning with a capital M and meaning with a small m can help maintain the difference between meaning as an anthropologically constant (M) and meaning as experiential phenomenology (m). With the inclusion of Vitalising Psychology, it is shown how the need for meaning can be integrated into a holistic model that helps to understand the importance of basic psychological needs in human existence.

Keywords: meaning, meaning in life, search for meaning, need for meaning, vitalisation, vitalising psychology

The Existential Demand of the Mass

By Christopher Horn Larsen and Frej Sørensen

This article examines mass theory and mass dynamics from an existential psychological perspective. Through an existential reading of the paradigm of mass psychology, the article seeks to uncover new perspectives on contemporary existential challenges. It is stated that mass affects the individual. Therefore, the article seeks to understand the individual's possibilities for choosing authentically in the mass, read through an existential psychological perspective. The article states that there must be an intermediate existential in the encounter with the masses, which influences the individual in the direction of either authenticity or self-deception. At the same time, this intermediate existential opens up the potential for an existentially robust choice. The article lays out compromising dynamics for the subjectivity of the individual, as well as providing an insight into a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the mass. Finally, the individual's position and possibilities in the mass are perceived.

Keywords: mass psychology, existential psychology, social avalanches, existential robustness

Shame and Boredom – Existential Group Therapy with Socially Isolated Residents in a Care Home

By Emily Hartz

Life's finitude is a central theme in existential psychology, and this theme is often addressed in terms of death and the question of how we relate to our own mortality. This article explores another – and strikingly overlooked – existential aspect of the finitude of life, namely old age. It presents a practical example of existential group therapy with elderly care home residents and discusses the therapeutic process in the light of Simone de Beauvoir's existential analysis of old age.

Keywords: old age, group therapy, existential therapy, shame, boredom, Beauvoir