
PREFACE

When Rollo May and I began this textbook, we had four goals in mind: to introduce existential psychology to a new generation; to bring life, passion, and the riches of the humanities back into the psychology curriculum; to render existential psychology accessible—particularly for the training clinician; and to address the integrative implications of existential psychology—in light of our diversifying profession.

We spent many hours planning, envisioning, and detailing this undertaking—and many hours reflecting upon our respective contributions. Suddenly, however—in the winter of 1992—Rollo became ill and had to withdraw from a portion of his involvement. He then—generously—requested that I oversee our project and carry it through to completion.*

The result, I believe, has been salutary—for all concerned. Through a vibrant “chorus of voices,” and a rich tapestry of subjects, Rollo’s vision has been affirmed on these pages and extended to a new generation.

We have attempted a delicate balance in this book—between organizing the human experience and acknowledging its inherent disorder; clarifying issues while conceding their ultimate obscurity. Yet the task we have set is imperative, we believe, on several counts: meeting the hunger for existential psychology among baffled students and researchers; meeting the challenges of the growing integrationist movements in psychology; and optimally dealing with the health care reality in our society, which is radically curtailing our options.

The timeliness of existential psychology cannot be overstated today; for today so many are perplexed. The blows to traditional worldviews (first religion, then science) in our century have been mind-boggling and have exceeded the human capacity to adapt. After World War II, it is no longer possible in many quarters to expect salvation, purity,

*Note: When a perspective is essentially my own in this text, I employ the pronoun “I.” When it is essentially shared between Rollo and me, I employ the pronoun “we.”

or truth from any of our traditional worldviews, and many of us are debilitated as a result. Our maladies divide into two basic camps: those which are characterized by *retreat* from these bewildering realities (as in depressive and obsessive syndromes), and those which are typified by *exploitation* of them (as in sociopathic and narcissistic profiles).

Existential psychology, on the other hand, may be in a unique position to address these disquieting syndromes—because it evolved during the crises that precipitated them. This is our sincere hope, anyway, and our thesis in this book.

Finally, despite being aimed at graduate students, this book can be accessed by many readers. Professionals interested in enhancing their skills, philosophy and humanities students, and psychologically minded lay readers may all find passages of relevance here—or food for future thought.

A note on our approach: Although this text synthesizes a number of existential standpoints in psychology, it is not a comprehensive or exhaustive formulation. It is *one* existential-integrative viewpoint, based on our own editorial conceptions.

For those readers interested in pursuing other lines of inquiry concerning existential psychology, we spiritedly direct you to the appropriate reference citations, noted throughout the text.

We highly encourage such cross-fertilizing inquiry, moreover, and are grateful if we can inspire it.

Finally, to ensure the confidentiality of the clients discussed in this volume, multiple alterations have been made with regard to their identities. Those readers who think they can identify particular clients are mistaken. Although honesty and accuracy are the cornerstones of scientific research, in this book the preservation of confidentiality takes precedence over the disclosure of unnecessary detail. In many cases, however, readers will recognize people who exhibit the personality dynamics discussed in this book. That will be because despite alterations in case details, these dynamics are common. And it is this very commonality that is a basis for our study.

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This text has been the co-creation of so many giving people—both living and dead—that it is impossible to list them all in this limited space. Their spirits, however, will be evident on these pages, and each reader will recognize some or most of them, I am sure.

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I can't say enough about the McGraw-Hill editors of this volume, Chris Rogers, Jane Vaicunas, David Dunham, Phil Zimbardo, and especially Laura Lynch—they deeply understood what was at stake.

I am particularly grateful, finally, to my wife Júratè for her cheerful and tireless editing, the bright and sensitive souls who wrote original contributions for the text, and above all, to Rollo and Georgia May, without whose great support and involvement this project would not have been possible.

Kirk J. Schneider