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## Emotionality: An Existential- -Analytical Understanding and Practice

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*Summary.* – This short introduction to existential analysis first gives a glimpse into the background of this phenomenological approach to psychotherapy. Emotionality plays a great role in its anthropology and practice, and is understood as a specific perception of the relevant in life. As such, it forms a cornerstone for existence and has its place in the midst of the three other existential dimensions described in Existential Analysis. The following phenomenological description of the origination of feelings shows four steps and leads to a stimulation of vital energy, which gives emotions their specific significance for life. This is the background for the existential analytical theory of emotion. What is important for practice is the distinction between feeling and sensing, the first being connected with one's life and detecting values, the second being connected with one's authenticity and with their morality. Another important distinction is made between affect and emotions which have different functions in existence. Finally, forms of emotional dysfunction, some research and basic elements of the therapeutic treatment of difficulties with emotions and affects are outlined.

### **THE SPECIFIC PERSPECTIVE OF EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS**

Existential analysis (EA) is a method of phenomenological psychotherapy with an existential-philosophical background (referring especially to Max Scheler and Martin Heidegger). The aim of existential analysis could be summarized as follows: to help people recognize and come to terms with their behavior and emotions – with life in general – with an “inner consent” (Längle & Görtz,

1993; Längle, 2008a). In simple words, EA tries to help people to live with an “inner consent” with what they do. In EA, the term “existence” plays a central role, and therefore its understanding is crucial. In this short and practical description of EA, existence is understood as the emotionally anchored realization of our being in the world. Emotionality plays in this understanding of existence a central role (Längle, 2003c), to which the term “inner consent” refers. Consent is meant as a sentiment, a decision on the basis of inner harmonizing, an assessment of the situation and of oneself which leads to an inner approval of one’s action and dealing with reality (von Kirchbach, 2003). Existence, therefore, denotes what can simply be called a “whole” life. From an existential perspective, the wholeness of life – “existence” – is characterized by making *decisions*. Freedom, meaning and responsibility are the turning points therein (Frankl, 1967; Frankl, 1973). EA stresses that what constitutes meaningful existence is furthermore shaped by continuous dialogues, relationships and mutual influences that an individual has with the world around him or her (Frankl, 1973, p. 160; p. 20).

EA and its subsidiary branch of logotherapy were founded in the 1920’s by the Viennese neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor E. Frankl (1938, 1973, 1994; Längle, 1998b). Logotherapy has been referred to as the “Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy”, following the psychotherapies of Freud and Adler (Soucek, 1948; Hofstätter, 1957).

Frankl’s aim was to develop a theory to combat what he called the growth of “psychologism” within the field, a form of reductionism which “presumes to analyze every act for its psychic origin, and on that basis to decree whether its content is valid or invalid” (Frankl, 1973, p. 15). Frankl’s interests focused on what he termed the “specifically human” dimension. For Frankl, the intellectual, philosophical and spiritual capabilities of human beings pointed not only to a fundamental need, but also to our intentional search for meanings and values. He considered the “will to meaning” our primary motivation, the active and deliberate search for meaning in our lives (Frankl, 1988). He often contrasted the “will to meaning” with Freud’s “will to pleasure”, and with what Frankl summarized as Adler’s “will to power” (1988, pp. VII).

Frankl had intended logotherapy to act as a supplement to the psychotherapies of the 1930’s rather than a comprehensive psychotherapy on its own. Logotherapy was thought of as a corrective for the trend towards “psychologism” and concentrated on the suffering from a loss of meaning (Frankl, 1967; 1973; 1988; 1994). According to Frankl, a person is not merely a physical being with psychological drives. A spiritual dimension (a third dimension of the human psyche in addition to the somatic and psychological dimensions) has to be added to address uniquely human qualities and capabilities that cannot be subsumed under physical or psychological processes, like freedom, responsibility and meaning. These uniquely human qualities bring us “into existence”. Through this dimension our life is open to what is possible, meaningful and of value (Frankl, 1973).

In the last 30 years, progress has been made in EA through the work done by the Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis in Vienna, particularly in the areas of motivation, emotionality and methodology (Längle, 1988; 1990; 1993; 1994; Längle & Görtz, 1993; Längle & Probst, 1997). Because of this development, EA can be considered an independent and major trend in psychotherapy today. EA has evolved from “Logotherapy as a supplement to other psychotherapies” into a full-fledged psychotherapeutic method (Längle & Görtz, 1993; Stumm & Wirth, 1994; Stumm & Pritz, 2000). Psychopathology is always connected with a loss of existentiality (freedom), caused by affects that are fixated, distorted, dissociated, etc. The process consists in helping people to live authentically and freely by finding one’s essence in midst of inner and outer reality. This is done by finding out to what one could give one’s inner consent. EA resonates with the Rogerian concept of congruence (Rogers, 1961; Rogers, 1966). However, EA puts a bit more emphasis on the active decisions and commitments an individual exhibits rather than on the accompanying mood or organismic feeling of growth. Over the years, phenomenological analysis with patients (Allport, 1955; May, 1979; Längle, 1991; 2000; 2003a) has shown that this inwardly given (spoken and/or felt) consent is a highly complex achievement wherein the individual brings together all the relevant layers of their existence into one simple felt “yes” (that what we term “affirmation”). Emotionality plays a central role in this concept both by reducing complexity (a great capacity of emotions which help enormously to survive) and by founding the relations in existence. This contribution of emotionality to existence describes its anthropological position and tightens at the same time emotionality to its existential task: the connection of the human being to life.

## **THE EXISTENTIAL RELEVANCE OF EMOTIONALITY**

In modern phenomenological EA, emotionality is pivotal as emotions, affects, moods and feelings, the main elements of emotionality in EA, are phenomena in our life which occupy us more than many people may think. The overestimated rationality in many work areas, which urges efficiency and is culturally present as the common Cartesian attitude towards life in the European and American civilization, has a tendency to devaluate emotionality and presses beyond the bounds of our attention. For many people value (if there is any) and emotions, if not seen merely as obstacles to clear and logical thinking, are only private, and even intimate. For them, it is hardly possible to speak about feelings, and even paying attention to them is sometimes experienced as embarrassing.

But emotionality as the capacity for having feelings and dealing with being touched inwardly plays a central role in our daily life (see also, e.g., Damasio, 2003; Damasio, 2007). One could even say that life turns around emotionality, especially feelings: a visit in the restaurant, theater, concert, cinema, seeing a friend, going for a walk, encountering and loving, sexuality and relaxation, celebrating, grieving, repenting, hoping, trusting, singing, hiking... - emotionality is always centrally involved. We always want to experience something in our life. When the feelings lack their rootedness in the other dimensions of existence (see below) they shift into sentimentality, a superficial playing with sentiments which are not truly, sincerely being touched by life, not excepting suffering. If people lack experiencing emotions, a bias towards addiction comes up, promising the "true life", which one has difficulties to turn away from.

Looking at this central role that emotions play and asking what makes emotional experiences so attractive leads immediately to their existential task: emotions detect the personally relevant values in one's experiences and stimulate one's life. And affects connect – serving as motives – the subjects with their vital needs and lead to protective movements (such as coping reactions) to help to overcome the situational difficulties represented by affects in experiences. As a consequence, for EA as a phenomenological approach to psychotherapy, emotions are seen as detectors of values and affects as protectors of life, as will be outlined in this paper. Emotionality is therefore the basis for the theory of values in EA. Values are defined as the reason for preferring one thing or action (or whatsoever) above the other. Having such a say in decision (and therefore in existence), values are considered as the "ground" (reason) for all decisions. They are fundamental not only for the realization of human freedom, but also for responsibility (seen as the result of a relation with a value), and for finding purpose and meaning in any situation, even in life (Frankl, 1973). Emotionality is a necessary element for founding existence. It connects existence with the vital and psychical life and anchors existence in life, or, vice versa, life in existence (Längle, 1993; 2003c).

In EA, the term "feelings" is commonly understood as a category encompassing both emotions and affects (for a closer distinction see below), as well as also mood, passion, whim, sensation, thrill, and first impression. Feelings are defined in EA as the perceptions of things (experiences, thoughts etc.) in their relevance and significance for one's own life connected with a dynamic impulse either greater proximity or greater distance. Seen existentially, feelings have a specific task: to detect the relevance of what human beings are confronted with, for their life (Längle, 2008). They are "*indices of importance, which in case of a relevant event cause imperatively a being to be touched, an ego-participation, a being involved*" (Wenninger, 2001, p. 108). In agreement with this description of feelings only one question arises: who or what dictates that an event has to be considered

“relevant” if this is not done by the feelings themselves? Ulrich (2000, p. 373) understands feelings similarly: they “*appear when we ask if and how an experienced event, an idea or a recollection touches a person*”. In EA’s anthropology, feelings hence have the same importance as the body has for being in the world, conscience for being oneself and purpose and meaning for having a future. Through feelings, the human being is connected with their life. Damasio (2007) sees all emotions and feelings as connected with the overcoming of the organism, whereas we see them also connected with psychologically experienced life. It is feeling which brings life into existence. It is life that evokes feelings and wakes up within feelings.

Feelings have existential weight. The weight lies in their impact on the attitude towards life. To explain: having good feelings means that under such circumstances it is easier to accept being alive. With good feelings it is easier to live, one is more inclined to realize an inward “yes” to life (having an inner consent to life). Good feelings nurture and facilitate one’s existential decision for life, whereas bad or hurting feelings make the decision for life more difficult.

Although this task that feelings have is significant, it describes only one parameter of fulfilling existence. To highlight the position feelings have in existence, a short glimpse of the structure of existence along the lines of EA is necessary. As already hinted, the complexity of human existence is approached in EA by a four dimensional concept, gained by phenomenological studies (Längle, 1999; 2008). Looking at what human beings have to essentially deal with to realize a fulfilling existence, four unavoidable dimensions of reality show up.

The first is the dealing with one’s being in this world. This claims for a sense for reality, recognition of facts and their laws, acceptance of what is given, with the purpose either to change or to maintain it, with the aim to ascertain one’s overcoming.

The second dimension of reality is the fact of being alive. Life means growth, maturation, declining and death. Temporality and transitoriness play a role. This is the dimension of feelings, of emotions and drives, of relations and values. It calls for turning towards valuable things/experiences with the aim to make one’s existence rewarding and enjoyable.

The third dimension of human existence is the inevitable fact that one has to be oneself. There is an undissolvable bond to oneself, combined with the great questions if one is authentically oneself, or if one leads an alienated or an overly adapted life. The role of others in the process to find and to become oneself is crucial. An encounter and a dialogue with oneself and with the world are the prerequisites; intuitive feelings and morality are the basics of founding one’s true self. Looking at others and being seen by them leads to the development of the self-esteem.

Finally, the fourth dimension of existence consists in the fact that everything is in constant change and development. Human life takes place in greater contexts, to which everyone is contributing and depending on at the same time. The existential

challenge is how one can contribute in such a way that a development towards value in the future is possible. This is the dimension of existential meaning.

These four dimensions build the “cornerstones of existence”, formed by facts, life, being oneself and staying in a developmental context. Thus the function of emotionality in the context of existence is fundamental but not sufficient. One cannot realize a fulfilling existence without referring to feelings and weaving them into one’s life, even if one’s existence is as successful and efficient as can be. No life is fulfilling without incorporated feelings. But, on the other hand, having a good relationship and openness to feelings is not sufficient for a fully rewarding life.

Amongst these four dimensions of existence, feelings stand out in the two middle and interiorizing cornerstones. These two dimensions comprising feelings are surrounded by the mundane first and fourth ones, which are concentrated around action (the first dealing with capacities and abilities to act, the fourth with meaningful action).

## THEORY OF EMOTIONALITY

Emotionality arises through the contact of the subject’s vital energy with an object – which can be anything: a physical, cognitive, fantasized, inner or outer object or a situation. As pointed out in the last section, emotionality consists in the specific perception of the importance or relevance of the perceived object for one’s life (physical life, psychological life – vital power – or what one holds for life). This is the nucleus of the existential theory of emotionality (Längle, 1998a; 2003b; 2003d). The following table briefly summarizes the origin of emotionality and shows how feelings arise. The whole process begins with touching closeness (Figure 3.1):

<b>closeness</b>	→	<b>touch</b>	→	<b>being moved</b>	→	<b>energy</b>	→	<b>feeling</b>
(sth. comes near; contact. Intensified by relationship + time = turning towards)		(effect on the subject: being touched by a direct contact)		(experiencing motion from inside)		(life becomes sensible – „it doesn’t leave me cold“)		<b>(be it emotion or affect)</b>
		<b>feeling = vital energy</b>	+	<b>impulse</b>	→	<b>fundamental form of relation</b>		
		experienced power in emotions and psychodynamics		direction of energy in emotions and affects		experience of spontaneous being related by attraction or impulse of rejection		

Figure 3.1 Existential analytical theory of emotionality. The figure shows briefly the steps which lead to the generation of emotionality and the substance contained in feelings.

A phenomenological understanding of feelings sees them as felt, mobilized vitality. The power of life is brought into experience in feelings. Vitality, or the power of life (which keeps the human alive), is what we experience practically as what is refreshed after a good sleep, what declines when we are sick or depressive, what is excited in fear, what cannot be controlled in addiction, what extinguishes when we die. When this power is touched it is always directed: either it pushes or pulls the subject closer, or it draws the subject away. This movement is experienced as attraction or rejection (see also Damasio, 2007). Thus, feelings influence relation by their inherent impulse of direction, which either tends to strengthen the relation or to establish a greater distance. We can stress this point by saying: Where there is a feeling – there is relation. Feelings create a feed-back loop: they start within a relation (closeness and contact) and lead back to the relation on a new level. The relation is changed, either empowered or weakened by the forthcoming feeling which is generated by the (new) contact.

This concept also postulates that feelings never arise out of themselves (alone) or arbitrarily but are stipulated by an object (real, imagined or thought). Feelings therefore always relate to something.

Feelings are energetic experiences. Therefore they are able to move the subject, which is a prerequisite for motivation. There is no motivation without feelings. Seen from an existential perspective, feeling is important to mark what is important for one's life, and to give them more presence. Thoughts which are not "loaded" by feelings are easily forgotten, overlooked or not realized. When an experience or intention is combined with a feeling like anxiety, love, interest, etc., the probability of being taken into account is much higher, sometimes even forcing. A regret which is expressed only cognitively is taken as only verbal but not existential, not real, because the person seems not to be ready for the necessary consequences.

Feelings may arise spontaneously and instantly by any (voluntary or involuntary) contact with objects (or thoughts, fantasies etc.). But they can also be deliberately modified by turning towards the object. This intensifies feelings while any turning away of attention, physical and mental closeness reduces its impact, as will be described below in the therapy section.

Ciampi (2002) explained how feelings accompany and lead all thinking and behaving. His investigations show how acting is embedded within feelings and how important it is that one's acting is rooted in feelings. Only then it becomes "our" acting, it becomes "round" because we then live in it and experience it as relevant for life.

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONS

After describing the origin of emotionality in general, we now focus on the specificity added to the origination of emotions. One can describe how a concrete emotion originates in four stages. This process starts with a relationship:

- a) Emotions arise only within relations. They allow closeness, turning towards the object. Emotions can be seen as concretizations of relations (whereas in affects the relation can be so reduced and shortened, that it is better to speak of mere contact, e.g. when a foreign person appears and shouts and produces an aggression against an unknown personality).
  
- b) This relation is characterized by its openness. One lets the object act upon oneself, and unfolds its impact. One allows the object “to do with oneself whatever it does”, and is open to what penetrates into one’s subjectivity (what can be considered as the archetypal feminine act – a possible insight as to why females seem to have a more direct access to feelings (Habel, 2010)). The difference in the evoking of affects is that affects are determined by a penetration of a stimulus, whereas emotions are “invited”. One opens oneself to them, opens oneself inwardly and is interested in what is found moving within oneself. Emotions therefore happen in the realm of person, of decision and freedom, and are not fully determined. Perception occurs within this openness. “Emotions are perceptions” says Damasio (2003, p. 110); in his view, the perceived object is mainly the altered state of the body and sometimes the accompanying mental state (Damasio, 2003). EA is quite close to this theory, but sees it a bit less materialistically and a bit more psychological-philosophically:
  
- c) The “screen” upon which this “im-pression” projects is one’s own vitality and relation to body and life. The object mobilizes the vital, psychic forces which can be seen as an appearance of the body and are, therefore, to a high degree physiologically substantiated: “*The body is the theater of all emotions*” (Damasio, 2007, p. 69). In the words of action psychology, this means that a process is initiated in those involved ask themselves: “How does my life taste or feel like in relation with this object that I am in contact with?” Such an object may be, e.g., an encounter with another person, which impacts one’s own life and starts moving it, “stirring” the vitality and loosening its dynamics. The same happens with simpler experiences, like listening to music or eating a piece of chocolate: how does this experience impact my physical life? How is life connected with such an object?



By its connection with life the perceived content appears in its relevance for life, is appraised by vitality and by what we encounter and see as life.

- d) As a result of this process, an inner movement emerges, a “being touched” by something. We spontaneously describe such experiences in that way, when they are strong enough to become conscious: “This moves me, this touches me”. The phenomenology of this “being touched” makes evident that there is an experiencing of an impulse through direct contact with an object. This impulse has a vibration, and it is not simply absorbed and neutralized or leads to a counteraction, as we know from mechanical physics. This impulse hits a living organism with a psychic capacity, and as such it produces more than a simple counteraction. It triggers an inherent dynamic, “electrifies” a human being with vital power and an energetic body. Such contact “turns on” one’s life, brings it into experience, focuses it onto the object in question.

From that moment on, the object appears in a new light, in the light of human vitality. As a consequence, it stops being a neutral object and converts into something significant to life, since it was able to reach and move it. The bestowed significance conveys the object into a (positive or negative) substance of value (a complete value comprises also a decisional part: the experienced contribution of the object to the affirmation to life; this forms a part of the theory of values).

## **FEELING AND SENSING**

There is no generally accepted terminology of feelings. In EA we agreed to use the terms as closely as possible to their etymological meaning. Therefore, feeling is seen as a very general term describing every inward movement – whatever is felt in contrast to thought, remembered, fantasized or sensually perceived (heard, seen etc.). We already described feelings in section 2. In addition to these feelings there is another human capacity which has to be classified: sensing (Längle, 2003b). Sensing doesn’t belong to the emotionality or feelings described above. But where do senses belong? They are neither cognitions nor memories. They have the qualities of emotions, but have another aim. In EA we resolved the taxonomic problem by adding them to the feelings “sensu lato”, i.e. to feelings in general, in the broadest sense, whereas what we described so far belongs to the categories of “specific feelings”, or, feelings “sensu stricto”. Their characteristics are a “near” sensation to direct contact. Classical feelings are connected with a close body experience and describe how something “feels on one’s own skin”, i.e., how it feels to me and how it affects my own relation to life.

In contrast to classical feelings, sensing is “further off”, it refers to sensing something over a distance of time or space. It is what we “sense in our fingers”, what we “smell” in a way, and means what something “tells” us. Instead of looking upon how one feels in the presence of that object, one senses something as such. Feeling brings up a sensation about the benefit for one’s physical or psychological life (affect) or for one’s essence (emotion). Sensing, instead, brings up a kind of intuition. The content of a subjective feeling is: “Does it feel good to me?” The content of the more objective perception in sensing is: “Is it good?” Feelings detect physical and psychological conditions of situations (conditional feelings). Sensing detects intrinsic values and outcomes of things for themselves, and may also detect what these values can, in addition, convey essentially to the subject. They contain a phenomenology of the situation and they can be called “phenomenological feelings”, or, as Max Scheler (1980) calls them, “intentional feelings”.

This distinction is important because these two forms of feelings focus on different contents of existence. Feeling in the stricter sense aims to connect with life – drives (hunger, sexuality etc. as affects stimulated by the body), affects stimulated from outside, emotions (both will be described below) and the perception of values (what is experienced as “good”) – and their contrary belong in this category.

Sensing is a complex phenomenological perception of the essential in a situation. It connects one’s own essence with the situation and/or grasps the essential of the situation. It is, e.g., this good or bad “feeling” we have about the outcome of an enterprise we start, or when we hear a compliment (“does this person bear an intention to seduce in his mind?”), or when we instantly perceive a tense atmosphere when joining a group, etc. These feelings have their own logic; they are not strictly rational.

The sensing targets all the corresponding to one’s own essence (in the system of EA’s structural concept: what belongs to the third structure of existence, the “being oneself”). For finding one’s own identity, sensing is indispensable. It is the tool to detect authenticity, esthetics, personal love and morality. It is by sensing that we grasp what is adequate or wrong.

Their distinction is important for praxis. It first needs a clear understanding of this difference for having a better orientation about what the different feelings mean and to what they are related.. Then they need different procedures for dealing with them, which led to devising different steps in the method of Personal Existential Analysis (PEA – Längle, 2000).

## AFFECT AND EMOTION

Another important and quite parallel distinction is made within the group of the classical feelings, or feelings in the stricter sense. We have already differentiated between affect and emotion.

Affect (from the Latin *ad-ficere* = doing something to something) is understood in correspondence to its Latin meaning as a psychical reaction to a stimulus, mobilizing psycho-physical vital energy. Affect is a perception of an object. The content perceived consists in the perception of its significance for the maintenance of vital life. This makes it a “stimulus” and triggers a quick, vital and energetic reaction. Its substance is psychic energy. The affect is related to the vital overcoming, its strengthening, nurturing, promoting or protecting. Affects belong to the “psychic dimension” in Frankl’s anthropology (Frankl, 1973). Affects are, e.g., aggressive feelings like hate, rage, anger, or sexual arousals by erotic stimuli, envy, disgust, or the appetite for a cake when passing by a bakery, etc. A word, a look, a gesture, bumping the shin – when a stimulus leads to mobilization of feelings out of immediate contact, then we call this state “being affected”.

Caused by a stimulus, affect is limited by the duration of exposition and accompanied by a phase of subsiding. It is characteristic for this immediate reaction to perception that it is related to the impact of a force. This effect mobilizes the level of energy (the vital foundation of the affect) and has an impact on the fundamental relation to life (which, vice versa, also has an influence on the affect itself).

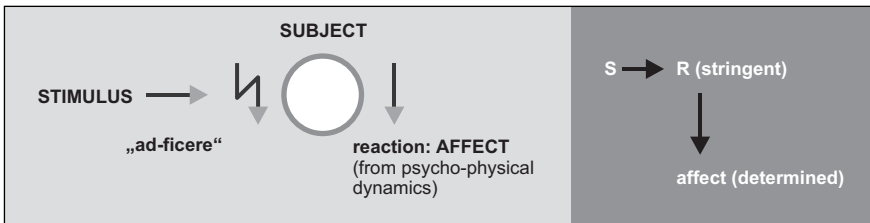


Figure 3.2 Affect. The stimulus reaches the subjective psycho-physical vital energy and triggers it by the conscious or unconscious perception of its significance for the maintenance of vital life.

Emotion (from Latin *e-movere* = moving from inside out) is understood as a feeling related to personal values. An emotion in the proper sense is the subjectively felt quality of an experienced content, characterized by being conducive or detrimental to the attitude towards life or life’s mood (what describes the origin of its appraising function) and is also characterized by a perceptible inner movement of vital energy which leads to an impulse coming along with the emotion (what describes their dynamic and motivational charge). Emotions describe “how impor-

tant or unimportant a thing is and how much value we should attribute it” (Arnold, 2002, p. 115). In agreement with this description the only question is: who or what assesses the quantity of value and who or what generates that value and attributes it if it is not the experience itself? Is emotion a cognitive procedure with a kind of affect? In EA we deny this and see the perception of the inward movement of what one experiences of the ego, of the “self”, so that we see the origin of authenticity and what we identify with as the appraisal of the degree of value. Whatever brings this “self” to strengthen their attitude towards life (normally it is an affirmation) is considered to be a positive emotion. Similarly, Damasio (2007) describes emotions as being inseparably linked to good and bad. For him, the good is defined as what helps to overcome life and the bad as what leads to death.

The content of experience can be perceived, imagined (fantasy), a thought or a remembered experience (which, however, does not spring from a mere stimulus; a stimulus is not characterized by conveying a content or value but, instead, by its correspondence to psycho-physical energies in the subject, the stimulation of which produces the affect). In the emotion, the content mobilizes the experience of fundamental value (the subjectively perceived value of life itself). Positive emotions strengthen it and enhance it. Positive emotions therefore fortify the fundamental relation to life, and make the affirmation to life more tangible.

Emotions differ from affects mainly by their passage through the essence of the person, by their transition through personal freedom. As free inner movements, emotions are not caused (they do not follow the determination of the stimulus). Instead they have a reason. Reasons do not force, they set free. In the case of emotions they freely allow people to inwardly find their way to what corresponds to one’s essence. These reasons are called personal values, i.e., something which is subjectively experienced as worthy or unworthy for one’s life, which is found by the type of inner movement and prompts one to find life’s answer to it, stemming from one’s deep relationship to life. Not being reactions, emotions are comparable with inner language.

Examples of emotions are joy, grief, love, happiness, or, an autumn forest that touches by containing the message of “life’s transience” – there, life “speaks” to the self, prompted by the perceived content. Its language is a free, undetermined, personally produced feeling, coming out from the inside as the beginning of an answer to perception.

To sum it up by comparing both feelings one beside the other: affects are perceptions on the level of stimulation of psycho-physical energy, whereas emotions are perceptions on the level of personal essence, constituted by one’s freedom that comes into resonance, and underlined by psycho-physical energy. Both perceive what is relevant for life, but in different aspects: affects perceive what is relevant (or detrimental) for psycho-physical overcoming, emotions perceive what is relevant (or detrimental) for the affirmation to life and for inner fulfillment in life.

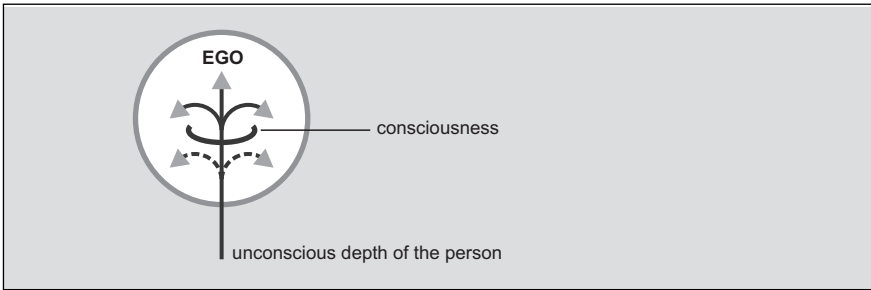


Figure 3.3 Emotion. Emotions arise from the depth of the personally felt relationship to life as free, personal “nucleus of an answer” to a perceived content.

Again this differentiation is important for existential analysis, because in affects, the human being does not stand on the proper level of existence, but remains on the level of its prerequisites, like reactions to the environment, basic needs, protective or defensive reactions. Affects are, of course, tied to life; however, only at the level of instant overcoming or pleasure. Affects are impersonal.

Emotions are expressions of the person, of one’s essence. They correspond to the reasons or values, causing a person to consent to their life. For example, love as an emotion is a personal love, seeing the other in their own value and experiencing him or her as valuable for one’s own life, in the sense that this relationship helps oneself to agree with one’s being there (it improves the “fundamental relation” to life). And through the value of this relationship life itself appears more to be of value (improves the “fundamental value” – the perceived value of life itself). Love as an affect would not be free, but stimulus-dependent (and therefore more or less exchangeable), stimulated, e.g., by erotic attraction, transference of unresolved parent’s attachments, economical needs, etc.

## EMOTIONAL DYSFUNCTION

The free access and flow of emotions is considered to be crucial for psychological health (e.g. Orlinsky, Ronnestad, & Willutzki, 2003; Freud, 1974; Rogers, 1984; Längle & Görtz, 1993); the functioning of defense (or coping) reactions to buffer deficits, insecurities, losses, traumas, aggressions, etc., is also considered to be crucial. In pathological states, a persistent feeling of loss of life or of a lack of necessary values is present. Then, the level of generating emotions is lost and, instead, affects start dominating behavior (Längle, 1998a; Kolbe, 2010). These affects are coping reactions, not free, but automatic, involuntary and undecided behavior, which has only the goal of overcoming the actual situation and to provide relief, independently of any attempt to arrive at a causal solution of the problem.

The affects of the coping reactions are true realizations of preserving life may it be physical life, psychologically felt life (e.g., being calm, pleasure, excitement etc.) or what is mentally and spiritually understood as one's life (e.g., self-esteem, love, one's interest, conviction etc.). This coincides with what we consider as the theme of all feelings: to relate one's existence to life.

Coping reactions of disturbed emotions develop on different levels. The basic movement is retreat (regression). This means inwardly or outwardly withdrawing into one's 'shell' as a place of safety –there, at least, one can relate to oneself. It may also consist in the development of indifference, or in removing oneself from relationships. It may also be crawling under a blanket in order to strengthen oneself and to experience warmth; or, hiding behind other "important" activities. Postponing in order to win time, or doing something else in the hope that things will get better.

A more powerful level of coping reactions consists in over-activity (activism) like achievement, e.g., 'completing' checklists for not having to feel the worthlessness of the work, or the inability to say no, so as to avoid being less liked. Over-protectiveness is also a special, relationally oriented achievement, as is regrouping to strengthen oneself (assembling a group around oneself). A common form is distraction, e.g., through helping, self-sacrificing, etc., instead of turning attention towards one's feelings. A goal-oriented construction of the context of significance is devaluing to avoid negative feelings of insecurity, expectations of others, e.g., by saying: "I haven't done anything special...".

Psychoenergetically, activism is seen as more costly than the basic movement. It demands an active investment of strength.

If these reactions are not sufficient, more power is invested, and one becomes aggressive. There is a specific type of aggression when feelings and values are in question: rage. Rage is not destructive, but searches for relation and for ways of "shaking off the load", so that one can live as one likes. In overt terms, rage seems to say: "I want to live – if I allow this to happen, then I cannot live (well)!" Such rage makes one feel as if one's life was surging; it makes one 'hot', it makes one 'cook inside oneself', one sees 'red'.

If the reaction does not develop into rage, the development of apathy is probable. This is the fourth and last level of coping reactions: the freezing reflex. Apathy already denotes a partial overcoming of the situation. It is the final reaction where one is able to not be totally overwhelmed by the problem, although a partial defeat has already occurred. Typical reactions are passivity and the paralysis of feelings, loss of strength with constant tiredness and inner cold, apathy, lack of feelings ('death of feelings', they feel as if they were dead), exhaustion with the allowing of events to continue occurring, e.g., in an relationship. If this state persists or the situation does not improve, depression arises.

Clinical dysfunction of emotionality is mainly concentrated around depression. In EA, depression is understood as a lack of experiencing values (Längle, 1987; 2004). The main reason for this default is the blockade of feelings, especially of emotions (other deprivations come from cognitive sources, such as a deprived environment, etc.). When the feeling of emotions is blocked, values cannot reach the person and nurture the psyche and human spirit. Three main reasons for the development of depression on the emotional level are discerned (Längle, 2004). The first one lies in the lack of bereavement of value-losses, so that the emotions are no longer free to move and are replaced by protective affects like regression, hyperactivity, etc. The second reason is caused by traumas, which hurt so much that it is impossible for the subject to be open to their emotions and again replaces them with affective substitutes, cognitive hyperactivity, or (repressed) aggression. The third one is the vital lack of energy (as it is often the case with major depression or with classical endogenous depression) so that the perceived value cannot be felt and experienced in its fortifying power. These causes lead to the turning away from valuable contents, which finally evokes the depressive feeling of life not being worthwhile.

## RESEARCH

Research at the Institute of Psychology of the University of Berne (von Aesch Shaked, 2007) showed that, amongst other findings, in a clinical population (N = 231 inpatient persons) test results (amongst them the Existence Scale – Längle, Orgler, & Kundi, 2000) pointed to the fact that emotional stress has a negative correlation with the capability for existential life. Psychological health seems to be more correlated to existentiality than to emotionality (which corresponds to the theory that emotionality forms only one part of the fourfold structure of existence).

People with high emotionality and good regulation of emotionality (Gross & Thompson, 2007) show a decrease of psychological stress after their stay in the hospital. This shows that good access to emotionality improves the therapeutic benefit in psychological stress reduction. Nevertheless, it became evident that existentiality and its change in therapy is a significantly better predictor for the improvement of psychic stress at the end of therapy than the regulation of emotionality.

The significant correlation between emotional exhaustion/burnout and lack of meaning/existentiality was shown by Nindl (2001) with 105 teachers. Emotional burnout seems to weaken the whole structure of existence.

In another study, Scheßl (2010) showed in qualitative interviews with 24 burn-

out inpatients that besides their educational-pedagogical background with disturbing or hurting experiences at school they all had a significant lack not only in the emotionality, but also in their entire existentiality. This finding also goes along with the theory that emotionality forms a part of a fulfilling life.

Tutsch, Drexler, Wurst, Luss, & Orgler (2000; 2001) asked 200 people about what they are primarily occupied with in their lives. The result showed that most people are involved in finding themselves, and, to a second degree, in emotionality and relations. Only 100 patients were primarily occupied with relations and emotions.

Görtz (2001) developed a test for measuring the quality of life. She found similar results: The quality of life does not consist only in good emotionality, but is structured according to the four existential dimensions of life.

Important research on the correlation of affects and emotions have been made by several researchers (Hariri *et al.*, 2003; Seitz *et al.*, 2006; Schore, 2007; Rolls & Grabenhorst, 2008; for an overview see Franz, 2009). They found that the basic routines of affective adaptations are subject to functionally supraordinate systems of the prefrontal cortex. This control consists in integrating situative and normative aspects into the affect system and thus inhibits the acting out of the raw affect. These “high-level-competences” of the regulation of affects are not very much determined phylogenetically. This means that an ontogenetic impact on the elaborated emotions is present, which can be understood as the development and influence of the resources of personhood (with the central capacity of freedom and of making decisions), as shown by the phenomenological description.

A group of researchers described the empirical research in the development of emotionality (Jonsson *et al.*, 2001; Hariri, Mattay, Tessitore, Fera, & Weinberger, 2003; Schore, 2007; Adolphs, 2002; Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2004) which covers four steps. They correspond quite well to the four dimensions of existence (for an overview see Franz, 2009):

1. Affect attunement – intuitive perception of the feelings of the child by the mother – she instantly knows how her child feels when she sees or hears it.
2. Affect sharing – empathically sensing the emotions of the child, as if they were her own.
3. Affect marking – taking a position, “detoxicating” themselves of the child’s feelings (not allowing everything, calming down, replying, so that a ‘resonance catastrophe’ doesn’t arise), the emotion appears in a relieved form in her face and she gives comments.
4. Symbolizing and expression of the feeling, correlating with the somatic context.



What we plan to investigate next is the inhibition of emotionality by specific types of families, such as depressive or histrionic ones. The theoretical assumption is that in a psychopathologically dominated environment, primary emotions (a first and immediate set of feelings, a mixture of affects and emotions) dominate and the development of integrated emotions (elaborated, personalized emotions which are in connection to the given situation) is inhibited (both types of emotions are terms of the method of Personal Existential Analysis – Längle, 1994; 2000). Another theme is the investigation of the anxiety of feelings, and how it is combined with the anxiety of closeness.

## **THERAPEUTIC ASPECTS OF WORKING WITH EMOTIONALITY**

Therapeutic work with emotionality mainly deals with three themes: the first one is the theme of mindfulness (or phenomenological openness) towards one's own emotionality arising by paying attention to what one likes to do, the second one is the central activity of enhancing emotionality by turning attention towards it, the third one is the work of awakening emotions in life situations of loss when grief is necessary.

The first practical intervention focuses on the ability to be attentive to one's own liking of what one does. Clients are asked to pay attention to what degree liking plays in their life, as well as to the manner of how they can discover if they truly like something and not only cognitively think that they "certainly" like it because it is effective, rational, accepted, etc., instead. – The experience of "liking" opens access to one's own life; it contains the anticipation of pleasure and/or value and hence it unfolds attraction and invites emotional closeness. Clients are taught that the reference point of liking making it discernable is the subjective well-being – the feeling that all goes well when one does what one likes.

The second and central intervention working with emotionality is focusing one's activity on mobilizing emotions and on tuning affects and moods. The pivotal activity is, as pointed out before, turning to the content of experience. As pointed out in the section on the development of emotions, turning towards an object is an amplifier of the emotional and affective process. It occurs by focusing attention, which brings life into resonance and movement. The phenomenological analysis of "turning to" describes it as the readiness to accept effects. Turning to consists in actively taking up three basic conditions, which are the prerequisites for a developed emotionality: relation, time, and closeness. In more detail:

An open turning to means letting others be one and enter into the relation. This means taking up what is already there as the basic relation. As soon as one is aware of something, there is a relation. It is impossible for one to not have any relations at all. But this automatic relation is not yet a decided relation. To give feelings

ground, it is important to give them a place in one's own life. This happens by adopting the relation in the "turning to" phase. Relation is like a bridge to the other over which life can flow.

Turning towards something means taking time. Taking time is providing the object with something very valuable: with one's own life-time. Time gives the turning to special significance, because it is loaded with one's own life (time is always life-time). The "turning to" becomes a lingering in the presence of the other. Basically, there is the notion: Life "happens" over time. As a consequence one can say: Life happens when we take time. For what we take time, for that we live. When rushing or under time pressure, turning to does not occur. This close connection of life with time stems from the nature of life. Life is change, growth, maturation, and adaptation. Changes can only happen in time. Time and movement are one; time is the space which makes movement possible. Taking time generates an inner space so that movement can emerge in oneself. Consequently, one can say: Time is the space for emotions. To feel deeply, we need time. We need time to nourish relationships and to live them. Rushing makes this hard.

Turning to establishes closeness. One gives closeness and admits closeness. One enters the contact zone, gives the other access to one's interiority, looks for access to the other, and dissolves the delimitation between inside and outside. Emotion is closeness measured by one's own life.

These three prerequisites – relation, time, closeness – form the background of this fundamental work in existential analytical psychotherapy on the mobilization and modification of emotions. More than these structural elements, there is a dynamical procedure at hand, the Personal Existential Analysis (PEA). This is a phenomenological method to first mobilize impressions and then process them by integrating the phenomenological content into one's life context. This is done by finding one's personal understanding and position. It ends with finding an appropriate expression and activity based on one's personal will.

Specific applications of these basic reflections are developed in EA (Fischer-Danzinger, 2010; Jaeger-Gerlach, 2010; Kolbe, 2000; Längle, 2003b; 2003d; 2003e; 2010; Tutsch, 2010). There are different trainings and methods to either come to a greater distance or closeness. Some are procedures that evoke more openness or work with taking a position.

The third intervention to mobilize emotions is working with grief. The grieving process in a phenomenological attitude (Längle, 2008) starts with setting the perception to what one has lost free. One gives the problem, the loss, the pain, etc., a close look. This openness is accompanied by doing nothing else, just looking at it and giving the thing perceived a way to take effect upon oneself. Grief cannot be produced. The activity is perception, looking at reality. Grief has the same structure as other specific human emotions, like love: it comes by itself. In

other words: grief either occurs, or it doesn't exist. The grieving process can take place only when one is open to be essentially (i.e., inwardly) touched by the loss. When one feels with one's life the severity of the loss, they feel the significance of the loss for their life. When this happens, life is stimulated and its central quality arises: inner movement. Being inwardly moved by the loss, touched in one's own vitality, this changes the (passive) pain and burden into (active) grief. This process repeats what was described at the beginning of this chapter: emotions arise when psycho-physical vitality is reached. A visible sign of the beginning of an inner movement are tears. Crying is the sign that life is still there, although it feels like it's dead. Life is moving inside, tells the grieving person: "I am still here, I am with you". This is the wonder of life which appears again in one's feelings despite of loss and adversaries. On the basis of this phenomenological event and this attitude of openness, the phases of grief may start: emotional acceptance of the new reality in crying, inner dialogue with sympathy for oneself, talking and starting to care for oneself, new orientation with affirmation towards life as it is now ("are you ready and do you feel capable to step into your life again?"), taking up a new and interiorized relation to the lost person/object, and starting with new relations. After all of the grieving, one can say: "I lost – but I gained a new life."

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter shows the inevitable importance of emotions and feelings for building up existence and coming to fulfillment in life. It also makes evident the limits of emotionality. There is no life without emotionality. Life brings up emotionality and feelings, and life "flows" through feelings, which makes our being dynamic. But existence means more than just living one's feelings. The human being is bestowed with more than that; they are able to handle one's "being there", which can also be used for compensation when the emotionality is feared, blocked, or lost. These other dimensions of existence are described with the capacity of cognitive recognition, esthetical and moral sensing, acting and thus contributing to a change to the better of what is: living in becoming.

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