Supplementary Elements of a Comprehensive Existential Psychology:
A Response to Paul T.P. Wong’s editorial, *Existential Psychology for the 21st Century*

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In a convincing and very comprehensive approach Paul T. P. Wong (2004) has set out to redefine existential psychology and to create its body of knowledge. He rightly reminds us of the need to reflect on “real people in concrete situations” (p. 1) as opposed to remaining on the conceptual level. Furthermore, by presenting some “fundamental questions relevant to the survival of humanity and the well-being of every individual” (p. 1) Paul lays the foundation for a valuable and meaningful discussion and development of a comprehensive existential psychology.

The following three theses (see Mengel, 2002) may thus serve as complementary ideas and suggestions:

1) A human being first of all aspires to organize his or her life to be meaningful and values-oriented. In choosing from the various categories of values within the different areas of living, one uses patterns typical for one’s type of personality. The plan of one’s individual life and its realization, however, expresses one’s personal and individual handwriting.

2) A person organizes his or her life within natural and cultural relations and towards individual and social orientation. Thereby he or she uses the following categories of values and meaning: experience, creation, and attitude. The different levels of organization are: mind, soul, and body. One’s instruments for orientation and control are intuition and feeling as well as reason and conscience.

3) Everybody feels one’s life to be full of meaning and intact, in as much as one orientates oneself towards the richness of what one shall, will and can do, and as far as one indeed translates that into action. Wherever one stays behind, one feels one’s life to be broken and limited according to the tragic triad of grief, guilt and death. In freely and responsibly organizing one’s life and by consciously dealing with one’s failures and limits one becomes the entrepreneur of one’s personal and social future.

In summary, I would like to add that in order to be fully comprehensive and supportive of “real people in concrete situations” (p. 1), the *International Journal on Existential Psychology & Psychotherapy* needs to supplement its research on and discussion of the fundamentals of human existence. Besides answering the question of what (fundamental concepts) I suggest to elaborate on the essentials of why and what for (common and individual orientation and motivation) and to provide practical guidelines along the how (personal coaching and therapy) of human and individual existence.

References


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