

A Dollop of *Existentialism*

Exit

Exist

Existed

Existent

Existence¹

Existential

Existentialism

Existentialistic

Existentialistically

No Exit – Nausea – Sartre – Nietzsche – The Courage to Be

By

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¹ Existence – *Daseins* – *Existenz*

Life is refuted.

The sting of fear.

An authentic life.

The obedient self.

Have ye courage?

Is that all there is?

To be or not to be...

*Weltanschauung*²

The God above God.

The anxiety of death.

Ontological root of anxiety.

Time is the heart of existence.

Sein und Zeit - Being and Time

An endeavour to grasp reality.

The essence of man is his existence.

Der Mut zum Sein – The Courage to Be

What is to be dreaded and what dared?

What is good? Ye ask. To be brave is good.

Above all the concept of “ontological self-affirmation.”

There are no valid arguments for the “existence” of God.

The obedient self, on the contrary, is the self which commands itself and “risketh itself thereby.”

² In which a picture of reality is combined with a sense of its meaning and value and with principles of action (Wilhelm Dilthey, p. 2-204.



A stolid armoured knight on a proud horse, accompanied by his faithful dog, rides through a wild narrow gorge flanked by a goat-headed devil and the figure of death riding a pale horse. Death's rotting corpse holds an hourglass, a reminder of the shortness of life. The rider moves through the scene looking away from the creatures lurking around him, and appears almost contemptuous of the threats, and is thus often seen as symbol of courage; the knight's armour, the horse which towers in size over the beasts, and the oak leaves are symbolic of the resilience of faith, while the knight's plight may represent Christians' earthly journey towards the Kingdom of Heaven symbolized by the city on the hill. [Pix zoomed in to make sure you can see the details.]

This note on Dürer from Janson's art book (actually Jeanne's): "...is one of the artist's finest prints...the knight on his beautiful mount, poised and confident as an equestrian statue, embodies an ideal both aesthetic and moral. He is the Christian Soldier steadfast on the road of faith toward the Heavenly Jerusalem, undeterred by the hideous horseman threatening to cut him off, or the grotesque devil behind him. The dog, another symbol of virtue, loyally follows his master despite the lizards and skulls in his path" (p. 391).

Knight, Death and the Devil is dated and signed by the artist; the bottom left of the tablet is scribed "S. (=Salus/in the year of grace) 1513. [Knight, Death and the Devil - Wikipedia](#)



Knight, Death and the Devil ([German](#): *Ritter, Tod und Teufel*) is a large 1513 [engraving](#) by the German artist [Albrecht Dürer](#), one of the three *Meisterstiche* (master prints) completed during a period when he almost ceased to work in paint or woodcuts to focus on engravings. The image is infused with complex iconography and symbolism, the precise meaning of which has been argued over for centuries.

It was widely copied and had a large influence on later German writers. Philosopher [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) referenced the work in his work on dramatic theory [The Birth of Tragedy](#) (1872) to exemplify pessimism, while it was later idealised in the 20th century by the [Nazis](#).

Yes, I know. A lot of over kill with this painting (there is more) but it serves us in our track of seeking "that which will cause us to see the reality of life in an existential manner" – so sayeth Gheart...I know of three women (actually four) and three men that will do more than just read through every line of this paper, but will relish the idea of what the paintings and the history will provide toward some remarkable artistic closure. Besides, I got the idea from Tillich – he likes paintings.

[Add a big ole smiley face here.](#)

Entry, Eintrag, Entrée

Welcome to my ecclesiastical and enlightened existential exercise on existentialism. This is a lit fuse – a long fuse that has been burning for many years and maybe for a few more.

But, this hope is what this paper is all about. What is it, about our lives, that is THE cause for concern – especially for someone (like me) who is somewhere into his “two minute warning”? The questions start adding up when they (you and I) ask about life – what life? – before, now, or after? The answer to that has to do with me – and you. It has to with all three, of course, but the focus will be on the “now.”

Right now, or sometime, we have to decide on some of the desperate issues listed earlier. The task of this paper is to illuminate some existential issues that might be helpful with our living a responsive and authentic life. Of course, and you will understand, this is coming from me with my background, my experience in life, and expressed here in with my authors, writers, philosophers, theologians, and existentialists I have chosen...noting there are other fuses to watch burn in this world. YOU have to pick your fight, stage, route, person, profession, and direction on your own.

So, here we go...

What will you put on your tombstone? How would you like to be remembered? How important is it to have ‘something’ remembered about you after you die? We ALL have that desire to be remembered – you may not say it, but you do. What would you “like” to be remembered for?

To get there we have to decide with what to do with our lives. Some will start with “When I get to heaven, the good Lord will take care of my dreams and wishes, meaning my life is to live to go to heaven.” Others make the claim they are working on living so that the interrogation with St. Peter at the gate is something they can pass and get let in. I will say most Christians are somewhere in this ball park...A three level antiquated ball park: heaven, earth, and hell.

If you are standing on that corner waiting for that bus to show up you have a problem because that bus is not coming...maybe that bit of extreme, extensive, and expedient existential enlightenment will be explicated later...(whew).

Bottom line is your life is up to you. You must decide. You must improvise, overcome, and adapt. We will explore Paul Tillich’s “You are accepted” and discuss why the three level universe is as outdated as maybe is the expression “God is dead.”

Or is it?

Existentialists – to name a few (in no real order):

Early Existentialists - St. Augustine, Plato, Thomas Aquinas, Blaise Pascal

Later Existentialists - Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Eric Fromm, Albert Camus, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Karl Jaspers, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Edmund Husserl, Simone de Beauvoir, Karl Heim, Nikolai Berdyaev, Ludwig Binswanger, Rollo May, Arthur Miller, Eric Bentley, Miguel de Unamuno, Norman Mailer, Van Cleve Morris

Existentialist Theologians - Carl Barth, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, H. Richard Niebuhr, John Knox, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Schubert Ogden

Existentialist Themes³

The individual and systems

Intentionality

Being and absurdity

Freedom and choice

Anxiety, dread, and death

The form of communications



The (Great) Tower of Babel – Peter Bruegel the Elder.

"Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'" (Genesis 11:4).

This Tower "is an Existentialist understanding of the human situation" (p. 129).⁴

Question: What Towers have we built (recently) that might fit this description in Genesis?

³ Van Cleve Morris (1966). *Existentialism in education: What it means*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

⁴ Paul Tillich (1952). *The courage to be*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

What Is Existentialism?

“We must now remove a major stumbling block - namely, the confusion surrounding the term, ‘existentialism.’ The word is bandied about to mean everything – from the posturing defiant dilettantism of some members of the *avant garde* on the left bank in Paris, to a philosophy of despair advocating suicide, to a system of anti-rationalist German thought written in a language so esoteric as to exasperate any empirically minded reader. Existentialism, rather, is an expression of profound dimensions of the modern emotional and spiritual temper and is shown in almost all aspects of our culture. It is found not only in psychology and philosophy but in art, *vide* Van Gogh, Cezanne, and Picasso – and in literature, *vide* Dostoevsky, Baudelaire, Kafka, and Rilke...[*vide* means see or consult.]

Existentialism, in short, is the endeavor to understand man by cutting below the cleavage between subject and object which has bedeviled Western thought and science since shortly after the Renaissance... ‘Do not wish to be a philosopher in contrast to being a man...do not think as a thinker...think as a living, real being. Think in Existence’ [A quote from Paul Tillich.]

...the crucial question always is that I happen to exist at this given moment in time and space, and my problem is how I am to be aware of that fact and what I shall do about it...they hold that these cannot be understood in any given person except in the context of the overarching fact that here is a person who happens *to exist, to be*, and if we do not keep this in mind, all else we know about this person will lose its meaning. Thus their approach is always dynamic; existence refers to coming into being, becoming...Existentialism is basically concerned with ontology, that is, the science of being (*ontos*, from Greek ‘being’) (pp. 12-13)⁵ [emphasis mine.]

Reality or Being is not the object of cognitive experience, but is rather

‘existence,’ is Reality as immediately experience...[a Tillich quote].

The existentialists are centrally concerned with rediscovering the living person amid the compartmentalization and dehumanization of modern culture, and in order to do this they engage in depth psychological analysis...That is to say they use psychological terms with an ontological meaning (p. 14).

⁵ Rollo May (1958). *Existence: A new dimension in psychiatry and psychology*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

A Reflective Existential Pause

Let me shore up a couple of thoughts on some books I have mentioned and explain how these books serve to show how the enigma of this paper is so personally rewarding to me as the author – and of course I must say it is an “existential” rewarding!.

Tillich...Paul Tillich has jumped up more than one notch on my author list. He has been slumbering on a theology shelf for over fifty years and has only been looked at a few times. He came alive – actually I had already moved him and his “Courage to Be” (*Der Mut zum Sein*) up to lead off this paper and now I will elaborate his work - and close this paper with him.

Tillich showed up back in 1970 as one of four writers we studied in an Ecumenical Institute weekend called Religious Studies One, or RS1. Jeanne was the one who came up with this and we attended together. It lit my fuse. I almost joined the Order but ended up doing pedagogy and worked up to a Level One Pedagogue. We read, charted, and studied his paper on Saturday morning and I was hooked. I *got jerked right through that ringer*...because I had been where Tillich was talking about. I will later share this part of his paper.

Just this past week, it was my thrill to jump back into one of the saved file folders of a course I took for my PhD titled “Philosophy of Adult Education” (EDAE 6200) which had listed the general philosophies as Idealism, Realism, Experimentalism, and Existentialism...again, here is a stack of papers, charts, and learning that have been on the shelf for a few years – and jumped off one of my PhD shelves wanting to be read and reviewed. Why would anybody go back and look at papers, notes, and books you had in college for any degree? Nobody does that! Well, this one paid off in spades – especially for this paper.

The dots were connecting. The fuse was still burning. The review of the 6200 paper on Existential Analysis is mainly to show the names of the humanistic and theistic authors – have added it as page 15 to this paper. To authenticate bringing up an ole college paper let me give you a quote to show how well it fits from Tillich, to college, to the present:

Existential man stands in the present with an appreciation
of the past in order to forge his future. His life is not adrift.

Man in these times, is not at the end of his tether (Colin Wilson⁶).

⁶ Colin Wilson (1956). *The outsider*. Boston, MA: The Riverside Press.

ATTENTION ON DECK

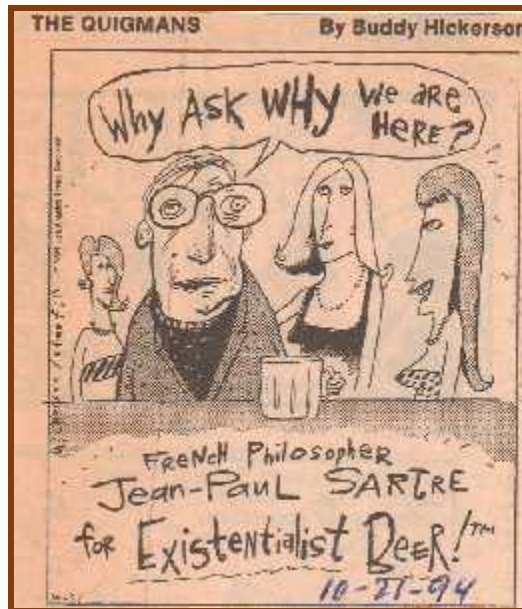
This note is to broadcast the fact that this paper has very little, if any, continuity to it.

You may see some of the pages that will follow in some order and have a theme to them or at least a convention with the same subject while others are *just stuck in and are stand-alone pages*.

This is a conservation issue and an economy of expression format touting the fact *Existentialism* is in no way a philosophy to be contained with any degree, and from my sense, no degree of:
“all laid out so you can makes heads or tails out it.”

The reason is this is my paper and my **freedom** to write it exactly the way I want to – for the, of course, good of man!

Thus Spoke ZARATHUSTRA



Jean-Paul Sartre⁷

“Sûrement, Monsieur est existentialiste!”

“The existence of man, this being, flung into the world, is essentially finite. Limited by death, his existence is a ‘being for death,’ as the Kierkegaardian anguish was a ‘sickness unto death” (p. 13).

“According to Heidegger, man unlike other beings, interrogates himself. In fact, man is that being who questions, endangers, and puts at stake his very existence” (p.17).

“The philosophy of Sartre, although containing much that is linked in part to the philosophy of Heidegger and in part to that of Husserl...In common with Heidegger, Sartre has ‘the ontological concern,’ the need to study the idea of Being, and also an emphasis on the idea of Nothingness...(p. 23).

“Thanks to existentialism, to be or not to be has again become the question. And this reminds us that there have been many existentialists – or, as Kierkegaard would say, many existents” (p. 27).

“The existent individual, then will be he who has this intensity of feeling because he is in contact with something outside of himself. He will undergo a kind of crucifixion of the understanding...he will be in relation with what Kierkegaard calls ‘the absolute Other’: a God who...is absolutely heterogeneous to the individual; an infinite love which embraces us but because of our individuality and sinfulness we are opposed to it” (p.7).

⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre.. (1968). *Essays in existentialism*. (Ed. Wade Baskin, with a Foreword). New York, NY: The Citadel Press.

A touch of Tillich's Existentialism⁸

The common point in all existentialist attacks is that man's existential situation is a state of estrangement from his essential nature. Hegel is aware of this estrangement, but he believes that it has been overcome and that man has been reconciled with his true being. According to all the existentialists, this belief is Hegel's basic error. Reconciliation is a matter of anticipation and expectation, but not of reality. The world is not reconciled, either in the individual – as Kierkegaard shows – or in society – as Marx shows – or in life as such – as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche show. Existence is estrangement and not reconciliation; it is dehumanization and not the expression of essential humanity. It is the process in which man becomes a thing and ceases to be a person. History is not the divine self-manifestation but a series of unreconciled conflicts, threatening man with self-destruction. The existence of the individual is filled with anxiety and threatened by meaninglessness. With this description of man's predicament all existentialists agree and are therefore opposed to Hegel's essentialism. They feel that it is an attempt to hide the truth about man's actual state.

The distinction has been made between atheistic and theistic existentialism. Certainly there are existentialists who could be called "atheistic," at least according to their intention; and there are others who can be called "theistic." But, in reality, there is not atheistic or theistic existentialism. Existentialism gives an analysis of what it means to exist. It shows the contrast between an essentialist description and an existentialist analysis. It develops the question implied in existence, but it does not try to give the answer, either in atheistic or in theistic terms. Whenever existentialists give answers, they do so in terms of religious or quasi-religious traditions which are not derived from their existentialist analysis. Pascal derives his answers from the Augustinian tradition, Kierkegaard from the Lutheran, Marcel from the Thomist, Dostoevski from the Greek Orthodox. Or the answers are derived from humanistic traditions, as with Marx, Sartre, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Jaspers. None of these men was able to develop answers out of his questions. The answers of the humanists come from hidden religious sources. They are matters of ultimate concern or faith, although garbed in a secular gown. Hence the distinction between atheistic and theistic existentialism fails. Existentialism is an analysis of the human predicament. And the answers to the question implied in man's predicament are religious, whether open or hidden (pp. 25-26).

⁸ Paul Tillich (1957). *Systematic theology* (Volume II) *Existence and the Christ*. Chicago, IL; U. of Chicago Press.

After the Tillich Existentialism Existentially Extension above I was going to use this page for a review of his profundity, sagacity, and acuity but this is enough of “my well-articulated profundities.”

Finishing a completed essay on his work is beyond the framework and reach of this paper.

Although I do have more comments below on Tillich to finish, the pause here without more to say about the topic, is because there is more to read first. His two pages above from his Volume II of Systematic Theology should hold us until the next paper...meaning here below are the list of books that must be reviewed.

Perhaps you have some of them in your library so that we can read them together?



[My plight with Tillich is the joyful expectation of what is in store in these books. I have just learned about Tillich – rather, since 1970, relearned. This is like starting spring training and I know there are a lot games to play - and a lot of books to read...this is the joy of being a Monk Theologian – even if it has the whiff or scent of being Existentially Existent.]

Note on Sartre

Sartre was born in Paris in 1905 and in 1939 he was called up by the French Army and in 1940 was captured by the Germans and released after the armistice and returned to Paris. Some other three books I have are **Nausea**, **No Exit**, and **The Wall**. It would take a lot of reading to get a complete understanding of him and his writings. In volume 7 of the Encyclopedia Frederick Olafson says "Sartre's whole philosophy can be seen as an attempt to describe a mode of being – human being – whose essence is just this aspiration, which he thinks is necessarily doomed to failure. This combination of a rejection of all forms of rationalism, theistic and otherwise, with a recognition of the permanent validity of the demand they express may fairly be regarded as the most characteristic feature of Sartre's thought" (p. 288).

Note on Films



[Adolphe Menjou](#) (left) and [Kirk Douglas](#) (right) in [Paths of Glory](#) (1957)⁹

[Stanley Kubrick's](#) 1957 [anti-war film Paths of Glory](#) "illustrates, and even illuminates...existentialism" by examining the "necessary absurdity of the [human condition](#)" and the "horror of war". The film tells the story of a fictional World War I French army regiment ordered to attack an impregnable German stronghold; when the attack fails, three soldiers are chosen at random, court-martialed by a "[kangaroo court](#)", and executed by firing squad. The film examines existentialist ethics, such as the issue of whether [objectivity](#) is possible and the "problem of [authenticity](#)".

From these notes I do not understand comments about the big "E." I sat through this next suggestion on Kafka's book and will leave the note below for reference but will say this was one of the worse movies I have ever sat through. The list has a few more movies not much better – Barbie and Everything Everywhere all at Once get the same grade.

[Orson Welles's](#) 1962 film [The Trial](#), based upon Franz Kafka's book of the same name (*Der Prozeß*), is characteristic of both existentialist and absurdist themes in its depiction of a man (Joseph K.) arrested for a crime for which the charges are neither revealed to him nor to the reader.

Likewise, films throughout the 20th century such as [The Seventh Seal](#), [Ikiru](#), [Taxi Driver](#), the [Toy Story](#) films, [The Great Silence](#), [Ghost in the Shell](#), [Harold and Maude](#), [High Noon](#), [Easy Rider](#), [One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest](#), [A Clockwork Orange](#), [Groundhog Day](#), [Apocalypse Now](#), [Badlands](#), and [Blade Runner](#) also have existentialist qualities.

⁹ See my Web site under [Das letzte hurra!](#) and [Der treue Husar](#) and watch the 25 year old that Stanley Kubrick married right after the movie. Existentialism showed up in her song she sang in German to the French soldiers. This is worth four minutes of your time. **This was a good existential movie – it is a tear jerker.**

self-control, in our fight against special faults, and in our relationships to men and to society. Moral progress may be a fruit of grace; but it is not grace itself, and it can even prevent us from receiving grace. For there is too often a graceless acceptance of Christian doctrines and a graceless battle against the structures of evil in our personalities. Such a graceless relation to God may lead us by necessity either to arrogance or to despair. It would be better to refuse God and the Christ and the Bible than to accept them without grace. For if we accept without grace, we do so in the state of separation, and can only succeed in deepening the separation. We cannot transform our lives, unless we allow them to be transformed by that stroke of grace. It happens; or it does not happen. And certainly it does *not* happen if we try to force it upon ourselves, just as it shall not happen so long as we think, in our self-complacency, that we have no need of it. Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless and empty life. It strikes us when we feel that our separation is deeper than usual, because we have violated another life, a life which we loved, or from which we were estranged. It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction and composure have become intolerable to us. It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: "You are accepted. *You are accepted*, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. *Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!*" If that happens to us, we experience grace. After such an experience we may not be better than before, and we may not believe more than before. But everything is transformed. In that moment, grace conquers sin, and reconciliation bridges the gulf of estrangement. And nothing is demanded of this experience, no religious or moral or intellectual presupposition, nothing but *acceptance*.

In the light of this grace we perceive the power of grace in our relation to others and to ourselves. We experience the grace of being able to look frankly into the eyes of another, the miraculous grace of reunion of life with life. We experience the grace of understanding each other's words. We understand not merely the literal meaning of the words, but also that which lies behind them, even when they are harsh or angry. For even then there is a longing to break through the walls of separation. We experience the grace of being able to accept the life of another, even if it be hostile and harmful to us, for, through grace, we know that it belongs to the same Ground to which we belong, and by which we have been accepted. We experience the grace which is able to overcome the tragic separation of the sexes, of the generations, of the nations, of the races, and even the utter strangeness between man and nature. Sometimes grace appears in all these separations to reunite us with those to whom we belong. For life belongs to life.

And in the light of this grace we perceive the power of grace in our relation to ourselves. We experience moments in which we accept ourselves, because we feel that we have been accepted by that which is greater than we. If only more such moments were given to us! For it is such moments that make us love our life, that make us accept ourselves, not in our goodness and self-complacency, but in our certainty of the eternal meaning of our life. We cannot force ourselves to accept ourselves. We cannot compel anyone to accept himself. But sometimes it happens that we receive the power to say "yes" to ourselves, that peace enters into us and makes us whole, that self-hate and self-contempt disappear, and that our self is reunited with itself. Then we can say that grace has come upon us.

"Sin" and "grace" are strange words; but they are not strange things. We find them whenever we look into ourselves with searching eyes and longing hearts. They determine our life. They abound within us and in all of life. May grace more abound within us!

Paul Tillich's last page of "You Are Accepted" showing at the top paragraph 12, then 13, 14, & 15 (numbers not shown). Have bracketed "Grace strikes us...nothing but acceptance."

This is one of his best works.

THE ARENA

The focus of existentialism has not changed. Man, the existential man, still seeks meaning for his existence. Existential man stands in the present with an appreciation of the past in order to forge his future. His life is not adrift. Man, in these times, is not at the end of his tether.¹

"Existential Analysis divides a man's "worlds" into three—the world of nature and biological drives...the world of interrelationships between human beings...and the world of the individual's relationship to himself..."² For pedagogical reasons I will call these three arenas: humanistic, theistic and psychological.

Some of the writers in these areas are:

<u>Humanistic</u>	<u>Theistic</u>	<u>Psychological</u>
Sarte	Kierkegaard	May
Camus	Buber	Wilson
Barbusse	Nietzsche	Sykes
Hesse	Tillich	Kopp
Lawrence	Niebuhr, H.R.	Drucker
Wells	Bonhoeffer	Pearce
Kafka	Barth	Clarke
Nijinsky	Bultmann	Jourard
Dostoyevsky	Kazantzakis	
Gogal	Brightman	
Mann	Bertocci	
Ouspensky	Petty	
Blake	Ogden	
Conrad		

To be sure, there are others. My arbitrary list is just an armful

¹ Colin Wilson says that the essay "Mind at the End of its Tether" by H. G. Wells, is "the most pessimistic single utterance in modern literature..." Wilson, Colin. (1956). The Outsider. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

² Sykes, Gerald. (1962). The Hidden Remnant. New York: Harper & Bros.

This is page three of my EDAE 6200 Existential paper from one of my PhD classes but I want to point out the names of the Humanistic/Existential/Psychological writers.



Resurrection panel, Matthias Grünewald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*, c. 1512–16, oil and tempera on limewood panels, 376 x 668 cm (Unterlinden Museum, Colmar¹⁰, France; photo: [Steven Zucker](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Grunewald's work may thus remind us once more that an artist can be very great indeed without being 'progressive', because the greatness of art does not lie in new discoveries. That Grunewald was familiar with these discoveries he showed plainly enough whenever they helped him to express what he wanted to convey. And just as he used his brush to depict the dead and tormented body of Christ, he used it on another panel to convey its transfiguration at the Resurrection into an unearthly apparition of heavenly light. It is difficult to describe this picture because, once more, so much depends on its colors. **It seems as if Christ has just soared out of the grave,** leaving a trail of radiant light - the shroud in which the body has been swathed reflecting the colored rays of the halo. There is a poignant contrast between the risen Christ, who is hovering over the scene, and the helpless gestures of the soldiers on the ground, who are dazzled and overwhelmed by this sudden apparition of light. We feel the violence of the

¹⁰ Colmar is in north east France about 10 miles from Basel, Switzerland.

shock in the way in which they writhe in their armor. As we cannot assess the distance between foreground and background, the two soldiers behind the grave look like puppets who have tumbled over, and their distorted shapes only serve to throw into relief the serene and majestic calm of the transfigured body of Christ.

The Resurrection panel is the strangest of these inner visions. Christ is wreathed in orange, red, and yellow body halos and rises like a streaking fireball, hovering over the sepulcher and the bodies of the sleeping soldiers, a combination of Transfiguration, Resurrection, and Ascension.



This *Isenheim* Altarpiece picture from Jeanne's Janson "History of Art" and is Colorplate 46.

This altarpiece is a continuation of Grünewald's work as it has, again, the Resurrection panel showed with the other three panels opened up to make up the *Isenheim* Altarpiece. This is his main work and "overwhelms us with something like the power of the Sistine Ceiling" Some of us would jump on this existentially – "...the risen Christ shoots from His grave with explosive force...the rainbow-hued radiance of the Risen Christ, Grünewald's genius has achieved miracles-through-light that remain unsurpassed to this day" (Hanson, p. 389) .

Not shown, but worth the view or research, is to first see the panel/painting closed which is Grünewald's *The Crucifixion*. As above when the wings open up on either side then one can see the panels above. Wouldn't this be a well worth field trip to see while in France?

A Day of Dying or an Altar Call – maybe, just an Existential Ending

For this paper it is time to move on. The fuse will stay burning to the end. We will keep reading, charting, writing about existentialism until the bus shows up – surely, you caught my drift – as there is no end to the books to read, paintings to see, or movies to review. This paper is just a flash in the night (hopefully with “rainbow-hued radiance”). The review of Tillich after he jumped off the shelf and my rereading of EDAE 6200 after it called to be seen again is just another chapter in the process of life, reading, and being a Monk.

Kinda reminds me of looking back at my log books, or my Reminiscences and getting recharged to dig deeper into some worthy project paper.

Kinda reminds me of taking one of my guns and just cleaning it – the joy of just being with the metal, slides, scopes, and the smell of Hoppe’s 9. This is the same piece or slice of life and living as sanding on a fender or painting the hood on an ole ’40 Ford or maybe weaving a new quilt or rug for a grandkid. It is the track, trek, or event that counts.

Kinda reminds me of Sisyphus pushing the rock back up the hill as he had a smile on his face as he worked with “a measured tread and a melodious heart” just like we do when cleaning a shotgun, painting a hot rod, or working with our hands making something for the kids. There are more ways to end this as I could quote some more writers and existentialists but let me kinda shotgun my way with a blast that is wide, not very deep, nor very far – maybe.

First is an Altar Call – some have read this before.

Here is the main point at issue in the earlier discussion of a certain kind of existentialist theology. The danger in any restrictively existentialist interpretation of eschatological symbols is that man’s decision of faith or unfaith will be assigned a greater weight than it actually has. I can indeed decide whether to let myself be loved by God and so be freed to share in the “new creation” which that decision opens up for me. But what I can never decide is that I am destined for eternity to be raised up either to salvation or damnation by being incorporated in every present into God’s everlasting life. Loved by God we are and ever shall be – and about this, we ourselves can do nothing whatever. Our decision is simply whether we are to accept this eternal destiny and thereby enter upon that new life here and now in the moment which is possible for all who open themselves to God’s love. The question facing us, we might say, is not the one that stares at us from the fundamentalist’s road signs, “Where will you spend eternity?” but rather “How and in what ways will you spend time?” (p. 227).¹¹

¹¹ Schubert M. Ogden (1963). *The reality of God: And other essays*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Earlier there were some comments by **Rollo May** on Paul Tillich, so I want to end with them as promised but first a few notes. I have pointed out some comments about Tillich's famous and worthy direction with "You are Accepted" but I will have to leave his comments on the "God is Dead" issue and his "The God Above God" for another time. Here is some of Rollo May's end of story in Chapter 8 about "Paulus"¹² (of course, that's German for Paul) and I promise you they are tear jerking.

"Paulus and I used often to talk of death. He had none of the feeling that it was an 'untouchable' topic; there was no pornographic aura surrounding it in his mind. Death was an important, universal subject with which he was free and direct. Not that he was not afraid of death; but he regarded it as complementary to life, interwoven with life. Death is the ultimate symbol of our finiteness, of which weakness and illness are lesser symbols...

I said, "**Paulus, are you afraid of dying?**"

His face blanched slightly. "*Yes, Everyone is. It's the Unknown. The great unknowable. Nobody has ever come back to tell us.*"...

"In this discussion, Paulus stated that he would take the role of advocatus diaboli, the devil in this case being Heidegger. He outlined the concept that death is a necessary condition if life is to be understood; that life is complementary to death; that death is inevitable, and that an acceptance of it leads to greater capacity for joy in life. He repeated the phrase which was central in Heidegger: 'Life is running forward toward death.' It is a description of our existence.

"Paulus himself surely did run forward toward death. His letters in his seventies tell of his increasing consciousness of death. **In one to me on his seventy-fifth birthday he thanked me for my felicitations and added, 'I enter my fourth quarter-century, in which death is certain to claim me.'**..."

"I shall relate here what she later told me of his days during those last two weeks. He got progressively weaker. One day his voice began to rattle, and the doctor advised Hannah to call Renè and Mutie, telling them to come. The next morning she told Paulus they were coming, and he cried, 'Oh, no, no! This is the end.' He implored Hannah not to leave him all day long. But then he seemed to pull himself together.

"This is dying day," he said...

"During that day Paulus went in and out of consciousness..."

About seven in the evening he told the nurse and Hannah that he wanted to get up and walk. The nurse helped him sit up and dangle his legs over the edge of the bed. Then he lay back down and died.

¹² Rollo May (1973). *Paulus: Reminiscences of a friendship*. New York, NY: Harper & Row. (pp.100-105.)

Of course, there is more. There are more existential writers not covered. There are more that will never be covered – or, at least not in this paper. The quest for more will always be there for all of us. God bless the few of us giving the folks like Sartre, Tillich, and May a chance to let us know about living – and dying.

My goodness, I would not have made it to my grave if I had not uncovered these jewels of books from 50 years ago. At least I now have a plan to review some of them and go back and look at my file folders to see what kind of notes I took and see if they can be applied in today's marching orders. I hope, if you have read this far, that there is some interest stirred up in reading, painting, sanding, weaving, or cleaning shotguns.

My Super Sabre Society is an association with and about flying the F-100 or “The Hun” and although this is the last year – we/they are getting too old to keep it up (a polite term) – they have been announcing when one of us fighter pilots dies that “He has gone West¹³.”

I have asked mine to read “Heading two seven oh!”

Jeff Cooper comes to mind in this area of dying as his expression was “My measure is full and I go hence.”

I have asked mine to read:

Ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα and I go hence!



Oh, and don't forget the splendid existential rendering of Will Rogers:

“Where ever Biscuit goes is where I want to go!”

¹³ This same term is also being used by all of us guys that flew with Braniff...same song for most pilots.