

Temperament and Existence

Introduction

As a Temperament Analyst, I was always surprised that people felt a strong identification with their Temperament style and how much it contributed to them in their process of self-knowledge, especially in the encounter with the differences of others. I have been able to witness how, just with the Temperament Analysis, someone better understands their partner, their son, their brother or, even in the professional field, a doctor can understand better his patient, or a supervisor his subordinate. However, I always had the concern to potentiate this information for greater personal growth. It wasn't until I got to know Alfred Längle's Existential Analysis that I found what I was missing.

Below I present a brief approach to the Analysis of Temperament, followed by a philosophical reflection on the essence and existence, a parallelism that makes me value the relevance and depth of Längle's Existential Analysis, which leads us towards the encounter of a more fulfilled existence.

Retrospective outlook of human differences

The idea that people have different predispositions to act in specific ways is quite old and was initially outlined by Hippocrates around 370 BC. As mentioned by David Keirsey (2001), this idea persevered through the popular thought of medicine, philosophy and literature until the 19th century. In contrast, the idea that people are born without predispositions and therefore are malleable, is a notion that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. Ivan Pavlov considered behavior as mere mechanical reactions to different stimuli from the environment. John Watson, the first American behaviorist, claimed that through conditioning he could shape a child any way he wanted, as long as he was brought into his care at a very young age.

Sigmund Freud claimed that we are all driven from within by instinctual libido and that "high" motives are simply disguised versions of this instinct. Alfred Adler, another Viennese doctor, felt that we were striving to be superior. Harry Sullivan American psychiatrist proposed social solidarity as the basic motivation; and the humanistic psychologists Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow propose that the human being seeks self-actualization. Despite their differences, they all agreed that people have only one Fundamental Motivation.

In 1920 the Swiss physician, psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Jung disagreed. He wrote in his book *Psychological Typology* that people are essentially different. He stated that people have a multitude of instincts that drive them from within and that none is

more important than the others. He underlined the importance of the natural inclination towards Introversion or Extroversion, in combination with the preference for one of the four basic psychological functions proposed by himself: Reflection, Feeling, Sensation and Intuition.

Jung stated that there is a preference for a specific function so that we can be identified and typified based on that preference. This is how he presented what he called *Types of Functions or Psychological Types*. Around the same time, some other researchers revived the long-practiced study of personality that philosopher John Stuart Mill called Ethology; years later the psychologist Henry Murray would call it Personology. However, his books along with Jung's Psychological Typology were abandoned while Psychology was dominated by Freudian Psychodynamics on the one hand, and Pavlovian Conditioning on the other. Behavior was explained as the result of unconscious motives, past conditioning, or both, thus abandoning the idea of innate differences in human actions and attitudes proposed by Jung.

In the middle of the 20th century, Isabel Myers dusted off Jung's book and together with her mother, Kathryn Briggs, produced the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, a questionnaire to identify the different personality types, which was largely inspired by Jung's book, where sixteen patterns of action and attitude are identified, becoming extremely popular in the nineties, when more than a million people answered it each year. Interest in the Typology of Personality had a great boom in the United States, Canada and Europe.

This research has been developed very seriously by Keirsey (2001) and other prestigious authors. The results conclude that people with their behavior and attitude patterns are not the same and that these patterns are as innate as body complexion.

The Theory of Temperaments

According to Keirsey (2001), personality has two facets: one is Temperament and the other is Character; the former is a configuration of innate inclinations, while Character is a configuration of habits. The Character is the disposition and the Temperament is the predisposition, this means that our brain is like a computer that has its Hardware: the Temperament, and its Software: the Character. The first is the base from which the Character emerges, and it places an identifiable mark on the attitudes and actions of each person. Thus, Temperament is the innate form of human nature, while Character is the one that develops through the interaction of temperament with the environment, thus forming a unique and unrepeatable personality in each person.

The following is a brief outline of the history of Temperament Theory as a summary. By the early 20th century, nearly five thousand reports on Temperament and Character had been identified. The chart below, produced by Keirsey, shows a small part

of that long history and is self-explanatory, defining four different styles of temperament consistently observed at different times and by different authors.

Plato 340 BC	Artisan	Guardian	Idealist	Rational
Aristotle 325 BC	Hedonist	Owner	Ethical	Dialectical
Galen 190 d. C.	Sanguine	Melancholic	Choleric	Phlegmatic
Paracelsus 1550	Mutable	Industrious	Inspired	Curious
Adickes 1905	Innovative	Traditional	Doctrinaire	Skeptical
Spränger 1914	Aesthetical	Economical	Religious	Theoretic
Kretschmer 1920	Hypomaniac	Depressive	Hyperaesthetic	Anesthetic
Fromm 1947	Exploitative	Accumulator	Receptive	Marketer
Myers 1958	Inquirer	Organized	Friendly	Realistic

Fascinating is the idea, which has survived for over two thousand years, that individuals are predisposed to develop and adjust to one of four different configurations of attitude or action. This is something that has been studied, by so many people, in so many countries and for so long that it amply demonstrates its consistency and usefulness.

Myers finished writing his book "The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator" in 1958 and published it in 1962, although the US Educational System had been using his questionnaire for several years before it was published. With the contributions of Keirsey, Spränger, Kretschmer and Fromm it was concluded that in each of the four styles of temperament studied there were four different variants, giving a total of sixteen variants of Specific Temperaments.

David Keirsey asserted in his work that all people identify with one of those sixteen variants. Having a very positive effect on the way they perceive themselves and perceive differences with others, the experience that people have when identifying and accepting the description of their Specific Temperament is given in a validating way, leading them to constant reinforcement of their self-esteem. This is not a coincidence, is the result of giving Temperament Theory a judgment-free approach, highlighting the strengths of each Temperament style and not its weaknesses. The person, in this process, positively identifies important characteristics of their personality, which help them experience the differences with others in a friendly and playful way, allowing them to project their

personality in a natural way, being received by others in a positive way and in an environment of security and trust.

The temperament style of a person must be understood as something valuable, granted and not acquired, manifested as an innate tendency from the first moments of life and that can be observed over and over again throughout his life. Each style of temperament has a value in itself and should not be perceived as better or worse than the other styles, but rather different and therefore also with its own limitations.

The treatment that should be given to the information about the Temperament Theory from different authors, is to put it positively, highlighting the strengths, free from negative judgments and criticism, in such a way that when the information reaches the person, it has an identification process, mainly validating them against feeling judged, stereotyped, depersonalized, criticized or pigeonholed. Once feeling is validated, this Temperament Theory approach allows people to experience a better disposition to their differences with others in a receptive and revealing way.

Metaphorically, why does an oak sprout, develop, and mature like an oak, and why does a pine sprout, develop, and mature like a pine? Because the seed (essence) they come from is different, an oak will never behave like a pine and a pine will never behave like an oak. However, following the analogy with Temperament, it can be said that temperament is dynamic, not static, is unlimited and has enormous potential, in such a way that an oak can reach a wonderful degree of maturation, the same as a pine, even though they are so different.

The essentialist position vs The existentialist position.

An essentialist position would give more value of reality to the essences, this may be valid for the world of physical characteristics, that is, the essence of an oak speaks of what makes it be exactly that, an oak, and not a pine or an apple tree. Everything that it shares with the objects called oaks.

However, this essence only exists until we visualize a specific oak, and then, what is relevant is not its essence but its existence. When speaking of essences we speak of generalities, but when speaking of the possibilities in reality, we move from the essence to the existence and then we refer to a specific oak. Where is it? What quality of soil is it in? What is its environment like? How are the nutrients and conditions it finds in its maturation process? What is sheltered by its shade? Which living beings does it harbors?

For human beings, from the existential position, human reality cannot be reduced to a group of essential components. What defines a person are not the characteristics of their temperament, nor their physical features, nor their intellectual coefficient, nor their psychic processes, what defines a person is the particular way in which at each moment they are accommodating and integrating all those elements in their reality.

This leads us to define a goal: to use the philosophical background for the use of the Temperament Analysis model in combination with the Existential Analysis model. Alfried Längle states that:

Existential Analysis is characterized by never isolating the unity of the human being, always considering it in close dialogical union with its relationships with values. In other words: the human being according to Existential Analysis is never "complete" by himself, even when he is healthy and all his impulses are satisfied. The human being is gifted as a person to go beyond himself and turn towards others (things, people, tasks) with which he achieves his existential fulfillment (Längle, 2004).

What if we started from the essentialist perspective in which an inventory is made of all the gifts I have been given at birth, accepting the fact of my limitations, since naturally I do not receive all the gifts that nature offers and then, with this baggage, I potentiate the fullness of my existence?

Existentially, being a person cannot be reduced to a series of essential components, this would reduce the totality of their humanity. It can only give us elements for a fuller and deeper understanding of its existence.

It would be like saying that each of us was given a box of crayons and a canvas of a specific size at birth. Some people may have a larger canvas than others. Other people may have a wide variety of crayons, while some have only a few. Even in spite of all these differences, in the end what matters is the picture that is painted, the work. After all, there are artists who make masterpieces only with a pencil (Martínez, 2012).

Conclusion

Knowing your own specific temperament style is an excellent starting point and then asking yourself about each of the four Fundamental Motivations: World, Life, Being a Person and Meaning. According to Längle, the realization of existence requires consent in these four areas, both towards oneself and also towards the corresponding contents of the world (2009).

We can then conclude that what is important is not what is given, but what I am capable of doing with it. The prevalence of existence over essence is evident. Although taking a look at the essence can be extremely useful, perhaps this will allow us to better understand existence.

From the existential perspective, I am not just what the essentialist perspective dictates I have, but I am also the transcendence of what I have.

Indeed, existence prevails over essence.

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