



# Existenz

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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Human suffering that has its origin in self-centered cognition or emotion is a private event. When it reaches a level of intensity that resembles a boundary situation, such suffering can bring a human being to a point of existential crisis. The same crisis can also be triggered by direct or indirect actions of others. It remains a private event nonetheless, since existential suffering is an intrinsic quality of being human. In such situations, reflective mindfulness can bring these existential challenges into perspective. No matter what the theoretical foundation for such reflection might be, the departure from a real or perceived crisis becomes possible by transforming theory into authentic action. "Alleviating suffering" is the theme for Volume 11/2 and addresses two sources for human suffering, depression that originates from internal factors, such as biochemical variables, emotional or mental maturation, as well as external factors, such as the imposition of violent or careless actions upon either a person or entire populations.

The discussion of S. Nassir Ghaemi's book *On Depression: Drugs, Diagnosis, and Despair in the Modern World* (Johns Hopkins UP 2013) argues for the fecundity of what Ghaemi calls biological existentialism, a perspective on psychiatry that challenges the common practice of prescribing medications instead of practicing a human-centered approach to overcome depression. Being the director of the Mood Disorder Clinic at Tufts Medical Center, Ghaemi's perspective draws on philosophical theory as well as medical practice. The four critics of Ghaemi's book include Alina Marin and Casimiro Cabrera Abreu, both at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. Marin discusses the merits and limits of understanding depression within a causal framework, links the discussion to Jaspers who advocated a broader perspective on depression that is not restricted to cause and effect modalities. Cabrera emphatically endorses a humanistic approach for addressing depression. The critique by Daniel Adsett (Marquette University) addresses ambiguities regarding depression; while on the one hand the onset of depression can certainly debilitate a person into non-action, on the other hand it is an aspect of a valuable human experience that can build character and resolve for overcoming obstacles. For Elena Bezzubova (University of California, Irvine) biological existentialism as presented by Ghaemi is at best a start for discussing the need of a comprehensive theory on depression that needs to include complex variables related to existential, psychological, and medical parameters.

The psychosocial drama of human life with all its absurdity cannot be presented more detailed and witty than William Shakespeare does it. Eva Cybulska (London, GB) offers her study of Hamlet to guide the reader through the agony of despair and presents profound responses to suffering by philosophers and literary writers that will nurture reflective mindfulness for addressing this human characteristic. When suffering and despair is directly caused by violent human action, Jill Graper Hernandez (University of Texas at San Antonio) insists that human beings have a moral responsibility to intervene, to help, and to provide tangible means for help rather than merely empty words. Her case study engages with the violence of the current Syrian Civil War. Hernandez holds a mirror in front of the readers' eyes in order to make a case for the need for compassionate action.

Helmut Wautischer  
Editor-in-Chief

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### **Mission Statement**

The mission of *Existenz* is to encourage research and publication on problems and topics consistent with the general overview of Karl Jaspers, namely, the history of philosophy, phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics; psychology, philosophy of religion, politics, culture, and the arts. This journal serves as a publication outlet for various international Jaspers societies, including those in the United States, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Russia, and Japan, and also considers direct submissions of articles for online publication. *Existenz* is indexed in *The Philosopher's Index*.

### **Correspondence**

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