

Study Guide: Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person

Second Quarter Preliminary Assessment Reviewer

Part 1: Society and the Individual (Social Ontology)

In this section, we look at how society is built by humans, but eventually starts to feel like a "natural" force that controls us.

1. The Three Stages of Social Reality (Peter Berger)

How does a random idea become a "social rule"?

- **Externalization:** Humans create something—an idea, a tool, or a law—and put it out into the world.
 - *Example:* A group of friends decides that every Friday is "Yellow Shirt Day."
- **Objectivation:** Over time, these creations become "objects" that exist independently of the creator. They start to feel like "just the way things are."
 - *Example:* New members join the group and think "Yellow Shirt Day" is a mandatory rule that has existed forever.
- **Internalization:** The individual absorbs these social rules and makes them part of their own identity or desires.
 - *Example:* You feel "wrong" or "guilty" if you wear a blue shirt on Friday, even if no one is watching.

2. Agency vs. Structure

- **Social Structure:** The organized pattern of social relationships and institutions (laws, traditions, school rules) that guide or limit our choices.
- **Individual Agency:** The power of an individual to act independently and make free choices, even if it means changing the structure.
 - *Practical Example:* If a school has a rule against long hair (Structure), but a student starts a petition to change it based on cultural expression (Agency), they are trying to transform the structure.

3. The Looking-Glass Self (Charles Cooley)

We see ourselves through the eyes of others. Our self-image is built based on how we *think* others perceive us.

- *Digital Context:* Deleting a post because it didn't get enough "likes" is a modern example. You feel "lesser" because the digital "mirror" didn't reflect back the validation you wanted.

Part 2: Intersubjectivity (The "I" and the "Other")

Intersubjectivity is about the relationship between two "subjects" (people). It asks: Do you see the other person as a human being, or just a tool?

1. I-Thou vs. I-It (Martin Buber)

- **I-Thou (Intersubjectivity):** You treat the other person as a "Thou"—a unique, mysterious, and infinite human being. You listen and engage genuinely.
- **I-It:** You treat the person as an "It"—a thing to be used, a label, or a means to an end.
 - *Example:* Ordering food and not looking at the waiter's face is an "I-It" relationship. Sitting down to talk to a lonely classmate as an equal is an "I-Thou" relationship.

2. Totalization vs. Infinite Alterity (Emmanuel Levinas)

- **Totalization:** Reducing a complex person to a single label (e.g., "The Homeless Man," "The Criminal," "The Nerd"). When you totalize, you think you "know" everything about them based on that label.
- **Ethics of the Face:** When we look into the "Face" of another, we see their vulnerability. This creates a "call" to responsibility. We realize we cannot "kill" or ignore them.

Part 3: Existentialism (Freedom, Choice, and Death)

Existentialism focuses on the individual's struggle to find meaning in a world that doesn't give them a pre-written manual.

1. Existence Precedes Essence (Jean-Paul Sartre)

For a pair of **scissors**, the "essence" (purpose to cut) comes before it is even made. But for **humans**, we are born first (existence), and then we spend our lives defining who we are (essence).

- *The False Statement:* "We are born with a specific purpose." (Existentialists hate this; they believe we *create* purpose).

2. Facticity vs. Transcendence

- **Facticity:** The "givens" of your life that you didn't choose (your birthplace, your height, a chronic illness, your past mistakes).
- **Transcendence:** Your ability to move beyond your facticity. Your freedom to dream, plan, and change despite your limitations.
 - *Example:* An artist losing their sight is part of their **Facticity**. Finding a way to paint using touch and texture is their **Transcendence**.

3. Authenticity vs. Inauthenticity (Bad Faith)

- **Authenticity:** Taking ownership of your life and your choices. Living according to your own values.
- **Inauthenticity / Bad Faith:** Pretending you have "no choice." Following the "They" (**Das Man**) just to fit in.
 - *Example:* Working a job you hate and saying "I have no choice" when you actually

do have the freedom to quit (even if it's scary) is a form of Bad Faith.

4. Being-Towards-Death (Martin Heidegger)

Death is the "possibility of the impossibility." Recognizing that we will die isn't supposed to be depressing; it's supposed to make us wake up.

- **Finitude:** The fact that our time is limited.
- *Practical Example:* Knowing you only have one week left of summer vacation makes those last seven days much more valuable than the first week. Death does the same for life.

Part 4: Logotherapy and Meaning (Viktor Frankl)

Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, argued that "The Will to Meaning" is the primary drive of humans.

1. Three Ways to Find Meaning:

1. **Creative Value:** Creating something (art, a building, a family).
2. **Experiential Value:** Experiencing something (nature, culture, or love).
3. **Attitudinal Value:** Even when you can't change your situation (suffering), you can change your *attitude* toward it.
 - *Example:* A student failing a subject can find meaning by choosing to face the failure with dignity and using it as a lesson for the next semester.

2. The Final Why (Telos)

The ultimate goal that drives your actions.

- **Instrumental Value:** A means to an end (e.g., studying to get a grade).
- **Final Why:** The end itself (e.g., studying because you want to be a person who helps others).

Part 5: Types of Societies

How the way we live changes how we think:

- **Industrial Society:** Valued efficiency and production. Humans often felt like "cogs in a machine" (Rationalization).
- **Virtual Society:** Digital connection is high, but deep, local communal roots are often lost. We often struggle with the "Looking-Glass Self" on social media.

Reviewer Tip: When answering philosophy questions, always ask yourself: "Is this person acting out of freedom (Authenticity), or are they just following the crowd (Das Man)?" and "Are they treating people as humans (Thou), or as objects (It)?"