

Bultmann speaks both of "existentialist analysis" and of "existentialist interpretation," which suggests that there is some respect in which the things referred to are the same, or similar, even as there is another respect in which they are different. But how, exactly, is this to be understood?

Existentialist analysis abstracts from *my* existence as such in order to clarify the structure of *human* existence in general. Existentialist interpretation abstracts from *my* decision here and now to accept or to reject the possibility of self-understanding that an utterance or text opens up for me in order to clarify the meaning of this *possibility*, i.e., the understanding of human existence that the utterance or text re-presents.

Thus the two are the same—and properly distinguished as "existentialist"—in that they both abstract, in their different ways, from my own "existential" self-understanding—the first abstracting from my self-understanding *as such*, the second abstracting from my self-understanding *here and now*.

By the way, although Bultmann may say or imply that "existentialist interpretation" is *eo ipso* "scientific," or, in my terms, a matter of "critical reflection," there is no good reason for me to follow him in this. On the contrary, it is essential to my view (as expressed, e.g., in *Doing Theology Today*: 48 f.) to distinguish clearly and sharply between "existentialist interpretation" and "*critical* existentialist interpretation," only the second of which is properly said to be "scientific," or a matter of "critical reflection."

3 December 2001