

Beyond Meaning: A Post-Resolutive, Durational Existentialism

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Biocognitive Monographs Series
BM-2026-07 | Archived 2026

Citation

Martinez, M. E. (2026). Beyond Meaning: A Post-Resolutive, Durational Existentialism, Biocognitive Monographs Series, BM-2026-07. <https://www.biocognitiveculture.com/working-papers-archive>

Abstract

This position paper advances a post-resolutive form of existential thought grounded in durational enactment rather than meaning-seeking or interpretive reconciliation. Departing from classical existentialism and contemporary meaning-centered psychology, the framework reframes existential tensions—such as finitude, mortality, and absoluteness—not as problems to be solved, but as terrains to be embodied. Meaning is treated as a context-dependent strategy rather than a universal requirement, while courage and gratitude are reconceptualized as temporal skills enacted through lived duration. By distinguishing enacted duration from resignation or quietism, the paper argues that inhabiting the absolute without explanation constitutes a form of embodied courage. This post-meaning orientation neither denies existential limits nor redeems them, but cultivates composure, mobility, and durational tolerance in contexts where interpretive frameworks prove insufficient. The result is an existential stance oriented toward habitation rather than resolution, and practice rather than explanation.

Keywords:

durational existentialism, meaning-centered psychology, finitude

Position Statement

This position paper articulates a form of existential thought that departs from both classical and contemporary meaning-centered paradigms. Rather than addressing the perennial question of what existence *means*, this framework investigates how existence is *lived* when the demand for meaning is no longer primary. The contribution is neither nihilistic nor redemptive; it is post-resolutive. Existential tensions are not solved, reconciled, or transcended, but rendered non-dominant through durational practice.

Where traditional existentialisms approach the limits of finitude in order to extract insight, authenticity, or ethical commitment, this work steps past the edge and remains there calmly. The central claim is that human flourishing under conditions of mortality depends less on meaning-making than on the cultivation of temporal skills—capacities for inhabiting duration without narrative closure.

Departure from Existential Problem-Solving

Classical existential philosophy is organized around irresolvable categories: being and nothingness, freedom and facticity, self and other, finitude and transcendence. Even when these tensions are declared insoluble, they retain their authority as structuring problems.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* situates authenticity in resolute confrontation with Being-toward-death, maintaining ontological anxiety as the engine of disclosure (Heidegger, 1927/1962). Camus, rejecting metaphysical reconciliation, nonetheless frames existence as a heroic defiance of absurdity, preserving meaning as a negative reference point against which revolt is staged (Camus, 1955). Sartre's existential humanism similarly centers freedom as a burden requiring perpetual justification through choice (Sartre, 1946/2007).

The present framework diverges by abandoning the necessity of resolving—or even preserving—these existential categories. Rather than attempting to reconcile self and other, freedom and finitude, or meaning and mortality, it allows these oppositions to lose motivational centrality. They are not refuted; they are deprioritized. This shift marks a movement away from existential *drama* toward existential *composure*.

From Meaning-Seeking to Durational Practice

Contemporary psychology has largely inherited existentialism through meaning-centered models. Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, for example, frames meaning as the primary motivational force capable of countering despair and suffering (Frankl, 1959/2006). While clinically valuable, such approaches continue to assume that psychological coherence requires narrative purpose.

The biocognitive durational model challenges this assumption. Meaning is treated not as a universal requirement but as a context-dependent strategy. Under conditions of heightened love, loss, or mortality salience, consciousness may temporarily adopt an “as if immortal” stance—what Vaihinger termed a *useful fiction*—to expand experienced duration (Vaihinger, 1911/1924; Martinez, 2014). Crucially, this is not denial but functional adaptation. The durational model recognizes that, while terrains of meaning continue to inform lived existence, durational absoluteness constitutes a post-resolutive form of completeness—one that does not depend on explanation or reconciliation.

Over time, however, durable well-being depends less on sustaining meaning than on learning how to inhabit temporal flow without requiring justification. Duration becomes the primary medium of lived experience, replacing meaning as the central organizing principle (Martinez, 2001; Martinez, 2014). The durational model recognizes that, while terrains of meaning inform existence, durational absoluteness is post-resolutive completeness.

Courage and Gratitude as Temporal Skills

Within this framework, courage and gratitude are reframed not as virtues (ethical traits) nor as beliefs (cognitive commitments), but as *temporal skills*. This distinction is not merely semantic. It reflects a shift from moral evaluation and propositional assent toward enacted capacities that regulate lived time under conditions of uncertainty, loss, and finitude (Ryle, 1949; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Virtues presuppose normative standards embedded within moral narratives; they locate courage and gratitude within ideals of character and evaluative judgment. Beliefs, by contrast, presuppose truth claims—often implicit—that function to stabilize anxiety by resolving ambiguity (e.g., beliefs about meaning, justice, or permanence). Temporal skills presuppose neither moral evaluation nor epistemic closure. They are learned, embodied capacities that operate prior to narrative justification and independently of belief coherence. Their function is not to explain experience, but to *stabilize duration* within it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991).

From a phenomenological perspective, human suffering under finitude is often less a response to events themselves than to *temporal distortion*: contraction under threat, loss, or illness, and compulsive expansion through anticipation, projection, or compensatory meaning-making (Husserl, 1991; Ratcliffe, 2008). Courage and gratitude function as countervailing skills that regulate these distortions without resolving them.

Courage is the temporal skill of remaining present to *temporal contraction*—as encountered in illness, aging, vulnerability, and mortality—without accelerating into avoidance, denial, or symbolic compensation. It is not the absence of fear, nor the moral triumph over it, but the capacity to sustain attentional and affective presence as duration narrows. Courage, in this sense, resists the

impulse to flee the present by converting finitude into narrative resolution, heroism, or transcendent meaning. It holds open lived time precisely where it threatens to collapse (Heidegger, 1962; Ratcliffe, 2008).

Gratitude, conversely, is the temporal skill of registering *temporal extension*—continuity, relational presence, embodied sufficiency—without converting that extension into entitlement, permanence, or possession. Rather than a positive appraisal of circumstances, gratitude functions as a non-appropriative attunement to duration as given. It sustains openness to what endures without transforming continuity into a claim against loss (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Varela et al., 1991).

Both skills are acquired through practice rather than persuasion. They cannot be installed through exhortation, moral instruction, or belief change alone. Nor do they require narrative articulation to function. Operating below reflective explanation, courage and gratitude modulate temporal experience directly—shaping how long one can remain present to contraction and how freely one can inhabit extension. They do not resolve existential tension; they render it livable (Ryle, 1949; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Together, courage and gratitude form a biocognitive pair: complementary temporal capacities that allow consciousness to remain durationally stable in the face of finitude, without recourse to denial, idealization, or metaphysical consolation. Their significance lies not in what they *mean*, but in what they *do*—how they enable sustained inhabitation of time as it is lived (Husserl, 1991; Martinez, 2001; Martinez, 2014).

A Post-Resolutive Existentialism

By *resolutive existentialism*, I do not refer to a formal school or unified doctrine, but to a shared orientation across existential traditions in which confrontation with finitude, freedom, or absurdity is ultimately expected to yield interpretive, ethical, or narrative stabilization.

This position may be described as post-resolutive existentialism. It does not seek final answers, syntheses, or redemptions, nor does it lapse into nihilism. Instead, it treats unresolvedness as a stable condition rather than a problem to be overcome.

Where existentialism traditionally asks how one should live *in spite of* finitude, this framework asks how one lives *with* finitude once the demand for meaning recedes. Existence is no longer something to be justified, interpreted, or redeemed. It is something to be inhabited—over time, as time. In this sense, the work represents a shift from existential interpretation to existential habitation. The edge is no longer a site of crisis or insight, but a livable terrain.

Expanded Development: Post-Resolution as the Reorganization of Existential Life

To fully understand the significance of post-resolutive existentialism, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by “resolution” in existential history. Resolution has not merely denoted answers to metaphysical questions; it has functioned as a regulatory imperative. Whether through meaning, authenticity, ethical commitment, transcendence, or rebellion, existential systems have historically promised stabilization through interpretive closure.

Even when philosophers denied the attainability of resolution, they preserved its structural role. The absurd still required revolt. Authenticity still demanded stance. Freedom still required justification. In all cases, existence remained answerable to a question it could never conclusively resolve.

What unites these otherwise divergent existential positions is not their conclusions, but their underlying expectation that existential exposure must culminate in some form of resolution—

whether articulated as authenticity, meaning, revolt, commitment, or faith. Even when resolution is framed as provisional or tragic, it remains structurally necessary. Existential tension is permitted to persist only insofar as it generates a stance that restores coherence.

Post-resolutive existentialism departs precisely at this structural point. It does not reject the insights of existential confrontation, but it suspends the assumption that such confrontation must resolve into an interpretive or ethical endpoint. The decisive shift is not away from finitude, but away from the demand that finitude justify itself. What stabilizes existence here is not a stance, narrative, or belief, but the acquired capacity to remain durationally present without interpretive closure.

Post-resolutive existentialism marks the point at which this demand itself dissolves. What is relinquished is not seriousness, value, or responsibility, but the requirement that existence *explain itself* in order to be livable. The organism ceases to treat unresolvedness as a failure condition. Instead, unresolvedness becomes a neutral feature of reality—neither threatening nor ennobling. This represents a fundamental reorganization of existential life. Meaning is no longer the axis around which affect, identity, and continuity must be coordinated. Narrative explanation relinquishes its regulatory primacy. In its place emerges duration as a stabilizing medium.

In post-resolutive existence, the self is no longer positioned as an interpreter tasked with reconciling contradictions. It becomes an embodied temporal agent capable of remaining present across expansion and contraction without escalation. The existential task shifts from *making sense* to *staying in contact*.

Importantly, this stance is not achieved through insight or decision. One does not “choose” post-resolution. It develops procedurally, through repeated lived encounters in which meaning fails to

restore equilibrium—and yet the organism survives intact. Over time, the nervous system learns that continuity does not depend on explanation. Duration becomes trustworthy.

This is why post-resolutive existentialism must be understood as a skill-based orientation rather than a philosophical conclusion. It is enacted, not affirmed. Practiced, not believed. It is acquired through exposure, not argument.

Affect remains fully operative in this mode. Love is not diminished; it is deepened by the absence of guarantees. Loss is not softened; it is endured without consolation. Mortality is not denied; it is integrated without dramatization. What disappears is the reflex to convert these realities into narratives of justification.

Post-resolutive existentialism therefore does not resolve existential tension—it outgrows the need to resolve it. What emerges is composure: a stable capacity to remain in the presence of what cannot be reconciled without internal fragmentation.

In this sense, post-resolutive existentialism is not the negation of existential philosophy, but its maturation. It carries the confrontation with finitude to its logical endpoint, where interpretation relinquishes authority and habitation begins.

Additive Elaboration: The Post-Resolute Stance as Developmental Threshold

To describe this framework as post-resolutive is not merely to signal the absence of answers, but to mark a developmental threshold in existential functioning. Resolution, historically, has served as a compensatory structure: a way of stabilizing consciousness when faced with the indeterminacy of finitude. What follows resolution is not collapse, but reorganization.

In the post-resolute stance, unresolvedness is no longer experienced as deficit. It is metabolized as a condition of reality that does not require narrative repair. This represents a shift from epistemic

mastery to temporal tolerance. The subject no longer seeks coherence through explanation, but continuity through embodied duration.

Importantly, this stance does not emerge through intellectual assent. It is not achieved by accepting paradox or embracing ambiguity as a philosophical position. Rather, it develops through repeated exposure to moments in which meaning fails to stabilize experience—illness that does not redeem, loss that does not instruct, love that does not justify permanence—and the organism nonetheless remains present.

Here the post-resolute condition reveals its biocognitive significance. Meaning-making, while adaptive, is energetically costly. It recruits narrative systems, evaluative judgments, and symbolic coherence to regulate distress. When meaning is relinquished as compulsory, regulatory burden shifts from cognition to embodied temporality. The nervous system learns, over time, that continuity does not depend on explanation.

This is why the post-resolute stance cannot be reduced to acceptance, resignation, or stoicism. Acceptance implies an object that has been cognitively integrated. Stoicism implies a moral discipline oriented toward control. Post-resolutive duration implies neither. It is a learned capacity to remain in contact with what exceeds integration without converting that excess into doctrine or identity.

In this sense, post-resolutive existentialism does not negate the achievements of earlier existential thought; it extends them. It carries forward the confrontation with finitude, but releases the demand that such confrontation yield insight, authenticity, or redemption. What remains is not emptiness, but skill—specifically, the skill of staying.

Formal Distinction from Apophatic Theology and Negative Capability

Given its emphasis on non-explanation, absoluteness, and endurance beyond meaning, the present framework may appear adjacent to apophatic theology or to aesthetic traditions of negative capability. A formal distinction is therefore required.

Apophatic theology approaches the absolute through systematic negation, withdrawing language to preserve transcendence and orienting silence toward an ineffable divine referent (Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987). Non-knowledge remains epistemic and ultimately theological.

By contrast, post-resolutive duration is not oriented toward transcendence or hidden fullness. The absolute here is immanent, temporal, and embodied. Non-explanation is not reverence but regulation.

Negative capability, as articulated by Keats, valorizes remaining in uncertainty without irritable reaching after fact or reason, primarily as an aesthetic and imaginative capacity (Keats, 1817/1958). Post-resolutive existentialism differs in aim and scope: it is not an aesthetic posture but a lived regulatory competence under existential pressure.

The post-resolute stance does not sanctify uncertainty or aestheticize ambiguity. It operationalizes endurance.

Enacting Duration Is Not Capitulation

A potential misreading of this framework is to construe the enactment of duration as resignation, quietism, or capitulation in the face of existential absolutes. This interpretation mistakes non-explanation for passivity. In fact, enacting duration constitutes a form of embodied courage: the willingness to enter a terrain of absoluteness without interpretive scaffolding, reconciliation, or symbolic rescue.

Capitulation implies surrender to an external force. Enacted duration does the opposite. It refuses the authority of explanatory regimes—whether metaphysical, moral, or narrative—to adjudicate

the legitimacy of lived time. What is relinquished is not agency, but interpretation as a compulsory mediator of experience.

In this sense, duration is not endured but embodied. The subject does not seek to understand absoluteness, nor to domesticate it through meaning. Absoluteness is approached as a lived terrain—entered, inhabited, and exited—without being converted into doctrine, worldview, or existential identity.

Conclusion

The distinct contribution of this framework lies in its refusal to dramatize existence and its insistence that existential maturity does not require resolution. By abandoning the compulsion to solve foundational tensions—self and other, freedom and finitude, meaning and mortality—it proposes a mode of living oriented toward endurance, precision, and composure rather than explanation.

This is not a retreat from existential seriousness, but its continuation by other means. Where traditional existentialism mobilized anxiety as a catalyst for authenticity, and contemporary meaning-centered models mobilize narrative coherence as a buffer against despair, the durational approach cultivates tolerance for unresolvedness itself. Psychological stability is no longer secured by answers, but by the capacity to remain present within temporal flow without narrative reinforcement.

The implications of this stance are both theoretical and practical. Philosophically, it reframes the existential project from one of interpretation to one of habitation. Existence is not a text to be decoded nor a problem to be mastered, but a temporal field to be entered, navigated, and exited repeatedly. Clinically, it suggests that well-being may depend less on restoring meaning than on

strengthening durational skills—particularly in contexts of chronic illness, aging, bereavement, and irreversible loss, where explanatory frameworks often collapse.

Importantly, this framework does not abolish meaning. It situates meaning as optional rather than obligatory, instrumental rather than foundational. Meaning may arise, recede, or reappear without being tasked with stabilizing existence. What carries continuity instead is duration itself: the embodied capacity to remain in time without requiring it to justify itself.

In articulating a post-resolutive, durational existentialism, this work offers a composed alternative to both nihilism and redemption. It neither negates the absolute nor seeks refuge from it. Instead, it treats absoluteness as a terrain—entered with courage, inhabited without explanation, and left without residue. The aim is not transcendence, but skillful presence.

Existence, in this view, is no longer something to be solved. It is something to be lived—over time, as time.

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