

Introduction

Viktor Frankl and Man's Search for Meaning

Viktor Frankl was born on 26 March 1905 in the Jewish district of Leopoldstadt in Vienna. After living a remarkable life that was shaped by the major intellectual and cultural trends of the twentieth century, he died at the age of ninety-two of heart failure on 2 September 1997 in Vienna. Frankl is best known for writing the highly acclaimed Holocaust testimony *Man's Search for Meaning*, and he is also recognized as the founder of his own school of psychotherapy—logotherapy. As the proclaimed successor to Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's individual psychology, logotherapy is promoted as the “third Viennese school of psychotherapy.”¹ Defined succinctly, logotherapy is a form of existential psychotherapy that is conceived as “therapy through meaning.”² Frankl's third school of Logotherapy therefore complements the Freudian will to pleasure, and the Adlerian will to power, by considering the primary motivational force in humans to be the will to meaning. In Freudian and Adlerian therapies the focus is on personal introspection, uncovering character structures, and remembering significant (often traumatic) events in the past. In contrast, logotherapy focuses on concrete life conditions and guides the patient to find what is considered the unique and specific meaning to their existence.

Since his death, three biographies of Frankl have been published. In Vienna, Frankl's disciple Alfred Längle published *Viktor Frankl Ein Porträt* in 1998. Längle, the head of the International Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis, was Frankl's right-hand man from 1982 until 1991. In 1991 Frankl severed ties with Längle over the latter's psychotherapeutic revisions that incorporated elements of depth psychology, personal introspection, and significant

experiences. According to Frankl, these revisions were “anti-therapeutic.”³ Despite the rejection, Längle’s biography is full of praise and admiration. This is not surprising since Längle conceived of Frankl as a “fatherly friend” during their association and claimed that he was one of only two friends Frankl had in his life, and the “one who knew him best.”⁴ This intimate friendship allowed Längle to rely on personal stories and anecdotes, along with an extended version of Frankl’s autobiography that Frankl had entrusted to him, to paint a glowing portrait.

The second biographer, the American psychologist Haddon Klingberg, Jr., was a professor of psychology at North Park University in Chicago. Klingberg originally studied with Frankl in Vienna in 1962. Although they had little to no contact over the years, Frankl chose Klingberg in the early 1990s to become his official biographer. Based on hundreds of hours of interviews Klingberg provides an “unabashedly sympathetic rendering of their story as Viktor and Elly [Frankl’s second wife] told it to me.”⁵ Similar to Längle’s, Klingberg’s book is conceived in a hagiographic mode that is profoundly flattering. I published the third biography, *Viktor Frankl: Das Ende eines Mythos?* in 2005. The objective of my biography was to provide a critical reflection that focused on Frankl’s intellectual struggle for meaning. This substantially revised English version includes two chapters not originally published in German, and also incorporates the insights of Längle and Klingberg. In addition I respond to criticisms that head of the Frankl archive and university Professor Alexander Batthyány expressed in his response to my critical view of Frankl, entitled *Mythos Frankl? Geschichte der Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse 1925-1945, Entgegnung auf Timothy Pytell*.

All biographers agree that Frankl’s biography is fascinating. In his long and productive life Frankl wrote over thirty books and dozens of articles. As a neurologist and self-proclaimed founder of existential analysis, Frankl addressed in his writings subjects ranging from therapeutic and social concerns to scientific research.⁶ His renowned Holocaust memoir, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, is a worldwide best seller, and was once ranked by “Library of Congress in Washington ... as one of the ten most influential books in America.”⁷ *Man’s Search for Meaning* has also sold millions of copies in the English version alone, and has been chosen five times by American colleges as “the book of the year.”⁸ Indeed, the impact of the book has been global because it has been translated into twenty languages, including Chinese and Japanese, and sold over ten million copies worldwide. Touting his success to Robert Leslie, the curator of the Viktor Frankl Library and Memorabilia in Berkeley, Frankl proclaimed, “*Man’s Search for Meaning* was Number One on a new list called Longseller. This list refers to those bestsellers which throughout decades, do not stop bestselling.”⁹

The success of *Man’s Search for Meaning* has also served to promote logotherapy because Frankl included a theoretical synopsis of his brand of analysis as a postscript. The synopsis, entitled “Logotherapy in a Nutshell,” was included at the suggestion of the renowned Harvard psychologist, Gordon Allport. Allport

was an early supporter of Frankl when he came to America in the late 1950s, and he wrote a preface for the first English translation of Frankl's testimony. During the 1960s the success of *Man's Search for Meaning* enabled Frankl to steadily build a broad base of support for logotherapy in America, and, from the 1970s on, globally. Currently there are numerous logotherapeutic institutes and societies that literally span the globe.

Along with his Holocaust testimony, Frankl's broad popular appeal stems from the fact that his intellectual work focused on what is arguably the central question of Western culture in the twentieth century: nihilism and the problem of human meaning.¹⁰ Besides asking this essential question, Frankl also claimed that his existential psychology provided ways to answer to this profound dilemma. His brand of existentialism certainly does offer a straightforward and quite popular answer to the problem of human meaning. As a doctor and psychiatrist Frankl took a practical and humanistic approach to the problem of human meaning. He therefore developed "dimensional ontology" that allowed him to diagnose patients as beset with either a somatogenic (physical), psychogenic (psychological), or noogenic (spiritual) malady. Logotherapy focuses primarily on the latter category as it helps patients to triumph over the psychosomatic by allowing them to muster "the defiant power of the human spirit" and derive meaning from their problems/conditions. As praxis, logotherapy is very eclectic and open to almost any therapeutic technique from hypnosis to lobotomy. However, Frankl developed two logotherapeutic techniques—paradoxical intention and dereflection—based on the noological dimension's ability to disassociate. The origins of paradoxical intention are discussed in chapter 4 and dimensional ontology is covered in chapters 8 and 10.

Logotherapy also provided a theory of values that pointed to three possibilities for the fulfillment of the will to meaning: (1) a deed or creative work; (2) an experience, especially love; and (3) the attitude we take toward an unalterable fate.¹¹ This latter category of attitudinal values is key to logotherapy because it helps individuals derive meaning from the most tragic and "meaningless" circumstances of human suffering. Undeniably, Frankl and his movement of logotherapy provide a great deal of solace and comfort for those in emotional and spiritual need. On the other hand a more critical view argues that by offering hope and consolation rather than intellectual challenge, logotherapy is a "surface psychology." In this view logotherapy is an early example of the "self-help" movement that fits into the genre of "retail psycho-spirituality."

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of logotherapy as a *therapy* is not a primary concern of this book and instead the focus is on a biographical history of Frankl's intellectual struggle to find meaning as it unfolded in the dynamic twentieth century. The development of logotherapy and in particular the logotherapeutic conception of humanity is central to this story.

The secondary literature on Frankl is constantly expanding, and often consists of tributes of resounding praise. There is also a significant body of literature

on the therapeutic aspects and strategies of logotherapy being developed by the Viktor Frankl Institute.¹² Frankl and his intellectual production have been overlooked by academic historians for a variety of reasons. Most academics have focused on the arguably more sophisticated work of Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Binswanger, and Medard Boss. However, when Frankl reflected on his rejection by academia he was fond of stating “that the really big ones,” i.e., Heidegger, Jaspers, Binswanger, and Allport, showed appreciation for his work.¹³ Part of the rejection undoubtedly also stemmed from Frankl’s character. For example, in their biographies both Längle and Klingberg describe Frankl as a genius, but also suggest Frankl’s personal style might have led some to reject or overlook the significance of his ideas. According to Klingberg, Frankl could appear to “be demanding, impatient, too quick and tart in debate... At times he sounded boastful, self-congratulatory.”¹⁴ On the other hand Klingberg claims Frankl’s characteristics of self-absorption, self-promotion, and disregard for others are attributable to his “creative genius.”¹⁵ Längle asserts a similar view of Frankl but uses the term “narcissistic” to capture Frankl’s character and to explain why he was rejected by many of his contemporaries.¹⁶ These assessments are confirmed by the renowned scholar of Martin Buber, Maurice Friedman. Friedman hosted Frankl in the mid 1970s at Tulane University and was somewhat put off by Frankl’s arrogance, describing him as a “brilliant prima donna.”¹⁷

Despite his persona (or maybe because of it) Frankl certainly achieved success in academia. For example, he was a professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Vienna, Distinguished Professor of Logotherapy at the U.S. International University, and visiting professor at Harvard, Duquesne University, and Southern Methodist University. He also received twenty-eight honorary doctorates from universities throughout the world, and the American Psychiatric Association awarded him the Oskar Pfister Award. Finally, in 1995 Frankl was nominated by the far right Freedom Party for Eherenbürgerschaft (Honorary Citizenship of Vienna), and he eventually received the high honor by unanimous vote. But arguably his most significant “achievement” was his ability to not only survive Auschwitz and Dachau, but also to retain a hopeful and positive take on life after such profound tragedy. Without a doubt, much of Frankl’s intellectual and moral legitimacy stemmed from the tragic optimism exemplified by his Holocaust testimony.

In his own self-appraisal, in an article somewhat ironically entitled “Logotherapy on Its Way to Degurufication,” Frankl quoted an unnamed “president of an international organization” who introduced him in these terms: “Dr. Frankl, you remind me of the Austrian emperor Charles V. Of his worldwide empire one used to say that therein, the sun never sets.” Frankl concluded by adding: “And wasn’t he right?”¹⁸ Frankl’s embrace of the image of himself as a reincarnation of Charles V—in a lecture on the degurufication of logotherapy—reveals a profound inconsistency in his life that deserves to be explored. Namely, while Frankl lived valuing the humbled simplicity of an ascetic, he

clearly pursued and enjoyed his worldwide fame. As we shall see, in the culturally fractured European twentieth century what could prove more alluring to a man who throughout his life strove to become someone of importance—than to be king?

Frankl's Struggles

Addressing the significance and development of his own work, Frankl claimed that “each founder of a psychotherapeutic school ... describes ... his own neurosis and ... writes his own case history.” In Frankl’s case this was “the hell of despair over the apparent meaninglessness of life[, the] ultimate nihilism” that he “wrestled with ... like Jacob with the angel” until he developed “immunity against nihilism.”¹⁹ According to Frankl, a fight and subsequent triumph over nihilism is the charm of logotherapy, and the grand unifying structure of his intellectual efforts.

Many commentators have noted that the prevalent existentialist world view after World War II originated in humanity’s confrontation with the absurd and irrational nature of existence in the first half of the twentieth century. In this view, the response by the existentialists to horrific total war and cultural crisis was to embrace radical individualism, and the complementary claims that the recognition of human mortality/absurdity and subsequent absence of objective universal truth leads to “authentic” existence.²⁰ The existential posture that questions and thus undermines traditional social norms and values has led to the criticism that existentialism is beholden to relativism and ultimately nihilism. This in turn begs the question: What are we to make of Frankl’s claims to have solved these profound philosophical dilemmas?

Frankl’s intellectual biography is an interesting case study in how existentialism and the consequent dilemma of human meaning came to occupy intellectuals in the twentieth century. His popular existentialism and personal solution to nihilism also provide an insightful way to reflect on how and why the existential attitude became so pervasive. As he often stated, his work occupied the “border ground” between philosophy and psychology. Notably, the Holocaust impacted both Frankl’s intellectual development and the reception of his ideas.

But there is also significant continuity in Frankl’s development. Frankl described himself not as a “big thinker,” but rather as one who thinks consequences through.²¹ As we shall see, from his teenage years, Frankl continually focused on nihilism, and the analogous existential concerns with the meaning of life, the limits of rationality, and the existence of God.

Therefore, the following intellectual biography will seek to comprehend the unity of Frankl’s life by examining the tensions around which it was structured. Frankl’s intellectual development began with his brief immersion in Freud-

ianism in the early 1920s. According to Frankl, he initiated a correspondence with Freud that eventually led Freud to publish one of Frankl's letters in the *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*.²² But he soon found the Freudian world view disenchanting and reductionist. As his disenchantment set in he was also rejected for training analysis by the secretary of the psychoanalytic society, Paul Federn. Subsequently, Frankl joined Adler's circle in 1924. In 1925 he published an article that celebrated Adlerianism and rejected Freudian iconoclasm.²³ The next year, Frankl published an article on the psychology of intellectualism. In this article, Frankl argued that the intellectual is characterized by a "hypertrophy of the thought function."²⁴ The content of the article was slightly critical of Adlerianism, and revealed a young man struggling with the question of human meaning. With the breakup of Adler's circle, Frankl aligned with two of the older and more conservative departing members: Rudolf Allers and Oswald Schwarz. In addition to these influences, Frankl described how in the late 1920s Max Scheler's *Formalism in Ethics*, a phenomenological work on objectivity and values, was like "a bible" for him, and helped shake him free from "psychologism."²⁵

In 1928 Frankl began working under Otto Pötzl, who had replaced Wagner Juaregg at the University of Vienna; the next year Frankl designated Pötzl as "Honorary President" of his burgeoning youth counseling movement.²⁶ In the late 1920s Frankl studied medicine and continued to develop the praxis of youth counseling he had begun under Adler. In the early 1930s, Frankl initially formalized logotherapy, and his prescription for youth in distress was a call for them to find a "mission."²⁷ Apparently Pötzl had some influence over the initial formation of logotherapy because in 1996 Frankl described Pötzl as "the true genius," ranking him above both Freud and Adler.²⁸ However, Pötzl was a very ambiguous figure politically, because he claimed to have paid Nazi party dues from 1930 to 1933, and he eventually joined the Nazi party in December of 1943.²⁹ It is quite possible that Pötzl was a "muss Nazi" and only joined, or was pressured to join, the Nazi party, because of his position at the University clinic. According to Klingberg, "Pötzl was, in Viktor's enduring estimation, 'no Nazi'—not in sympathy, not in behavior."³⁰ Frankl's relationships to Freud, Adler, and Pötzl are the keys to understanding his search for meaning.

After receiving his medical degree in 1930, Frankl practiced as a doctor, first under Pötzl and then under Dr. Joseph Gerstmann at the Maria Theresien-Schlössel. From 1933 until 1937 Frankl worked in the female suicide ward at the state hospital Am Steinhof.³¹ In 1936–1937 he participated as a commentator in all four seminars conducted by the Austrian Landesgruppe (branch) of the International General Medical Society for Psychotherapy.³² The International German General Medical Society was under the leadership of Carl Jung. The German General Medical Society (Görling Institute) was the largest of the national groups, and beginning in 1934 was under the leadership of the cousin of the leading Nazi Hermann Göring, Henri Mathius Göring. In 1937 Frankl

wrote an article on the “spiritual problem in psychotherapy” for the Göring Institute’s journal, the *Zentralblatt für Psychotherapie*.³³ In this article Frankl re-framed the notion of having a mission as one of accepting responsibility. Frankl also took a stance against the Göring Institute’s political agenda with his adamant argument that the therapist was in no position to determine the content of the sense of responsibility. In January 1938, two months before the *Anschluss* (connection) with Germany, Frankl connected the logotherapeutic focus on world views to the work of some of the leading Nazi psychotherapists.³⁴ It is important to note that despite the affirmative statements about the focus on world views by the leading Nazi psychotherapists, he once again took a stance against the imposition of world views in therapy. He also published the article in *Der christliche Ständestaat*, which was anti-Nazi and steadfastly supported the Catholic authoritarian state. Some have suggested that Frankl’s activities in the 1930s are another reason some Viennese tend to overlook his logotherapy. For instance, in June 1996 at the opening address of the World Congress of Psychotherapy, Frankl was interviewed by Professor Guttman from the University of Vienna. Guttman, who is also a member of Frankl’s institute, cited Frankl’s 1938 article in his concluding statement when trying to explain why Frankl and his logotherapy had not received the recognition they deserved.³⁵ Frankl’s actions and writings from the 1930s are addressed in chapter 5.

In the early 1940s, Frankl conducted medical research that involved attempts to revive suicidal Jewish patients at the Rothschild hospital. For many, Frankl’s medical efforts are heroic and capture the desperation of a doctor acting in unfathomable circumstances to save Jewish patients. As we shall see in chapter 6, under the circumstances some might find the extraordinary measures questionable.

In September 1942 Frankl was deported to the ghetto Theresienstadt. He spent two trying years in Theresienstadt working in the mental hospital, and three anxious days “in depot” in the unfinished “Mexico” section of Auschwitz Birkenau, before being transferred to Dachau. He then spent nearly seven horrendous months working first as a laborer, then as a doctor in two sub-camps of Dachau. After his release in April 1945, Frankl eventually returned to Vienna. In 1945, Frankl dictated both his famous Holocaust testimony and revised a work written before his imprisonment, *The Doctor and the Soul*. His continuing struggle to combat relativism and find Meaning led Frankl to publish *The Unconscious God* in 1946. This book argued not that God had been subjected to a cultural repression, but rather that individuals had a need for a personal religiousness/spirituality within their unconscious depths. This leads to compatibility between logotherapy and pastoral psychology. Also, this assertion of the existence of an unconscious god has been described by the founder of thanatology, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, as Frankl’s most “honest” book.³⁶

In addition to his conviction in an unconscious desire for God, Frankl’s account of his camp experience presented his survival in terms of heroic spir-

itual suffering. As we shall see, this version, which made the Holocaust seem survivable, cut against the grain of many other Holocaust testimonies. But Frankl's popular testimony affirming the existence of God after the catastrophe played well with the American religious community, and helps explain why Frankl developed a strong following among American ministers and pastoral psychologists.

At the same time, Frankl's testimony, second only to the *Diary of Anne Frank* in popularity, has raised the ire of experts on the Holocaust. For example, in the 1990s the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington purportedly refused to sell *Man's Search for Meaning* in the gift shop³⁷ Also, a powerful critique of Frankl's approach to the Holocaust can be found in Lawrence Langer's book *Versions of Survival*. According to Langer, Frankl presents "a very partial view," because "he excludes ... the possibility that for thousands in the deathcamps ... death may have seemed more 'worth' dying than life worth living."³⁸ Langer also described Frankl's interpretation as a "circumventing [of] the death encounter in favor of spiritual heroism ... to contend with the moral uncertainties of the Holocaust."³⁹ These issues are addressed in chapter 7.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s Frankl became very popular in America. Frankl's survival of the Holocaust, his reassurance that life is meaningful, and his personal conviction that God exists served to make him a forerunner of the self-help genre. Frankl's success was achieved despite an early 1960s critique of logotherapy by Rollo May. May, who was a founder of the American existential psychology movement, criticized logotherapy (especially its religious coloration) for being "authoritarian."⁴⁰ Perhaps this criticism moved Frankl to tone down what some saw as heavy-handed religiosity, and he promoted his work as usable by the religiously oriented as well as agnostics and atheists. However, shortly before his death, in an interview with Dan Quayle's speech writer Matthew Scully, Frankl claimed "if you call 'religious' a man who believes in what I call Supermeaning, a meaning so comprehensive that you can no longer grasp it ... then one should feel free to call me religious."⁴¹

Thought

In terms of the intellectual history of the twentieth century, Frankl's trajectory fits neatly into the widely prevalent existentialist critique of Freud. Like many existentialists, Frankl criticized the purported absolutism and nihilistic reductionism inherent in Freud's reliance on biology. At heart, Frankl's existential brand of analysis represented a revolt against what he saw as the nihilistic reductionism of Freud's naturalism. That is, Frankl, like most existentialists, wanted to view humans as purposeful meaning-giving subjects, rather than as biological organisms powered by drives.

In his analysis and historical reconstruction of the crisis of positivism and rationalism in European intellectual culture, Gerald Izenberg's *The Existentialist Critique of Freud* characterized Freud as a transitional figure who undermined positivism even as he attempted to shore it up. In Izenberg's view, the positivistic framework out of which the psychoanalytic theory of meaning developed had been constructed with the purpose of explaining man as a biological organism. Freud's theory of instincts was therefore an attempt to integrate the biological, physiological, and psychological perspectives. According to Izenberg, after the First World War, Freud developed the conception of the death instinct in order to provide a biological explanation for "irrational" behavior such as passivity, idealization of the object of love, etc. "But as a biological construct, the death instinct was a phantasy ... that couldn't be fitted into a theory based on survival and procreation, [and] revealed the inadequacy of a biological framework to encompass a truly human psychology."⁴² Therefore, Freud's death instinct, and the endeavor to develop a non-biological explanation for self-alienation, became the take-off point for the existentialist critique of Freud.

In general terms, the existentialists insisted on the primacy of meaning in psychic life, and they wanted to develop a conception of selfhood that was free from Freud's biological determinism. Consequently, they rejected Freud's positivism, which treated the self as driven by instincts and dominated by past psychic events. Instead, the existentialists established a subjective psychology within which the self was presented as a purposeful and meaning-giving subject, capable of freedom and authenticity, as well as a surrendering of authenticity. The latter occurred when the subject conferred "an absolute determinateness on the roles and norms of one's social environment," which "gave one a sense of solidity, of sameness through time." This conception of un-authenticity allowed the existentialists to explain "the continuing power of the past in the life of the present ... and the meaning of submission to authority figures and identification with them" without reference to "the drive to inorganic stability" as Freud defined the death instinct.⁴³

From Izenberg's perspective, the existentialism of Binswanger, Heidegger, and Boss appeared as a continuation of the crisis of positivism because each completely rejected a material understanding of human behavior. As Izenberg pointed out, the rejection of naturalism by the existentialists, initiated but certainly not completed by Freud's postulation of the death instinct, undermined any attempt to affirm what is healthy. Since the existentialists rejected biological norms as reductionist, they could not say what is natural, but only what is "authentic." The problem is that authenticity is "only a negative moment in which the self suddenly [becomes] aware of the irrationality of all 'necessary' beliefs and the self-constituted nature of permanent identities."⁴⁴ But beyond this epiphany of disengagement and distancing, the concept of authenticity is unable to offer anything positive. Izenberg illustrated the dilemma when he described how Freud preserved the holist concept of health by grounding it in

universal instincts, while the existentialists “had no such recourse to biological norms of health” and as a result “each took a different path out of their common dilemma.”

According to this viewpoint, the open-ended concept of authenticity placed existentialists in a theoretical impasse. Sartre attempted to negotiate it by blending existentialism with Marxism. According to Izenberg, Heidegger turned to Nazism and “historical activism in the form of nationalist renewal,” and after the failure of the Nazi movement to “a mystical form of idealist absolutism that betrayed his original concept of Authenticity.”⁴⁵

Although Izenberg did not deal with Frankl, his work does provide an important analytical aid. The existentialist philosophical impasse was exemplified in Frankl's struggle to overcome nihilism and find Meaning, and more specifically in his critique of the Freudians, whom he considered “the unmasking psychologists ... that negate what is authentic, the truly human, in human beings.”⁴⁶ After he abandoned both Freudianism and Adlerianism, Frankl's pursuit of the genuine in human beings led him to follow an intellectual trajectory somewhat similar to that of Heidegger. Buttressed by a belief in the objectivity of values derived from Scheler, Frankl initially attempted to solve the existentialist impasse of authenticity (or in Frankl's terms, Meaning) by trying to develop a new form of psychotherapy. In Frankl's “height psychology,” the focus was on will, responsibility, and having a “mission.” But the actual content of these missions was an issue for the individual conscience. Relying on Scheler's conception of absolute values, Frankl was confident that the individual would find the ultimate *Meaning* of their life. Also, Frankl's therapeutic proscriptions rejected the imposition of world views in therapy; he therefore didn't address the existential concerns with submission to social norms, or identification with authority figures. Herein was the novel version of psychotherapy that Frankl promoted in the *Zentralblatt of Psychotherapie* in 1937. After the Holocaust, Frankl attempted to shore up the open-ended categories of will, responsibility, and a mission that undergirded his height psychology, with the concept of an “unconscious god.” Therefore, in 1946, Frankl prescribed that “it is the task of logotherapy to remind the patient of his unconscious religiousness.”⁴⁷

Given their mutual existentialist bent, it is not so surprising that Heidegger and Frankl had a personal relationship. Frankl described their mutual visits in the 1950s and their shared philosophical conviction “that what has passed, has passed, and what has passed will come again.”⁴⁸ As we shall see, Frankl's theoretical work was influenced by Heideggerianism, and his postwar intellectual position, with its mixture of existentialism and religion, may be described as a popularization of Heideggerianism.⁴⁹ These issues are addressed in chapter 8.

But there is one caveat here. As a representative figure in the existential critique of Freud, Frankl nevertheless maintained that his work was an “ontological fulfillment” of Freud and Adler. This assertion, first made in the *Zentralblatt für Psychotherapie* in 1937 and continued as a claim on behalf of the third

school of Viennese psychotherapy after the war, might have elements of truth in it, but it was also useful as an effective promotional strategy. This latter point is especially central since the logotherapeutic focus on the tragic triad surrounding life (death, suffering, and guilt) and the claim that this triad is deeply intertwined with a spiritual dimension have much in common with Heidegger's conviction that both death and guilt are privileged forms of awareness that can lead to authenticity. As we shall see, the trajectory of Frankl's intellectual development went from Freud to an existentialism embodied in logotherapy, but there were a variety of reasons behind his desire to navigate between (and beyond) both Freud and Heidegger.

From the perspective of traditional intellectual history, Frankl's transition from Freud to logotherapy, augmented by Scheler's phenomenology and Heidegger's existentialism, may be conceived as a reactionary clinging by a bourgeois intellectual to a "mandarin" intellectual culture of spiritual values.⁵⁰ But Frankl is much more than a mere reactionary because he takes a "third path" and attempts to fulfill the revolutionary opportunities in the field of psychology offered by the collapse of the monarchy, the rise of Red Vienna, and hyper-modernization after the Great War. As we shall see, his revolutionary solution is exemplified by his "height psychology." This perspective is confirmed by Geoffrey Cocks's recent argument that the period between the wars and Nazi Germany "did not constitute the culmination of modern trends. But they did form structural, experiential and discursive continuities in Germany and the West before 1933 and in the German successor states, Europe and the West, and eventually much of the world after 1945."⁵¹ In a way, the story of the development and worldwide success of logotherapy is a micro-history of these larger trends in modernity.

Finally, along with offering his particular solution to the crisis in values, Frankl's navigation from Freudian empiricism to the idealism of existentialism also involved a journey from a focus on eros to an affirmation of thanatos. The first orientation, exemplified by Freudianism, looked to the material, organic, and thus instinctual dimension of human existence to ground meaning. The second orientation, rooted in Kierkegaard, and initiated after the Great War by Freud's articulation of the death instinct, was fleshed out and clarified by Heidegger and other existentialists in their celebration of human finitude. As we have noted, many existentialists, with their focus on the reality of death, not life, turned toward idealist absolutism in order to locate "authentic" meaning. But as Izenberg rightfully pointed out, this position was ultimately relativistic because it could not provide normative grounds of health. How could it? As we shall see, Frankl's mature intellectual positions suggest that, like Sartre and Heidegger, he never adequately solved this impasse. Also, by remaining tethered to the claim that the "truth" and highest meaning within human existence is to be found in the tragic triad of death, suffering, and guilt, Frankl promoted spiritual values that were ultimately derived from a focus on thanatos. Aug-

mented by this theoretical position, Frankl could claim that the horrors of the Holocaust offered the possibility of a meaningful spiritual struggle, and that an ultimate “super-meaning” was to be found through a belief in God.

Frankl is therefore similar to many twentieth-century thinkers influenced by existential currents that initially were students of Freud, and in their rejection of Freud's biological reductionism looked to the reality of death in order to locate human meaning. It is not surprising that in their confrontation with human finitude, the existentialists found themselves affirming the totalizing movements of fascism, communism, or in Frankl's case, the development of a novel form of psychotherapy he labeled “height psychology.” Each of these strategies attempted to close the fractured and open-ended relativism of Western modernity. But after the disappointing failure of these worldly aspirations, the existentialists took flight in either idealist absolutism—with religious or neo-religious connotations—or the nihilistic rejection of the whole of humanity. As Heidegger pessimistically stated, we must “prepare expectations” because “only a god can save us,”⁵² while Sartre claimed man a “useless passion.” From this perspective Frankl's quasi-religious turn toward an “unconscious god” and a “super-meaning” to solve nihilism was a similar trend.

Existentialists have justified their focus on death with the claim that it leads to a privileged form of awareness and a vitalization of life. But if viewed from a Nietzschean perspective of a life-affirming philosophy, the pervasive religious sentiment among existentialists is the most insidious form of nihilism because it denies meaning to this world. We are therefore left with the question: Does the existentialist focus on death lead to denigration or a vitalization of life? Succinctly, what is authenticity?

The reconstruction of Frankl's intellectual biography is an effective way to ponder this question, and provides fascinating insight into some of the deep tensions in the secular-humanist culture of the twentieth century. This, then, is the story of Viktor Frankl's Search for Meaning.

Notes

1. See Viktor Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen Büchern steht* (Munich: Quintessenz, 1995), 44. Frankl claimed that Wolfgang Soucek first dubbed logotherapy the “third Viennese school of psychotherapy.”

2. See Viktor Frankl, “Logotherapy in a Nutshell,” in *Man's Search for Meaning*, Touchstone ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 101–137.

3. Alfred Längle, *Viktor Frankl Ein Porträt* (München: Piper, 1998), 280.

4. *Ibid.*, 171.

5. Haddon Klingberg, Jr., *When Life Calls Out to Us: The Love and Lifework of Viktor and Elly Frankl* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), xi.

6. The Viktor Frankl Institute's web page makes the claim that Frankl is the founder of both logotherapy and existential analysis. The Institute also maintains a current and thorough (since 1946) bibliography of Frankl's writings and a current curriculum vitae.

7. Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen*, 99.
8. *Ibid.*, 85.
9. Frankl, quoted in Robert Leslie, "The Story of a Bestseller," *International Forum for Logotherapy* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 64.
10. Frankl called the problem of meaning the "existential vacuum" and claimed it "is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century." See Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 111.
11. Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen*, 44.
12. For the constantly expanding list see <http://logotherapy.univie.ac.at/e/bibE.html>. The best introduction is *Existential Psychotherapy of Meaning: Handbook of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*, edited by Alexander Batthyány and Jay Levison (Phoenix: Zeig, Tucker and Theisen, 2009). There are two other secondary works in English on Frankl. The first, Joseph Fabry, *The Pursuit of Meaning: Viktor Frankl, Logotherapy, and Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), is an attempt to popularize and simplify Frankl's work for an American audience. The second, William Blair Gould, *Viktor E. Frankl: Life with Meaning* (Belmont, California: Brooks/Cole, 1993), is a very uneven attempt to paste a philosophical background to Frankl's work. The one in German, Karl Dienelt, *Von Freud zu Frankl* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1967), is deceptively titled. Dienelt focused mainly on humanistic psychology, with Frankl's postwar formulation of logotherapy representing the most significant vision among many.
13. Frankl's autobiography, *Was nicht in meinen*, contains pictures of him with Heidegger, Binswanger, and Jaspers. Also see Viktor Frankl, Interview by Tom Corrigan (tape recording), Vienna, Austria, 1981, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. Hereafter cited as Corrigan Interview (GTU).
14. Klingberg, *When Life Calls Out to Us*, 226.
15. *Ibid.*, 227.
16. Längle, *Viktor Frankl: Ein Porträt*, 129.
17. Interview with author, San Diego, California, 1 May 2006. Abraham Maslow had a similar response when he remarked in his journal after meeting Frankl in 1963: "3:10 a.m.—can't sleep. After Frankl evening, which wasn't unpleasant but was certainly a wasted evening... I didn't like Frankl's pushing." See Maslow, A. *The Journals of A.H. Maslow*, ed. Richard Lowry (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1979), 298. Finally, five years later, in 1968, Maslow wrote, "Funny thing about Frankl—he talks and writes the B-language [Maslow's terms for higher thinking; see chapter 10] and yet he doesn't live it. He's still pushing his own wagon, self-absorbed, narcissistic, just as in the past." *Ibid.*, 888.
18. Frankl, "Opening Address to the First World Congress: Logotherapy on Its Way to De-gurification," in *Analecta Frankliana: The Proceedings of the First World Congress of Logotherapy (1980)*, ed. Sandra A. Wawrytko (Berkeley: Institute of Logotherapy Press, 1982), 7.
19. *Ibid.*, 8.
20. For the best introduction to existentialism and its historical significance see William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1958). Also, Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre* (New York: NAL Penguin, 1975).
21. Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen*, 12.
22. Frankl, "Zur Mimischen Bejahung und Verneinung," *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psycho-analyse* no. 10 (1924): 437–438.
23. Frankl, "Psychotherapie und Weltanschauung," *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsy-chologie* no. 3 (1925): 250–252.
24. Frankl, "Zur Psychologie des Intellektualismus," *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsy-chologie* (1926): 326.
25. Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen*, 42.
26. See Frankl, "Selbstmordprophylaxe und Jugendberatung," *Münchener Medizinische Wöchen-schrift* (4 October 1929): 1675.
27. Frankl, "Wirtschaftskrise und Seelenleben vom Standpunkte des Jugendberaters," *So-zialärztlich Rundschau* no. 3 (1933): 45.
28. Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen*, 48.

29. For unknown reasons, Pötzl had his application reconsidered and redated to January 1941. See Pötzl's Nazi Party file, available at the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes.
30. Klingberg, *When Life Calls Out to Us*, 97.
31. See Index of Psychiatric Krankenhaus Baumgartnerhöhe 1934–1938, Wien Landes Stadt Archiv.
32. See *Zentralblatt für Psychotherapie* 10 (1937): 7–8.
33. Frankl, "Zur Geistigen Problematik der Psychotherapie," *Zentralblatt für Psychotherapie* 10 (1937): 33–45.
34. Frankl, "Seelenärtliche Selbstbesinnung," *Der christliche Ständestaat* (30 January 1938): 8.
35. See Viktor Frankl, interview by Giselher Guttmann, tape recording, 29 June 1996, Vienna, Austria, Opening Address World Congress of Psychotherapy. Hereafter cited as Guttmann Interview (WCP).
36. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, author of *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), also designated Frankl as one of the three people she would like to meet before she died.
37. On this point, see Matthew Scully, "Viktor Frankl at Ninety: An Interview," *First Things* 52 (April 1995).
38. Lawrence Langer, *Versions of Survival* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 16–17.
39. *Ibid.*, 24.
40. See Rollo May, *Existential Psychology* (New York: Random House, 1961), 42.
41. Frankl, quoted in Scully, "Viktor Frankl at Ninety," 43.
42. Gerald Izenberg, *The Existential Critique of Freud: The Crisis of Autonomy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 201–211.
43. *Ibid.*, 201–211.
44. *Ibid.*, 259.
45. *Ibid.*, 3–12.
46. See Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen*, 104.
47. Frankl, *The Unconscious God: Psychotherapy and Theology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 67.
48. See Frankl, *Was nicht in meinen*, 91.
49. For his part, Frankl claimed to surpass Heidegger's disciple Binswanger and his *Das-einanalyse* by suggesting it was only a form of Adlerianism. See Frankl, "Existential Analysis and Dimensional Ontology," in *Psychotherapy and Existentialism: Selected Papers on Logotherapy* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), 132.
50. See Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).
51. Geoffrey Cocks, *The State of Health: Illness in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 271.
52. Martin Heidegger, "The Spiegel Interview," in *Martin Heidegger Questions and Answers*, ed. Gunther Neske and Emil Kettering (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 57.