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# Sufferance, Freedom and Meaning: Viktor Frankl and Martin Heidegger\*

Cierpienie, wolność i sens.  
Viktor Frankl i Martin Heidegger

“He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how”.

F. Nietzsche

## Introduction: the issue of suffering and the radical freedom

Talking about suffering implies talking about life. Every life brings with itself the issue of suffering. This could sound like a quote from the doctrine of stoicism, nevertheless this is a fact, a hard fact which we face in our ordinary life. There is no life that can live without suffering; the only fact that we live implies the issue of vulnerability. The human being is one that is vulnerable in more respects: it is vulnerable in its body, in its affectivity, in its

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soul, in its social dimension, in its being-in-the-world, and so on. We constantly deal with our original vulnerability because we are lacking something, we are characterized by an original negativity, something that we could call, using algebraic language, a constitutive “minus”.

The experience of vulnerability opens upon the issue of negativity, which is central to our lives: we experience negativity when we think of death, be it our death or the death of people close to us. We experience negativity when we perceive the absence of a loved one, when we lose our jobs, or when a value in which we strongly believe shows its vacuity. We also experience negativity whenever we are unable to find the meaning of our life or when something happens that hurts us or undermines our place into the world. Negativity shows its various faces in every situation in which we experience a *not*, a negation, a wound, a split.

Our experience of negativity and the consequential suffering is always an embodied one: there is no space between me and the suffering I feel. This *embodiment* is central in the experience of our identity and our relationship to the others and to the world, and it is always an inalienable experience: no one else can suffer instead of me, maybe someone can be sympathetic with my suffering, with my problems, with my specific situation in a certain moment of my life but suffering remains a path that everyone must walk through with his naked feet. In this respect, we could affirm that personal identity is also built *phenomenologically* through the personal ability to *give meaning to suffering*.

The issue of suffering has engaged several traditions of thought, scholars and religions in the attempt to find reasonable answers: maybe the sufferance itself is one of the common denominator that has involved philosophy, theology, literature, arts, and so on in the effort to understand its meaning—and this is also one of the tasks of medical humanities. Thus, on one hand we can find currents of thought claiming that suffering is something scandalous and unacceptable in human life and, on the other hand, other positions affirming that suffering as something natural and physiological for human nature, or more precisely, for the original constitution of finitude.

In the frame of the issue of suffering, a particular place is occupied by the problem of the suffering of innocents, a delicate theme

that involves both theology and philosophy. If the Book of Job<sup>1</sup> in the Holy Bible introduces this problem, it is with the Gospel and with the *sacrificium Christi* that the suffering of the Innocent *par excellence* becomes central in our tradition of thought. The Russian writer Feodor Dostoevsky has perhaps been one of the most significant interpreters of this problem; the words of Ivan Karamazov on the sufferance of innocents (of children) are well known: “Even if there is a higher harmony in which the suffering of children will be redeemed, it is not worth the price. Out of love of humanity, I must give my ticket back”.<sup>2</sup>

Equally the problem of innocents during the scandal of the Holocaust goes in the same direction: how was this suffering possible for all those innocents—men, women, and children? Seminal scholars have tried to answer these questions by talking about the “radicalism of Evil”;<sup>3</sup> others have tried to give the same answer by talking about “the banality of Evil”;<sup>4</sup> however the words of Elie Wiesel remain so shockingly true and hard on the dramatic experience of the Holocaust<sup>5</sup> that no theory can justify those facts. We could claim that we face with three different orders of the issue of suffering: (a) the issue of suffering of human being in general; (b) the issue of suffering of an innocent; (c) and the issue of suffering in the injuring experience of Shoah. On all three levels we are faced with another enormous topic that is tightly bound to suffering: the issue of freedom.

In suffering our capacity to be free is reduced and our freedom is always threatened. Suffering and freedom are reciprocally related because of the original constitution of human beings. As Heidegger claims, “the human being is essentially in need of help because he is always in danger of losing himself and of not coming to grips with himself. This danger is connected with the human being’s freedom”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See A.J. Atlas, “Logotherapy and the Book of Job”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1984, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 29–33.

<sup>2</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, transl. by R. Pevear, L. Volokhonsky, New York 2002, p. 503.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to Gershom Scholem’s letter to Hannah Arendt dated July 24<sup>th</sup> 1963.

<sup>4</sup> See H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York 2006.

<sup>5</sup> E. Wiesel, *Night*, transl. M. Wiesel, New York 2006.

<sup>6</sup> M. Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, transl. Franz Mayr, R. Askay, Evanston



The entire question of the human being's capacity of suffering is connected with the imperfection of its unfolding essence. These words seem to be on the same path as Frankl's thoughts:

Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. Freedom is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is responsibility. In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

If freedom is to endure, liberty must be joined with responsibility:

Existence is a way of being, characteristic to human beings, which is not a factual being, but a facultative way of being. It is not a unique and never changing way of being, as neurotic people tend to misinterpret it, but the possibility to always change oneself.<sup>8</sup>

This is one of the reasons why Viktor Frankl's logotherapy is very close to existentialism and to Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology. Frankl met Heidegger personally: their first meeting was in Vienna in 1958, where Heidegger was invited to hold a conference entitled *Dichten und Denken. Zu Stefan Georges Gedicht 'Das Wort'*, in the Burgtheater of Vienna, on May 11<sup>th</sup>. From this initial meeting an important friendship and correspondence started between the psychiatrist and the philosopher:

Among my most cherished experiences are my discussions with Martin Heidegger when he visited us in Vienna. He wrote in my guest book: "To remember a visit on a beautiful and informative morning". On a photo taken at a typical Viennese wine garden, he wrote a sentence that was meant to point out the kinship between our philosophies: "*Das Vergangene geht, das Gewesene kommt*" [What has passed is gone, what is past will come].<sup>9</sup>

Frankl shared a large number of concepts with Heidegger *Daseinanalyse*, both in terms of philosophical assumptions and a phenomenological approach to mental health.<sup>10</sup> The link between freedom

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2001, p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in C. Warnock, "Statue of Responsibility. «If Freedom is to Endure, Liberty Must Be Joined With Responsibility»", *Daily Herald*, May 8, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> V. Frankl, *Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse: Texte Auch Sechs Jahrzehnten*, München 1994, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> V. Frankl, *Recollections: An Autobiography*, New York 2000, p. 113.

<sup>10</sup> I refer the reader to V. Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disor-*

and sufferance, between our ability to give meanings to sufferance and our ability to be free also *in* suffering is something very close to Heidegger's work. His work on the fundamental structures of *Dasein*—that expresses itself for instance in certain fundamental moods (*Grundbestimmungen*), Disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*), temporality (*Temporalität*)—and his work in the frame of the seminar series held in Switzerland with Medard Boss and known as the *Zollikon Seminars*, offer an analysis of existence and an approach to understanding of *Dasein* focused on the position of human being in the world rather than her objectification. The method inspired by Heidegger, called hermeneutical phenomenology, starts with the analysis of our being-in-the-world and with our constitutive freedom.

The relationship between freedom and suffering becomes more problematic in situations in which the capacity to be free is reduced not only by suffering itself but also by social or political conditions that do not allow us to find meanings both to suffering and to the loss of freedom. In this sense, the experience of the concentration camps helps us to understand the relationship string between suffering in itself, the loss of freedom and the research of meaning. All these issues are the center of the personal experience of the Austrian psychotherapist Viktor Frankl.

### Frankl's experience of concentration camps

On September 25<sup>th</sup> 1942 Frankl, his wife and his parents were deported to the Nazi Theresienstadt Ghetto where he worked as a general practitioner in a clinic. Two years later, on October 19<sup>th</sup> 1944, Frankl and his wife Tilly were transported to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he was processed. He moved then to Kaufering, a Nazi concentration camp affiliated with Dachau, where he arrived on 25 October 1944 and spent five months working as a slave laborer. In March 1945, he was offered a move to the so-called rest-camp, Türkheim. He agreed to be relocated to the latter, where he worked

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*ders: An Introduction to Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*, New York 2004, pp. 63 and following. See also J. Lantz, "Heidegger's Brightness and Frankl's Self-Transcendence", *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 2000, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 81–88.



as a physician until 27 April 1945, the date of his liberation by the Americans. His wife Tilly was transferred from Auschwitz to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where she died. All his family, except his sister Stella, were killed in the concentration camps. Liberated after three years in concentration camps, Frankl returned to Vienna. During 1945 he wrote his world-famous book entitled, *...trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen. Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (in English known by the title *Man's Search for Meaning*), in which he described the life of an ordinary concentration camp inmate from the objective perspective of a psychiatrist; nearly at the beginning of the book we can read: "Every man was controlled by one thought only: to keep himself alive for the family waiting for him at home, and to save his friends".<sup>11</sup>

All of his personal experience, all of his suffering constituted a strong basis for his logotherapy and existential analysis. In *Man's Search for Meaning* we read:

I had intended to write this book anonymously, using my prison number only. But when the manuscript was completed, I saw that as an anonymous publication it would lose half its value, and that I must have the courage to state my convictions openly. I therefore refrained from deleting any of the passages, in spite of an intense dislike of exhibitionism [...]. While we were waiting for the shower, our nakedness was brought home to us: we really had nothing now except our bare bodies—even minus hair; all we possessed, literally, was our naked existence. What else remained for us as a material link with our former lives?<sup>12</sup>

And again this impressive passage:

The thought of suicide was entertained by nearly everyone, if only for a brief time. It was born of the hopelessness of the situation, the constant danger of death looming over us daily and hourly, and the closeness of the deaths suffered by many of the others. From personal convictions which will be mentioned later, I made myself a firm promise, on my first evening in camp, that I would not "run into the wire". This was a phrase used in camp to describe the most popular method of suicide—touching the electrically charged barbed-wire fence. [...] The prisoner of Auschwitz, in the first phase of shock, did not fear death. Even the gas chambers lost their horrors for him after the first few days—after all,

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<sup>11</sup> V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Revised and enlarged edition, New York 1984, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

they spared him the act of committing suicide. [...] Apathy, the blunting of the emotions and the feeling that one could not care anymore, were the symptoms arising during the second stage of the prisoner's psychological reactions, and which eventually made him insensitive to daily and hourly beatings. By means of this insensibility the prisoner soon surrounded himself with a very necessary protective shell.<sup>13</sup>

In the concentration camp, his ordinary relationships to himself and to others changed. The subversion of every ordinary parameter is the most evident effect of this kind of life. Also the relationship with his body changes: phenomenologically Frankl arrives to the experience of body no longer as *Leib* but as *Körper* and his body becomes the *place* where the truth falls, as Nietzsche said once:

This body here, my body, is really a corpse already. What has become of me? I am but a small portion of a great mass of human flesh [...] of a mass behind barbed wire, crowded into a few earthen huts; a mass of which daily a certain portion begins to rot because it has become lifeless.<sup>14</sup>

The camp's experience was the most radical confrontation with suffering for Frankl and in that context he found the mode to carry on and to save himself: "In spite of all the enforced physical and mental primitiveness of the life in a concentration camp, it was possible for spiritual life to deepen".<sup>15</sup> In this sense, Frankl found his Archimedes' point in his wife. The thought of her became his shelter, his *why* to bear any condition of life.

Here is a description of this experience:

We stumbled on in the darkness, over big stones and through large puddles, along the one road leading from the camp. The accompanying guards kept shouting at us and driving us with the butts of their rifles. Anyone with very sore feet supported himself on his neighbor's arm. Hardly a word was spoken; the icy wind did not encourage talk. Hiding his mouth behind his upturned collar, the man marching next to me whispered suddenly: "If our wives could see us now! I do hope they are better off in their camps and don't know what is happening to us". [...] That brought thoughts of my own wife to mind. And as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and onward, nothing was said, but we both

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, pp. 13–15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 56.



knew: each of us was thinking of his wife. Occasionally I looked at the sky, where the stars were fading and the pink light of the morning was beginning to spread behind a dark bank of clouds. But my mind clung to my wife's image, imagining it with an uncanny acuteness. I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look. Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise. [...] A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth—that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which Man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: *The salvation of Man is through love and in love*. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. In a position of utter desolation, when Man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way—an honorable way—in such a position Man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. For the first time in my life I was able to understand the meaning of the words, “The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory”.<sup>16</sup>

This intensification of inner life helped the prisoner find refuge from the emptiness, desolation and spiritual poverty of his existence, by letting him escape into the past. When given free rein, his imagination played with past events, often as not important ones. His nostalgic memory glorified them and they assumed a strange character. Their world and existence seemed very distant and the spirit reached out for them longingly.

The move from the Auschwitz concentration camp to Kaufering represents a kind of “meager pleasures of camp life” a negative way of happiness, what Schopenhauer called “freedom from suffering”: there were no gas chambers, no “oven”, no crematorium, no gas: as Frankl writes, “this joyful surprise put us all in a good mood. The wish of the senior warden of our hut in Auschwitz had come true: we had come, as quickly as possible, to a camp which did not have a “chimney”—unlike Auschwitz”.<sup>17</sup> The entire experience of concentration camps is the basis of his existential analysis and all the techniques involved in the logotherapy are based on his experience of deportation.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 24.



How was it possible to convert this meaningless experience into something so important for mental diseases and for the approach to understanding human suffering? Logotherapy was specifically developed to respond to the existential search for meaning. This dynamic becomes evident in the process of a careful listening to patients' words, and exploring their reported experiences according to the principles of existential analysis. Existential analysis is not just a phenomenological summary of patients' present circumstances, their complaints, concerns, or feelings, but also a discernment of their orientation to meaning. The goal of existential analysis is to relate to the patients' world, and to accompany the patient in the search for meaningful responses.

“The distinctive character of existential analysis is, thus, that it is concerned with ontology, the science of being, and with *Dasein*, the existence of this particular being sitting opposite the psychotherapist”.<sup>18</sup> Although the personal background is essential to understand the patient, existential analysis is not oriented primarily toward the past, or the here and now of the present, but to the future: to what capacities a person still has, or can have for realizing meaning. Existential analysis is a form of dialogue which does not exclude discussing the patients' past and present, but its aim is always to involve the patient in the search for meaning in life with help from resources and possibilities afforded by a lifespan. An understanding of existential dynamics helps a therapist gain an accurate picture of the patients' existential search in the process of existential analysis.

### Frankl's logotherapy as will of meaning

According to Frankl, if there is a meaning in life at all then there must be meaning in suffering. Logotherapy rests on three basic pillars, or three fundamental assumptions:<sup>19</sup> (a) the meaning of life,

<sup>18</sup> R. May, “Contribution of Existential Psychotherapy”, in: *Existence: a New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*, eds. R. May, E. Angel, H.F. Ellenberger, New York 1958, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup> In brief, it is well known how logotherapy rejects nihilism, reductionism, pan-determinism (the doctrine that acts of the will, natural events, or social changes are determined by preceding events or natural causes—I refer to the *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, Springfield, MA 1994, p. 213), solipsism (the idea that our ability to perceive reality is only an il-



(b) the freedom of will and (c) the will to meaning. Some particular concepts are involved corresponding to each of these fundamental principles: philosophical concepts for the meaning of life; anthropological concepts for the freedom to will and psychotherapeutic concepts for the will of meaning and many others.

Since the whole of life is meaningful, every moment in life is also meaningful. As the whole of life has meaning, every person is intended, every situation offers unique meaning possibilities to be fulfilled. The existential decisions that beckon us to choose between what is meaningful and what is not meaningful, do not only mean that we are free to respond, but they also mean that we are being addressed by life, and expected by life. In life, there is a meaningful answer—one and only one meaningful answer, for each unique situation that we find ourselves in—which we have to discover. This is what Frankl called the Copernican revolution of his thought: in this sense, we answer to life with the existential decisions we make.

Frankl writes:

Any attempt to restore man's inner strength in the camp had first to succeed in showing him some future goal. Nietzsche's words, "He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*", could be the guiding motto for all psychotherapeutic [...]. Whenever there was an opportunity for it, one had to give them a *why*—an aim—for their lives, in order to strengthen them to bear the terrible *how* of their existence. [...] The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was "I have nothing to expect from life anymore". What sort of an answer can one give to that?

What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, furthermore, we had to teach despairing men, that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. We need to stop asking about the

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lusion), psychologism (reducing the origin of all observable behavior to the domain of the psyche—i.e. past learning, and character; in its extreme forms, it leads to considering religion as a neurotic tendency, something to be cured, or eliminated, rather than understood), spiritismus (the tendency to consider the dimension of the human spirit in isolation from the body and the mind; in its extreme forms leading to ignoring one's biological and emotional needs) and collectivism (the idea that the viewpoint of the individual is less valid than that of the majority. The viewpoint of the individual has to conform to the majority. Instead, Frankl firmly advocated a holistic view, which is the key to understanding logotherapy).

meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and right conduct. Life ultimately means taking responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.<sup>20</sup>

The second basic assumption of logotherapy, the freedom of will, arose from a response to the deterministic views of the human being:

Freedom of will is opposed to a principle that characterizes most current approaches to human beings, namely determinism. In reality, it is opposed to what I call pan-determinism. After all, freedom of will means freedom of human will, and human will is the will of a finite human being. Human freedom is not freedom from conditions, but freedom to take a stand and to face whatever conditions might confront him.<sup>21</sup>

The key to understanding Frankl's concept of the freedom of will is the inclusion of a third dimension in human existence, aside from the planes of body and mind. While in body and mind we are determined, and/or influenced by physical, and psychological mechanisms, there is a dimension—a uniquely human dimension—which allows us to reach beyond ourselves in the search for meaning. This dimension is called the *Noetic dimension* and it means the dimension of Spirit as a unique coordinate in the anthropological view of human beings. Frankl used the Greek word *nous* to avoid confusion with the religious connotations of the English translation of the German word *Geist* (or *spirit* in English), to differentiate spirit from a general understanding of the mind—in terms of a psychological function related to the processes of the brain—and to differentiate from the soul, usually referred to spirituality.

Frankl's logotherapy distinguishes somatic, psychic, and noetic levels in the human being. The somatic dimension is the bodily reality of existence, the psychic dimension is the mental and psychological apparatus of the person and the noetic dimension is the uniquely human meta-somatic and meta-psychic zone. It is precisely this dimension, the noetic one, in which the ability of meaning plays its role in our life. The noetic dimension is where the “will to mean-

<sup>20</sup> V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

<sup>21</sup> V. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning. Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*, New York 1988, p. 16.



ing” must make itself felt for the human being as a whole to persist. “Frankl insists on the truth of this idea, regarding himself and his fellow prison camp inmates as examples of meaning-until-the-very-moment-of-death [...]. The call to meaning spans the mundane and the momentous”.<sup>22</sup>

For Frankl, the *logos*—the primal sense or character of a human being—is the will to meaning, not the will to pleasure (Freud) or the will to power (Nietzsche). The word logotherapy as a theory of psychotherapy comes from the ancient Greek word *logos* that Frankl translated as meaning.<sup>23</sup> The literal translation of the word *logotherapy* is *therapy through meaning*. In this sense, logotherapy is a meaning-centered psychotherapy.<sup>24</sup> The existential background for

<sup>22</sup> M. Letteri, *Heidegger and the Question of Psychology. Zollikon and Beyond*, New York 2009, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> V. Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, New York 1984, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> In this context it is impossible to explain the key concepts of existential dynamics such as the Self-distancing, the Self-transcendence, the Noö-dynamics, the Existential Distress, the Existential Frustration, the Existential Vacuum, the Noögenic Neurosis, the Paradoxical Intention, the De-reflection, the Modification of Attitudes, the Socratic Dialogue and so on in detail. For this reason I refer the reader to V. Frankl, “The Pleasure Principle and Sexual Neurosis”, *The International Journal of Sexology* 1952, vol. 5, pp. 128–130; idem, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, New York 1984. Also, E. Lukas, *Meaning in Suffering: Comfort in Crisis Through Logotherapy*, Berkeley, CA 1986; idem, *Logotherapy in Crisis Prevention*. Unpublished Workshop Notes. Workshop held at OISE/UT, Toronto, Ontario, November 1996; idem, “Modification of Attitudes”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1980, vol. 3, pp. 25–34; idem, “New Ways for De-reflection”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1981, vol. 4, pp. 13–28; idem, “The ‘Birthmarks’ of Paradoxical Intention”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1982, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 20–24. I also recommend the reading of the major critical works on Frankl’s logotherapy: L.M. Abrami, “Conversations with Terminal Patients”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1997, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 80–84; L.M. Ascher, “Paradoxical Intention, Viewed by a Behavior Therapist”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1980, vol. 3, pp. 13–16; T. Bazzi, “Paradoxical Intention and Autogenic Training”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1979, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 35–37; P.H. Coetzer, “Gratefulness: a Highway to Meaning?”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1992, vol. 15, pp. 104–107; J.C. Crumbaugh, W.M. Wood, C.W. Wood, *Logotherapy: New Help for Problem Drinkers*, Chicago 1990; P.E. Haines, “Logotherapy’s Concept Applied to Grief and Mourning”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 2000, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 74–80; K.D. Heines, “Experiences with Logotherapy and Existential Analysis in a Hospital for Psychiatry, Psychotherapy, and Neurology”, *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1997, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 4–10; M. Khata-

the will to meaning is related to the nature of human existence: no other creature except human beings in the history of evolution have reached the point of being aware of and been confronted with life's finitude and mortality. In Frankl's view, exactly the ability to contemplate and be aware of life's ending makes life precious. Exactly in the knowledge that our life is finite does it make sense to act and find what is meaningful.

The motivation concept in the will to meaning means that every human being is inspired by a striving and yearning for meaning:

It is seen as our main motivation for living and for acting, and it goes deeper than the will to pleasure and power. When we see meaning in life, we are willing to endure any suffering. On the other hand, if we see no meaning, even a life of well-being will seem empty and futile.<sup>25</sup>

According to Frankl, the *Homo Sapiens* sees and thinks only in terms of success and failure. Aside from the thinking of the *Homo Sapiens*, Frankl introduces the thinking of the *Homo Patiens*, the suffering human being, as another dimension. For the *Homo Patiens*, the suffering human being becomes tolerable if it is met with meaning. Even if his or her efforts were not followed by success, but the effort was the pursuit of a meaningful task, that person will be saved from existential despair. On the other hand, even the most successful person's life will feel empty and futile without a sense of meaning and purpose. These two axes are known as Frankl's Cross.

Frankl writes:

Each man is unique and each man's life is singular; no one is replaceable nor is his life repeatable. This twofold uniqueness adds to man's responsibility. Ultimately this responsibility derives from the existential fact that life is a chain of questions which man has to answer by answering for his life, to which he has to respond by being responsible, by making decisions, by deciding which answers to give to the individual question. And I venture to say that each question has only one answer—the right one! This does not imply that man is always capable of finding the right answer or solution to each problem, or finding the true meaning of his

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mi, "Logotherapy for Chronic Pain", *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1987, vol. 11, pp. 67–75; J.E., Lantz, "De-reflection in Family Therapy with Schizophrenic Patients", *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 1982, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 119–122.

<sup>25</sup> R.C. Barnes, *Logotherapy's Consideration of the Dignity and Uniqueness of The Human Person*, Abilene, TX 1995, p. 9.



existence. Rather, the contrary is true; as a finite being, he is not exempt from error, and therefore, has to take the risk of erring.<sup>26</sup>

This capacity of asking and trying to find answers is what opens to Transcendence<sup>27</sup> and discloses the relationship between human beings and God in suffering from the point of view of psychotherapy. Frankl's logotherapy is deeper and broader than other psychological therapies because it penetrates the spiritual dimension of human existence and focuses on the meaning and purpose in life.

This stands in stark contrast to the anthropological assumptions underlying the approach of some of the early psychologists, such as Freud. For Freud, religion is a crutch for the psychologically weak, infantile and insecure and provides a reassuring framework and set of rules to be followed in an effort to ward off anxiety. Religion is always pathological and it is the universal compulsive neurosis of mankind. Frankl, by contrast, possesses a more balanced view of religion, seeing it as potentially contributing to, as well as detracting from, mental health. He provides an alternative explanation for the origin of religion—as part of the universal human meaning making process. Frankl states that religion is “man's search for ultimate meaning”. For him, religion is something that spontaneously wells up from inside a person. It is not something that can be imposed, preached or “commanded, demanded or ordered” externally but instead is a valid means of expressing self-transcendence and an orientation towards “the other”.

This self-transcendence is a universal human phenomenon and Frankl therefore sees an inherent latent religiousness in the human nature. Indeed, for Frankl, religion is almost a psychological necessity, by virtue of the psyche's being orientated towards “the Other”. Frankl rejects Freud's notion of “pleasure” and Adler's concept of “power” as the key motivational drivers and instead proposes that man's fundamental preoccupation is with the search for meaning, which can be found only outside of oneself. From this point of view, Frankl's existentialism is different from the existentialism of his contemporaries, such as Jean Paul Sartre, because it allows a kind of religiosity and an open space to transcendence. For example, Sartre—but also other

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<sup>26</sup> V. Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, New York 1967, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> See A. Pattakos, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, San Francisco 2010.

atheistic existentialists—suggest that life is ultimately meaningless, and we must find the courage to face that meaninglessness. Frankl instead says that we need to learn to endure our inability to fully comprehend ultimate meaningfulness.<sup>28</sup>

Frankl's God is not the God of the narrow minded, not the God of one denomination or another. It is not even the God of institutional religion. God is very much a God of the inner human being, a God of the heart. Even the atheist or the agnostic, he points out, may accept the idea of transcendence without making use of the word "God".

Frankl writes:

This unconscious religiousness, revealed by our phenomenological analysis, is to be understood as a latent relation to transcendence inherent in man. If one prefers, he might conceive of this relation in terms of a relationship between the immanent self and a transcendent thou. However one wishes to formulate it, we are confronted with what I should like to term "the transcendent unconscious". This concept means no more or less than that man has always stood in an intentional relation to transcendence, even if only on an unconscious level. If one calls the intentional referent of such an unconscious relation "God", it is apt to speak of an "unconscious God".<sup>29</sup>

This "unconscious God" is not anything like the archetypes Jung talks about. This God is clearly transcendent, and yet profoundly personal. He is there, according to Frankl, within each of us, and it is merely a matter of our acknowledging his presence that will bring us to supra-meaning, a meaning that opens to Transcendence and embrace this dimension as the specific one of human being. "Psychotherapy, handled correctly, will release a patient's religiosity, even if that religiosity was dormant and its release was not at all intended by the therapist".<sup>30</sup>

The risk that happens into psychotherapy is, according to Frankl, that the psychic element are converted in something as an anatomy of psyche. The risk is that psychoanalysis could depersonalize human being. Instead, by using logotherapy the concept of "spiritual" is in-

<sup>28</sup> See C.G. Boeree, *Viktor Frankl*, Shippensburg, PA 1998.

<sup>29</sup> V. Frankl, *The Unconscious God: Psychotherapy and Theology*, New York, p. 61–62.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 166.



troduced into medical practice as something independent but at the same time necessary. As underlined by Medard Boss—the Swiss psychiatrist with whom Martin Heidegger held the Zollikon seminars for 17 years—impulse and spirit are immeasurable phenomena but also complementary in their substantial difference: it means that the health of the soul (*Seelische Gesundheit*) is different but not opposed to the salvation of the soul (*Seelenheil*).

Frankl was very familiar with the works existentialist philosophers<sup>31</sup> and with some phenomenologists, such as Scheler, Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, and Ludwig Binswagner, whom he knew personally. He was well acquainted with the works of Dostoevsky, Marcel, Buber, and Nietzsche. Frankl provides a richer, more complex model on the origin of religion, as arising from spontaneous self-transcendence in the process of “man’s search for meaning”, and he emphasizes the positive, rather than the pathological, aspects of religious activity.

### Heidegger between phenomenology and *Daseinsanalyse*

The relationship between Heidegger and phenomenology is not simply a matter of education. The period from 1919 to 1929 has appropriately been called Heidegger’s “phenomenological decade”.<sup>32</sup> By 1919 a closer link was formally established between Husserl and Heidegger, and in 1920 Heidegger became Husserl’s personal assistant. “Phenomenology, that’s Heidegger and I and no one else”—according to legend—Husserl spoke these words in the early 1920s, when he was at the height of his fame in Freiburg and Heidegger was his young assistant.

Heidegger had great admiration for Husserl’s phenomenology and he worked in close cooperation with him until 1923 when he was appointed a professor at Marburg. During this period, Husserl’s phenomenology continued to extend its influence on Heidegger, but

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<sup>31</sup> See also D. Batthyány, O. Zsok (eds.), *Viktor Frankl und die Philosophie*, New York 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. T. Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time*, Berkeley 1993, p. 59; Cf. also T. Kisiel, J. van Buren (eds.), *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought*, Albany 1994.



gradually Heidegger's way of thinking diverged from Husserl's characteristic ideas. With the publication of *Being and Time* (1927), it became clear to Husserl that his assistant had rejected many important ideas of his own philosophy and that he had developed a completely new concept which, in many respects, contradicted the fundamental principles of his phenomenology.<sup>33</sup> His approach to phenomenology was not only a landmark within that movement, but has greatly influenced the reinterpretation of Husserl's phenomenology, especially among the later French phenomenologists.

Heidegger's phenomenological method starts from the same basic idea as Husserl's phenomenology: understanding human experience from the role of intentionality. Heidegger claims that before being

<sup>33</sup> The separation from Heidegger to Husserl is one of the most extended topic of the relationship between the two philosophers. On this issue I refer the reader to E. Husserl, "Randbemerkungen Husserls zu Heideggers 'Sein und Zeit' und 'Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik'", *Husserl Studies* 1994, vol. 11; E. Husserl, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, The Hague 1968; E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, The Hague 1969; E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, The Hague 1982; in particular E. Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)*, Dordrecht 1997.

For the critical literature see: F.W. von Hermann, *Der Begriff der Phänomenologie bei Heidegger und Husserl*, Frankfurt am Main 1988; S.G. Crowell, "Heidegger and Husserl: The Matter and Method of Philosophy", in: *A Companion to Heidegger*, eds. H.L. Dreyfus, M.A. Wrathall, Oxford 2005, p. 49–64; E.C. Boedeker, "Phenomenology", in: *A Companion to Heidegger*, eds. H.L. Dreyfus, M.A. Wrathall, Oxford 2005, p. 156–172; R. Bernet, "Transcendance et intentionnalité: Heidegger et Husserl sur les prolégomènes d'une ontologie phénoménologique", in: *Heidegger et l'idée de la phénoménologie*, eds. F. Volpi et al., Dordrecht 1988, pp. 195–215; B. Hopkins, *Intentionality in Husserl and Heidegger: the Problem of the Original Method and Phenomenon of Phenomenology*, Dordrecht 1993; T. Stapleton, *Husserl and Heidegger: the Question of a Phenomenological Beginning*, Albany 1983; S.G. Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths Toward Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston 2001; P. Keller, *Husserl and Heidegger on Human Experience*, Cambridge 1999; J.-L. Marion, *Reduction and Givenness: Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, Evanston 1998; J. Taminiaux, "The Husserlian Heritage in Heidegger's Notion of the Self", in: *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in his Earliest Thought*, eds. T. Kisiel, J. van Buren, Albany 1994, p. 269–290; E. Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, Berlin 1970; J. Beaufret, "Husserl et Heidegger", in: idem, *Dialogue avec Heidegger*, vol. 3: *Approche de Heidegger*, Paris 1974.



a reflection on intentionality (Husserl's view), phenomenology is to be an "understanding, a hermeneutic intuition",<sup>34</sup> a self-interpreting process in which "factic life" intuits itself. While Husserl was transforming phenomenology into transcendental idealism, Heidegger was developing a "hermeneutics of facticity", in which fundamental features and moods of existence such as fear, anxiety, boredom, need to be brought to light.

The most evident difference between Husserl and Heidegger concerns the idea of an inquiry "prior to" ontology. Heidegger argues that one must have something like a pre-ontological "understanding of being": so, ontology proper must be preceded by fundamental ontology—a phenomenological explication of how an understanding of being is possible. This presupposes what he calls *Dasein*. Heidegger accepts that Husserl's formal phenomenology of consciousness is possible but he argues that this "analytic description of intentionality in its a priori"<sup>35</sup> cannot fulfill the larger aim of accounting for the possibility of intentionality. Consciousness itself stays upon an ontological basis that has the character of "being-in-the-world". Heidegger's ontology proposes to show how the structures of being-in-the-world make consciousness possible in the Husserlian sense. According to Heidegger, Husserl was not able to see that the ontic transcendence—the meaning of entities as correlates of intentional acts—depended upon an ontological transcendence, the transcendence of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world.

Heidegger's phenomenological method started from the same point as Husserl's phenomenology: understanding human experience from the role of intentionality. Whereas Husserl came to his notion through the direct influence of Brentano, even if he made significant innovations<sup>36</sup> in Brentano's account of this notion, on the other hand

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<sup>34</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Toward the Definition of Philosophy*, London 2002, p. 117.

<sup>35</sup> M. Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time. Prolegomena*, Bloomington 1985, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup> In Aristotle's philosophy "intention" means the crucial point for virtuous actions and for judgment of character. Intention is not the same as volition, because non-rational beings can act with volition but not with intention. Intention is not a desire, a wish or an opinion. It is something previously deliberated upon, and is formed with reason or thought. Intention is what in old Greek is called *pro aireton*, which means "to choose before". Intention is the specific reason for which a person acts. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*,

Heidegger came to the notion of intentionality through Brentano's book *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*. Heidegger claimed that before being a reflection on intentionality (Husserl's view), phenomenology is to be an "understanding, an hermeneutic intuition", a self-interpreting process in which "factic life" intuits itself. While Husserl was moving phenomenology toward transcendental idealism, Heidegger was imagining it as a "hermeneutics of facticity": "In contemporary terms, intentional content cannot be understood as a function of consciousness alone but must be seen as deriving from the structure of being-in-the-world as a whole, that which enables our understanding of being".<sup>37</sup>

Heidegger conceived phenomenology in a manner that departed from the Husserlian mode of the analysis of consciousness but, in a second moment, he distances himself from Husserl. All the propositions of ontology are, in his view, a priori since they are concerned with Being rather than beings; for Being must be understood prior to all encounters with and the understanding of beings. Heidegger connects this doctrine of the apriority of philosophy with a unique conception of the manner in which time functions as the source of the a priori. In this sense, the basic problems of philosophy are also called the basic problems of phenomenology. It is under these presumptions that Heidegger shows how the structure of the basic problems of philosophy are connected to the fundamental analysis of the *Dasein* and to its special relationship to time and temporality.

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Cambridge 2000, with particular attention to the section IV.

For Brentano this feature became one of the characteristics of all psychical activities. According to Brentano, every psychical phenomenon is characterized by the "intentional inexistence" of an object. Cf. F. Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, London 1973. Husserl objected against Brentano's conception of the immanence of the intentional object to consciousness. The fact that all consciousness is a consciousness of something and that all consciousness is intentional, became for Husserl one of the building blocks of his philosophy. Cf. E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a phenomenological Philosophy—First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, The Hague 1982; idem, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, Dordrecht 1990; also cf. M.O. Onwuegbusi, "Heidegger's Contribution to the Phenomenology and Existential Ontology", *Lumina* 2011, vol. 22, no. 1.

<sup>37</sup> M. Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy*, New York 1973, p. 89.



In *Sein und Zeit* (1927) Heidegger differentiates his existential analytic from psychology, as well as from anthropology and the other human sciences that neglect the ontological foundation. The work on the meaning of *Dasein* is what Heidegger called the *Dasein Analytic*. Defining the fundamental structures of *Dasein* as the being-in-the-world, a unitary structure that discloses the worldhood of the world, the being-with-the-others and the being-toward-death, it is in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Being and Time* that we find the most important analysis of human being as such. This analysis opens up the fundamental structures that are always present in *Dasein*: they are the *Befindlichkeit*,<sup>38</sup> often translated as affectedness, that is a form of receptivity, a way of being open to the situations or environments that show the modes of being (*Seinsweisen*), of *Dasein*, such as fear (*Furcht*) and anxiety (*Angst*); the *Verstehen*, translated as understanding, that is expressive of *Dasein*'s active comportment towards possibilities and projects (understanding is not a mental state, nor is the possibility to be seen in terms of actual possibilities, rather, it is the grounds for the possibility of possibilities); and the *Verfallen*, the Fallenness, that is the *Dasein*'s average everydayness, the immersion in the world of its everyday concerns and projects. The *Dasein*'s unity of its unitary structure is what he calls care (*Sorge*). The unity of the care is temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*).<sup>39</sup>

Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* presents a radical novelty not only in the frame of philosophy but also in the context of medical sciences, such as psychiatry and psychology:

Paramount in Heidegger's contribution was his insistence on the structural unity of *Dasein*, which has introduced into phenomenological clinical psychology a framework for interpreting psychopathological phenomena within the context of the person's being-in-the-world as a whole, a scope scarcely approached in academic psychology. In other

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<sup>38</sup> See also F. Brencio, "Befindlichkeit: Disposition", in: *The Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology*, eds. G. Stanghellini, M. Broome et al., Oxford [forthcoming 2016].

<sup>39</sup> See also F. Brencio, "Heidegger and Binswanger: Just a Misunderstanding?", *The Humanistic Psychologist* 2015, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 278–296; idem, "World, Time and Anxiety. Heidegger's Existential Analytic and Psychiatry", *Folia Medica* 2014, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 297–304; idem, "Care and Being-In-The World: Heidegger's Philosophy and Its Implications for Psychiatry", *The Journal of European Psychiatry Association* 2014, vol. 29, Supplement 1, p. 1.

words, phenomenological psychologists now use philosophical resources to move beyond the description of more or less isolated mental states to the Gestalt “existence”.<sup>40</sup>

The work on the fundamental structures of *Dasein* helped psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists coming from different schools in terms of offering a new paradigm for medicine. It is the experience realized with Medard Boss in the context of the Zollikon seminars that highlights the need for an hermeneutic (interpretive) articulation of our lived engagement in our “average everyday” world as human beings. Not only phenomenology but also hermeneutics can contribute to a better understanding of ourselves, of our relationships to each other and to the experiences we are faced with. The hermeneutical phenomenology inaugurated by Heidegger also illuminates the relation between therapist and patient. If the symptom is a kind of language through which the body speaks, we also need to try to consider health (and also mental health) as a hermeneutical structure that needs to be interpreted. Heidegger’s work is of special interest in this respect, because his hermeneutical phenomenology can help to better understand the patient’s direct experience and understanding of his/her being-in-the-world and the doctor’s understanding of this being-in-the-world.

Heidegger’s new understanding of the human being allows to overcome not only Cartesian dualism, in which the mind is isolated from the world in which it lives and where mind and world are seen as separated, but also the traditional Freudian theory based on the Cartesian idea of isolated minds that carry the experiential world into inner and outer spaces: Freud’s psychoanalysis retained a Cartesian understanding of the mind as a self-enclosed apparatus containing mental contents. The phenomenological approach of Heidegger shows us that all the phenomena that have been the focus of psychoanalytic investigation are not the products of isolated intrapsychic mechanisms, but systems constituted by interacting worlds of emotional experience. Within these systems we relate to our being in the world, with other people and ourselves. Heidegger seeks to make the

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<sup>40</sup> F.J. Wertz, “Phenomenological Currents in Twentieth-Century Psychology”, in: *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism*, eds. H.L. Dreyfus, M.A. Wrathall, Oxford 2006, pp. 401–402.



unity of our being visible against Cartesian dualism through a phenomenological approach to human beings.<sup>41</sup> Heidegger insists that philosophy must investigate psychopathology in the light of our finitude and the constant risk of losing our freedom.

Ludwig Binswanger and Medard Boss developed an existential-phenomenological approach to psychotherapy in their work which was based on Heidegger's philosophy. Binswanger's first contact with Heidegger was through reading his *opus magnum* *Being and Time*, published in 1927. A first personal encounter took place on the occasion of a lecture of Heidegger's in Frankfurt in 1929, which Binswanger attended. Binswanger attempted to combine his field of research with the main insights of Heidegger's *Daseinsanalyse*, yet provoking Heidegger's objections on several points, that I will address in the section devoted to Binswanger's works. It was Heidegger's conception of being-in-the-world that solved the problem of the relationship between temporality and existence, in which Binswanger was interested. Heidegger's book showed him how the intentionality of consciousness is grounded in the temporality of human existence. For Binswanger, psychiatry was not merely a matter of treating the insane, the psychotic, and the neurotic, but a personal encounter between physician and patient as human beings and for this reason psychiatry required the understanding of man in his entirety, with his normal as well as his abnormal variations.

Medard Boss was a psychoanalyst and physician inspired by the existential-phenomenological philosophy of Martin Heidegger. He set himself the ambitious task of humanizing medicine and psychology from a new existential foundation. Boss, a student of Freud, did not want to do away with the valuable insights of medicine and psychiatry, but rather felt the call to show how the current, modern theoretical presuppositions of medicine and psychiatry were built on faulty theoretical grounds. Not so much as an application of, but rather from a working out of the ground of Heidegger's ontology, Boss felt that psychology and medicine would allow for a place of theory and practice which does a greater justice to the human.

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<sup>41</sup> See also R. Stolorow, "Heidegger and Post-Cartesian Psychoanalysis: My Personal, Psychoanalytic, and Philosophical Sojourn", *The Humanistic Psychologist* 2013, vol. 41, pp. 209–218.

Binswanger's and Boss's work and writings are the most comprehensive and radical attempts made so far to provide a philosophical answer and alternative to Freud's scientific project. Boss's (1963) conception of existential psychotherapy is the result of a personal dialogue with Heidegger over many years. As Boss claims, the Zollikon seminars were so important because Heidegger's analysis of existence is more appropriate for an understanding of human being than many of the notions that natural science has introduced in medicine and psychotherapy. Existential analysis does not propose a metaphysical thesis about human existence, but is empirical and documents factual findings, about actual forms of existence. In this sense, existential analysis is an empirical science with its own method and a specific ideal of exactness.

In this context Frankl's considerations on the usage of Heidegger's *Daseinsanalyse* are important. He claimed that the use made by Binswanger of the Heideggerian Daseinsanalysis was inappropriate. The main concern of Daseinsanalysis is not psychotherapeutic and has nothing to do with psychotherapeutic praxis; whereas existential analysis tries to assist in the treatment of neuroses,

Daseinsanalysis has the merit of having contributed to our understanding of psychosis. In this sense, Daseinsanalysis and existential analysis are not opposed to each other, but are complementary. For the sake of this understanding, Daseinsanalysis needs to focus on the unity of "being-in-the-world" (M. Heidegger), while existential analysis turns toward the diversity within the unity; the unity must be analyzed into the dimensional multiplicity of existence and facticity, of person and organism, of the spiritual and the psychophysical, in order to be able to appeal to the person or to call upon the defiant power of the spirit.<sup>42</sup>

Existential psychotherapy is not a specific technical approach that presents a new set of rules for therapy. It asks deep questions about the nature of the human being and the nature of anxiety, despair, grief, loneliness, isolation, and anomie. It also deals centrally with the questions of creativity and love. Out of the understanding of the meaning of these human experiences, existential psychotherapists have devised methods of therapy that do not fall into the common error of distorting human beings in the very effort of trying to help them.

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<sup>42</sup> V. Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, op. cit., p. 63.



## Logotherapy and hermeneutical phenomenology: a common path?

Frankl's logotherapy makes it clear that its primary goal is not an attempt to understand man anthropologically or ontologically, but to influence him therapeutically. In this respect, Frankl's main ambition is to find an alternative to Freud's and Alfred Adler's techniques by a new way of practical analyzing. The so called "Third Vienna School of Psychoanalysis" concentrates on helping people who suffer from a kind of neurosis neglected by the two earlier schools, what Frankl called "existential vacuum" or "frustration" expressed in the sense of meaninglessness. Frankl's enterprise transcends psychopathology and psychiatry in the traditional sense; it deals, by means of a new type of counseling, with the failure of man's practical philosophy of life. It might be considered primarily as

a contribution to an applied philosophy of life for otherwise normal patients, especially at times of major stress. As a psychiatrist who has put this philosophy to the "crucial" test (in more than one sense) of surviving several years in Nazi concentration camps, where he lost his entire family, Frankl has given logotherapy a verification which few other contemporary philosophies of life can claim—and without making any explicit theological assumptions.<sup>43</sup>

In Frankl's works, phenomenology plays a minor role: a few references to Husserl, more attention to the work of Max Scheler and to Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenology. Scheler's book on ethics, entitled *Der Formalismus*, became a kind of guide-text for Frankl: the frequency with which Scheler's name also appeared in Frankl's references can help give us an idea of the influence of his works on Frankl. In turn, a few references are devoted to Heidegger, but rarely specific ones.

How can we find common point between them? Are we entitled to talk about a common path between Viktor Frankl and Martin Heidegger? What do they have in common and how do they develop their own approach to suffering?

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<sup>43</sup> H. Spiegelberg, *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry: A Historical Introduction*, Evanston 1972, p. 344.



The hermeneutical approach to the understanding of human life is certainly one of the most evident common grounds between Frankl and Heidegger: both of them required a self-interpretation of human being that allows us to give meanings to our life, to our existence, to our experience of temporality and to the personal experience of suffering. The need of signification, the will of meaning or, using Heidegger's words, the self-interpretation of the facticity of my life are hermeneutical operations that illuminate the understanding of our life. What is difference is the usage of hermeneutical keys: for Frankl, for example, we find three types of such values that allow any conscious being to find some meaning for his/her life under any conceivable circumstances, and they are *creative values* (a), i.e. values that can be realized by creative activity; (b) *values of experience*, i.e., values that are realized by receptive surrender (*Hingabe*), as in aesthetic enjoyment of nature and art; (c) *values of attitude* (*Einstellung*), or better, response, expressed by the way in which we respond to the suffering that limits our access to creative and experiential values. Now these values are not only objective according to Frankl, but are also "situational values", they are geared to the particular situations to which they apply uniquely and specifically. On the other side, we find the hermeneutics of our facticity, an understanding of existence that remains inherent to the accomplishment of the latter without having to rise above it to produce its reflexive objectivation.

The hermeneutical approach which gives meaning to facts, to suffering, to temporality and, at last, to life is the central task for Frankl and Heidegger, both in conceiving life in a singular and also in a plural dimension. The hermeneutical phenomenology developed by Heidegger and the logotherapy enhanced by Frankl show how essential it is for medical science to be open to the contribution of philosophy and the medical humanities in general (if we think of Frankl's idea of creative values we are dealing with the importance of arts into clinical practice too). Logotherapy, phenomenology and hermeneutics are particularly helpful in giving us a "more complete" picture of our need of signification and of our abilities to give meanings.

Another common issue of Frankl's and Heidegger's work is the issue of freedom, in constant risk to be lost, also due to illness—and



in particular, when we deal with mental illness. For both authors, suffering reduce our capacity to be free and to act freely; every kind of suffering has a bearing on our freedom. In particular, Frankl's personal experience in concentration camps guides us to a correct understanding of freedom. The first impression that we can have is that, in the context of concentration camps, a human being is completely and unavoidably influenced by his surroundings—in this case the surroundings being the unique structure of camp life, which forced the prisoner to conform his conduct to a certain set pattern. However, the experiences of camp life shows that man has a choice of action. Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to become the form of the typical inmate. The sort of person that the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, and not the result of camp influences alone: "Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him—mentally and spiritually. He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp".<sup>44</sup> Man's attitude to his existence is something inherent to his finite constitution and his freedom is not freedom from conditions, but it is the freedom to take a stand *toward* the conditions.

As we read in the *Zollikon seminars*,

We do psychology, sociology, and psychotherapy in order to help the human being reach the goal of adjustment and freedom in the broadest sense. This is the joint concern of physicians and sociologists because all social and pathological disturbances of the individual human being are disturbances in adjustment and freedom.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> V. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>45</sup> M. Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, op. cit., p. 154.

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## Summary      Streszczenie

The aim of this paper is to show the relationship between Viktor Frankl's logotherapy and Martin Heidegger's *Daseinsanalyse*. I will underline a proximity between Frankl's approach to suffering and Heidegger's in the framework of existential analysis and phenomenology. Starting from the common assumption that in suffering our capacity to be free is reduced and our freedom is always threatened, both Frankl and Heidegger developed different approaches to signify suffering, to give meanings to our life, even when terrible circumstances happen. Suffering and freedom are reciprocally related because of the original constitution of the human being: a human being is essentially in need of

Celem powyższego artykułu jest ukazanie związków pomiędzy logoterapią Viktora Frankla a *Daseinsanalyse* Martina Heideggera. Odpowiednio w ramach analizy egzystencjalnej i fenomenologii wykazuję bliskość Franklowskiego i Heideggerowskiego podejścia do cierpienia. Wychodząc z rozpowszechnionego przekonania, głoszącego, że w cierpieniu wolność jest zawsze zagrożona, a przy tym doświadczanej wówczas w sposób ograniczony, zarówno Frankl, jak i Heidegger, rozwinęli odmienne



podejścia w kwestii postrzegania znaczenia cierpienia i sensu życia w sytuacjach, w których przytrafiają się nam rozmaite nieszczęśliwe zdarzenia. Cierpienie i wolność są ze sobą wzajemnie powiązane, co wynika z pierwotnej konstytucji człowieka: jednostka ludzka zasadniczo zawsze znajduje się w potrzebie, ponieważ zawsze bywa narażona na niebezpieczeństwo zagubienia i niemożność powrotu do siebie. Zarówno Frankl poprzez logoterapię, jak i Heidegger poprzez hermeneutyczną fenomenologię, włożyli znaczący wkład w psychiatrię i psychologię, interpretując jednostkę ludzką, jej skończoność, cierpienie i radykalną wolność.

help because he is always in danger of losing himself and of not coming to grips with himself. Both Frankl, through his logotherapy, and Heidegger, with his hermeneutical phenomenology, give to psychiatry and psychology a radical contribution in interpreting human being, its finitude, its suffering and its radical freedom.

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