

DEFIANT POWER:

AN OVERVIEW OF VIKTOR FRANKL'S

LOGOTHERAPY AND EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS



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Introduction

This small ebook grew out of a doctoral dissertation that the author is presently writing in the field of Jewish-Christian Studies (Bible, Culture and Hermeneutics) at the Chicago Theological Seminary. The dissertation aims to develop a hermeneutic based on Viktor E. Frankl's logotherapy and existential analysis and to apply that hermeneutic to the biblical Book of Job. Inasmuch as the audience for the dissertation would not be aware of the details of Dr. Frankl's theory, the doctoral committee and the author felt it would be good to include a chapter explaining logotherapy prior to the development of the hermeneutic. The body of this ebook is essentially that chapter.

It is not without modification. What is one chapter in the dissertation is divided into two chapters here. Chapter three is a section of a different chapter in the dissertation. This was done to make the topics more accessible. A few paragraphs of explanation that were part of the introduction in the dissertation have been moved into the main body for clarification. A final chapter consisting of sample case studies has been included. Since the dissertation is not a clinical work, the ebook is biased more toward theory and less toward clinical practice. It is hoped that the addition of clinical examples will compensate for this deficit. While the cases are real, the identities of the parties involved and details of their specific presentations have been obscured to protect their confidentiality.

The style of the writing has not been altered. Therefore, while this ebook is simply an overview and does not deal with these topics in-depth, it is, nevertheless, what

I believe is a thorough presentation of the theory that does not omit details for simplification. Multiple sources are brought together in a way found in no other overview of Frankl's theory. Footnotes are extensive. While this may be distracting to some, it is similar to the presentation found in the dissertation and allows the reader to double check the author's understanding independently.

Works dedicated to Dr. Frankl's logotherapy are few compared to the many other approaches in psychology and psychiatry. The author hopes that this brief overview, made inexpensively and made widely available, will whet the appetite of some to learn more.

Finally, the author wishes to thank Dr. Cynthia Wimberly of the Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy for the training in logotherapy and existential analysis that the author has received over the past four years. Thanks are also due to Dr. Kenneth Stone, Dr. Timothy Sandoval and Dr. Robert Moore of the Chicago Theological Seminary who have allowed the author to prepare a dissertation on a topic that is very near to his heart - the work of Dr. Viktor Frankl.

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Chapter 1

The Theory of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis

Nature of the Human Person

Frankl views the human person as a spirit that has a mind and a body (a psyche and a soma). He often refers to spirit as *noos* (and uses the adjective form *noetic*) to avoid religious connotation. He states that by this term he refers to that which is "uniquely human."¹ The division between the spirit and the psychophysical being is absolute. The former possesses free will; the latter is subject to the laws of biology and psychology. The former is the seat of human existence; the latter is the home of somatic and psychological facticity.² Consequently, Frankl does not dispute objective, empirical findings, such as elements of the psychodynamic model proposed by Freud (the existence of the unconscious, for instance) or the discoveries of American behaviorism (such as classical conditioning).³ Rather, he sees his contribution as consisting of a psychological model that includes the spirit in an understanding of the human person and in the clinical techniques derived from this model.⁴ Frankl refers to this model as *dimensional ontology*.⁵ He refers to the functional aspects of the model as *noodynamics*.⁶

¹ Frankl, V. E. (1969). *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*. New York: World Publishing Co., 17-18, 22.

² Frankl, V. E. (2000). *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*. New York: Perseus Books, 32-33.

³ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 26.

⁴ Frankl, V. E. (2004). *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders: An Introduction to Logotherapy and Existential Analysis* (James M. Dubois, Trans.). New York: Brunner-Routledge, 228.

⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 23; Frankl, V. E. (2010). *The Feeling of Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy* (Alexander Batthyany, Ed.). Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 63-64.

⁶ Frankl, V. E. (1959, 2006). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press, 105.

Frankl explains his dimensional ontology graphically by use of an image of a cylinder. When the curved plane of the cylinder is viewed, it is divided into three segments representing the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious - terms borrowed from Freud. When viewed from either end, the cylinder is further divided into an inner spiritual core, a psyche, and an outer body (see Figure 1). Frankl explains his concept of the human spirit based on this model.⁷

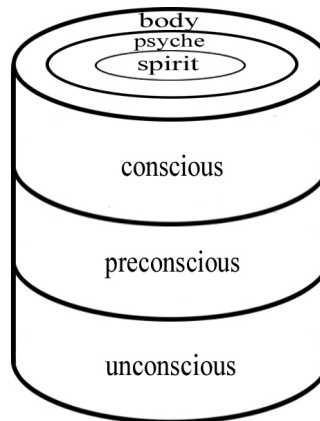


Figure 1: Frankl's Dimensional Ontology

The human spirit represents those characteristics of the human person that are not shared with animals. As such, evidence of the human spirit is found in those attitudes and behaviors that would not be predicted from biology and psychology. Frankl often refers to this unpredictable quality of being human as "the defiant power of the human spirit."⁸ This quality of being human could even be found in a concentration camp. Frankl notes, "...there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the

⁷ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 22-25; Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 33-36; Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 75-55.

⁸ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 147.

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 molded into the form of the typical inmate."⁹ Frankl situates phenomena of the human spirit in relation to empirical phenomena through his laws of dimensional ontology.

Frankl's Laws of Dimensional Ontology

Frankl addresses the relationship between the person as a spiritual being and the empirical study of the human person through the sciences by means of his *first law of dimensional ontology*: "One and the same phenomenon projected out of its own dimension into different dimensions lower than its own is depicted in such a way that the individual pictures contradict one another."¹⁰ Returning to the image of the cylinder, Frankl explains that, if projected from three-dimensional space onto a two dimensional plane, the cylinder may appear as either a rectangle or a circle (see Figure 2). These images appear contradictory, one having height and width, the other having circumference and radius. The contradiction is only solved when one recalls that the geometry measured is only a projection of a cylinder. An error is made if one comes to believe that a cylinder is nothing but a rectangle, or nothing but a circle. Likewise, an error is made if the psychologist assumes that the human person is nothing but the dynamics of the psyche or if the biologist assumes that the human person is nothing but a collection of chemicals.¹¹ Said another way, depression may be seen by some as a set of cognitive self-statements learned in childhood, or it may be seen as a deficiency of a chemical neurotransmitter. Frankl argues that an error is made if it is seen as either of

⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 66.

¹⁰ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 23.

¹¹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 24-25.

these things exclusively. Regardless of its cause, the human spirit is able to take a defiant stance toward the depression.¹²

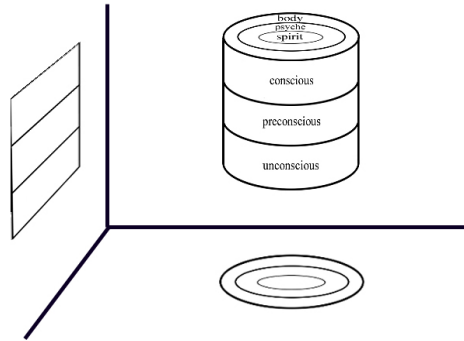


Figure 2: Frankl's First Law of Dimensional Ontology

A second analogy to explain Frankl's first law of dimensional ontology is made with the observation that the cylinder as depicted by Frankl is open, whereas the rectangular and circular projections are closed. That is, deterministic principles operate within the closed systems of psychology and biology, but freedom is found in the open system of the human spirit.¹³ The spiritual unconscious allows the spirit to remain free and open to the noetic dimension.¹⁴

Frankl's model is further explained by his *second law of dimensional ontology*: "Different phenomena projected out of their own dimension into one dimension lower than their own are depicted in such a manner that the pictures are ambiguous."¹⁵ One may imagine that a circle may be the two dimensional projection of a cone, a cylinder, or a sphere (see Figure 3). The cause of the circle is unclear. Likewise, a depression may

¹² Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 123, 132-133.

¹³ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 24-25.

¹⁴ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 68.

¹⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 23.

have a physical, a psychological, or a spiritual cause.¹⁶ Frankl sees logotherapy as the specific treatment of choice when the cause of psychological symptoms is a conflict in the spiritual unconscious, between what the person is and what the person may become. Because Frankl views the spiritual unconscious as incorruptible, logotherapy is also seen as an ancillary treatment when a psychological disturbance has either psychological or physical causes.¹⁷ In this latter case, the spiritual core is seen as a source of health and strength in its ability to choose an attitude toward the illness.¹⁸

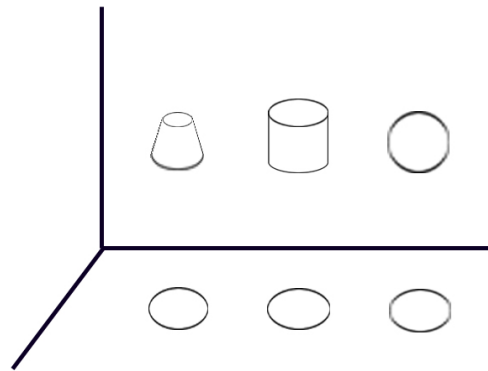


Figure 3: Frankl's Second Law of Dimensional Ontology

The Spiritual Unconscious

As depicted by the cylinder, part of the human spirit is unconscious. An analogous relationship exists between the *spiritual unconscious* and what Frankl calls the instinctual unconscious - his name for the model of the psyche proposed by Freud.¹⁹ The spiritual unconscious has a dynamic energy (that is, noodynamics) created by the

¹⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 24-25.

¹⁷ Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 185.

¹⁸ Viktor E. Frankl. *The Doctor and the Soul*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955, 1980, 1986), 289-290; Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 73.

¹⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 31-32.

difference between what a person is and what a person is capable of becoming.²⁰ Just as Freud associates the instinctual unconscious with libido, or unconscious sexual energy, so Frankl associates the spiritual unconscious with *religio*, or unconscious religiosity.²¹ Frankl further defines this unconscious religiosity as a "latent relation to transcendence."²² Frankl does not view this as a drive, however, like hunger or the sex drive, but rather as a "pull" from a noetic dimension, from a place where a transpersonal awareness can perceive the potentials of the human person.²³

Frankl further elaborates on transcendence through defining a *transcendent unconscious* that is part of the spiritual unconscious. This transcendent unconscious gives rise to the conscious experience of *conscience*. Frankl understands the existence of conscience to imply the existence of a transpersonal agent just as the existence of the navel implies the existence of a mother.²⁴ He explains, "Conscience is fully understandable only against the background of a transhuman dimension. To explain man's being free, the existential quality of human reality would do; however, to explain his being responsible, the transcendent quality of conscience must be considered."²⁵

To the extent that a person chooses to respond to this pull of *religio*, the conscience becomes conscious. Unlike Freud's superego the conscience, as a function of the human spirit, remains free to take a stand for or against any given cultural norm or moral.²⁶ The purpose of the conscience is to inform the human person of the one, right

²⁰ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 63-64.

²¹ Freud, S. (1949, 1969). *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (James Strachey, Trans.). New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 6-7; Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 54-55.

²² Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 68.

²³ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 60; Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 77-78.

²⁴ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 59-61.

²⁵ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 61.

²⁶ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 63-65. See Freud, *op. cit.*, 62, for Freud's association of the superego with conscience.

thing required by any unique situation.²⁷ One purpose of logotherapy is to make the spiritual unconscious conscious.²⁸ This leads to a refinement and development of the human conscience.²⁹

Frankl believes that evidence of *religio* can be found through the use of tools common to psychodynamic practice such as dream interpretation and word association.³⁰ An example of *religio* may be found in the following dream interpretation.³¹ The dreamer works in the American health care industry. He dreams that people are forced to go into space once a year on a rocket as part of the government's attempt to reform the health care system. Rockets have been prepared for the first batch of patients. A capsule is set on top of a rocket and a parachute attached. This tall, white rocket with black accents is unusually bright against the blue sky. This procedure is too dangerous, thinks the dreamer. He and his mother are in an elevator. She is going to the rocket, but the dreamer knows it is not yet time. She tells him she is scheduled for 1:30. He is scheduled for 5:30. The vivid, white rocket is then launched. As the rocket lifts off, the billowing plumes of smoke become clouds and the white rocket becomes Christ in vivid white robes.

The dream can be interpreted in light of Frankl's *religio*. The ascent of the health care rocket latently manifests the idea of spiritual healing. As the dreamer had been reading Jung, it is likely that the mother image was chosen to represent the unconscious (with reference to what Jung called the *anima*).³² The fact that she is going first suggests that spiritual healing is taking place first in the spiritual unconscious, but that the dreamer

²⁷ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 40-41.

²⁸ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 43-44, 47.

²⁹ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 183.

³⁰ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 47, 69.

³¹ This dream comes from the case notes of an unpublished existential analysis.

³² Carl G. Jung. *Aion*. In *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 9*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1958), p26.

must wait for some period of time before becoming fully aware of it. The spiritual unconscious is preparing him for departure to spiritual health.

The transcendent aspect of the spiritual unconscious demands responsible action. Frankl states what he calls the *categorical imperative of logotherapy* as: "Live as if you were already living for the second time and had acted as wrongly the first time as you are about to act now."³³ By this Frankl challenges the human person to view conduct in a larger frame, or to consider how a given behavior may be viewed at a future point. Unlike Freud, who defined the conscience as a psychological process determined by childhood experiences (i.e., the superego), Frankl refuses to reduce the conscience to something determined by anything else. For Frankl, conscience is a matter of irreducible transcendence, a function of a free and transcendent human spirit.³⁴ This is an example of how Frankl rejects psychologism and, thus, transforms psychotherapy from an applied science to an understanding of being human.

Frankl's Categorical Values

Logotherapy recognizes three *categorical values*, also known as the *meaning triad*, through which meaning in life may be discovered: the creative value, the experiential value, and the attitudinal value. The *creative value* encompasses all acts that give something to life that would not otherwise exist. The creative value may be actualized through work, through hobbies, or through doing good deeds. The *experiential value* includes all experiences of truth and beauty discovered in the world as well as all loving encounters with other human beings. The experiential value may be actualized through nature, art, dance, music, and literature and through relationships of love and acceptance. Frankl writes of a suicidal companion in a concentration camp who thought that there was nothing more that he could ask of life. Frankl reversed the

³³ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 89.

³⁴ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 63.

question by asking the man if life still demanded something of him. The man replied with creative and experiential values. He was writing a series of books that had not yet been finished and he had family members in another country that would be waiting for him if he survived. The *attitudinal value* is considered by Frankl to be superior to the creative and experiential values. The attitudinal value is actualized through the stance taken toward unavoidable suffering. If one chooses bravery over cowardice, mercy over revenge, or justice over appeasement, then the attitudinal value has been actualized. A meaningful life is, therefore, a life in which these values are actualized to the greatest possible degree.³⁵

Frankl's Phenomenological Assumptions and the Will to Meaning

Logotherapy makes three phenomenological assumptions. As stated by Frankl, these are freedom of the will, the will to meaning, and meaning in life. *Freedom of the will* refers to freedom to choose one's response to the conditions of life; it is not freedom from conditions in life.³⁶ Indeed, Frankl writes of the *tragic triad*, or those conditions of life from which no human being can escape: pain, guilt and death.³⁷ Frankl sees a fluid boundary between the *area of freedom* and the *area of fate*. At times, the area of freedom may be large with many opportunities to actualize values. At other times, the area of freedom may be small, but it never reduces to zero. Frankl famously writes: "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."³⁸

³⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 70; Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 118; Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 111, 112-115, 141-142.

³⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 16.

³⁷ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 73.

³⁸ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 65-66.

The *will to meaning*, or the desire to understand the purpose of one's own life, is the basic human motivation in the Franklian system.³⁹ He sees it as more basic than even the desire for pleasure and the desire to avoid pain. In fact, he points out that the human person, unlike the animal, will sacrifice pleasure or choose to undergo pain if it is seen as having a transcendent meaning for the sake of another or for a cause one in which one believes.⁴⁰ Finally, meaning in life is believed to be an objective *demand characteristic* of the environment.⁴¹ One of Frankl's most important insights is that it is not the human person who asks the meaning of life, but, rather, life that asks something of the human person. He explains: "One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it."⁴² Moreover, logotherapy teaches that life has meaning under any and all circumstances. Meaning in life is unconditional.⁴³ It is not the task of the human person to invent a meaning, but to discover the meaning that is already present.⁴⁴

To illustrate the discovery of meaning, Frankl tells the story of his consideration of accepting an American visa to emigrate after the Nazis had annexed Austria:

Shortly before the United States entered World War II I received an invitation from the American Embassy in Vienna to go there to pick up my visa for immigration to this country. At that time I was living in Vienna alone with my old parents. They, of course, did not expect me to do anything but pick up the visa and then hurry to this country. But at the last moment I began to hesitate because I asked myself, 'Should I really? Can I do it at all?' For it suddenly came to my mind what was in store for my parents....Then I went home and when I did so, I noticed a piece of marble stone lying on a table. I

³⁹ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 61-62.

⁴⁰ Viktor E. Frankl. *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*. (New York: Clarion, 1967), 40-41; Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 113.

⁴¹ Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, 21, 64.

⁴² Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 108-109.

⁴³ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 114.

⁴⁴ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 62.

inquired of my father how it came to be there, and he said, 'Oh, Viktor, I picked it up this morning at the site where the synagogue stood.' (It had been burned down by the National Socialists.) 'And why did you take it with you?' I asked him. 'Because it is a part of the two tables containing the Ten Commandments.' And he showed me, on the marble stone, a Hebrew letter engraved and gilded. 'And I can tell you even more,' he continued, 'if you are interested; this Hebrew letter serves as the abbreviation of only one of the Ten Commandments.' Eagerly I asked him, 'Which one?' And his answer was: 'Honor father and mother and you will dwell in the land.' On the spot I decided to stay in the country, together with my parents, and let the visa lapse.⁴⁵

One concrete way in which logotherapy understands the will to meaning is through the distinction it makes between *ultimate meaning* and the *meaning of the moment*. Ultimate meaning is believed to exist, but to be largely unknown or unknowable. It is the area of faith.⁴⁶ The meaning of the moment, on the other hand, is knowable. The meaning of the moment consists in the one categorical value that any given moment in life requires of any given person.⁴⁷ This must be discerned, rightly or wrongly, through the operation of conscience.⁴⁸ For Frankl, each combination of person and situation is unique and demands a unique response.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, similar meanings discovered in similar situations over time leads to the development of religions and universal values.⁵⁰ This does not excuse any given person from choosing what a unique situation may demand even if it should be in opposition to the superego or to culturally accepted values.⁵¹ He writes: "In an age in which the Ten Commandments seem to lose their unconditional validity, man must learn more than ever to listen to the ten thousand commandments arising from the ten thousand unique situations of which his life consists. And as to *these* commandments, he is referred to, and must rely on, his conscience."⁵²

⁴⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 58-59.

⁴⁶ Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, 33.

⁴⁷ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 108, 110-111.

⁴⁸ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 57.

⁴⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 41.

⁵⁰ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 63.

⁵¹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 42; Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 19, 63.

⁵² Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 65.

Frankl gives an example of realizing the meaning of the moment by noting that in one unique situation, a newly married husband was informed through conscience that he should free his wife from her marriage vows. The specific situation was that the young wife, newly arrived in a concentration camp, might be given the option to remain alive if she engaged in sexual activity with members of the SS. Frankl writes of the situation, "...the unique meaning was to abandon the universal value of marital faithfulness, to disobey one of the Ten Commandments. To be sure, this was the only way to obey another of the Ten Commandments - 'Thou shalt not kill.' Not giving her his absolution would have made him co-responsible for her death."⁵³ Fabry informs us that this man was Frankl himself.⁵⁴

The Existential Vacuum

Frankl defines the *existential vacuum* as a lack of recognized meaning and purpose in life. Frankl believes this state is the result of the frustration of the will to meaning.⁵⁵ This condition characterizes the modern world, a world in which previous traditions and values no longer provide the human person with guidance on what to do and a world in which the human person often does not even know what she may wish to do. A person in this situation may then simply do what others do (conformism) or do what others tell her to do (totalitarianism).⁵⁶ According to Frankl, manifestations of the existential vacuum include boredom, apathy and sometimes *noogenic neurosis*, a clinical condition in which psychological symptoms are caused by moral and spiritual conflicts.⁵⁷

⁵³ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 63-64.

⁵⁴ Fabry, J. B. (1968). *The Pursuit of Meaning: A Guide to the Theory and Application of Viktor E. Frankl's Logotherapy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 62.

⁵⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 84; Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 61.

⁵⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 83.

⁵⁷ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 85; Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 161-162.

The existential vacuum also affects attitudes on a societal scale. Frankl calls this the *collective neurosis*. It is characterized by 1. a provisional attitude toward life (living as if there is no tomorrow); 2. a fatalistic attitude toward life (acting as if one has no control over one's destiny); 3. collectivist thinking (a denial of one's own personhood); and 4. fanaticism (a denial of the personhood of those who think differently).⁵⁸ He sees all four aspects of collective neurosis as deriving from the spiritual dimension, specifically from the fear of responsibility and the escape from freedom. Frankl argues that this condition leads to the nihilism that he believes is in part responsible for the Holocaust.⁵⁹ "I am absolutely convinced," writes Frankl, "that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek, were ultimately not prepared in some Ministry or other in Berlin but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of Nihilistic scientists and philosophers."⁶⁰

The solution to the existential vacuum, according to Frankl, is the development of a sound philosophy of life. Such a philosophy would demonstrate that life has meaning for each and every human person.⁶¹ Frankl's logotherapy accomplishes this through teaching that the potentials in life are not indifferent. Meaning can be discovered through the human choice to actualize one value over another. He states: "Man must make his choice concerning the mass of present potentials: which will be condemned to non-being and which one shall be actualized, and thus rescued for eternity? Decisions are final for the only really transitory aspects of life are the potentialities. When one is actualized, it is actualized forever and can never be destroyed."⁶² For Frankl, values are actualized through concrete action in time. Once an action is taken, one cannot go back in time and undo it. Thus, actions taken reflect values realized, and these values are, therefore, realized for all time.

⁵⁸ Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 161.

⁵⁹ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 216-220.

⁶⁰ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 220.

⁶¹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁶² Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 100.

Clinical Applications

Frankl sees the tension between what the human person is and what the human person may yet become - noodynamics - as necessary to mental health.⁶³ He criticizes both psychodynamic psychiatry and empirical psychology for their reliance on the principle of homeostasis - the tendency of an organism to maintain balance.⁶⁴ Frankl asserts that the role of the human spirit is not to maintain balance, but to strive toward meaning fulfillment.⁶⁵ He defines two qualities of the human spirit as freedom of the will that leads to the ability to *self-distance* and the will to meaning that leads to the ability to *self-transcend*. Frankl's clinical methods are based on these characteristics of self-distancing and self-transcendence.⁶⁶

Self-distancing is the ability to detach from oneself and to reflect on oneself. This allows the human person, through the exercise of the freedom of the spirit, to choose an attitude both toward the world and toward the mind-body self that is in the world. It is through self-distancing that the human person is able to choose a response to unavoidable suffering of any kind, be it Frankl's internment in the death camps or to the mental and physical diseases that were the subject of his psychiatric practice.⁶⁷

Frankl's clinical technique of *paradoxical intention* is based on self-distancing. The use of this technique requires that the patient wish for the very thing that elicits the greatest anxiety. (Clinically, this breaks the cycle of anxiety).⁶⁸ For example, a patient who has panic attacks may not leave home for fear that she will have a heart attack and

⁶³ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 103-105.

⁶⁴ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 77-78.

⁶⁵ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 77.

⁶⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 17-19, 99.

⁶⁷ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 108-109.

⁶⁸ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 102.

die. Such a patient would humorously develop the attitude of trying to have as many heart attacks each day as possible, perhaps adding a stroke or two for good measure. Anticipatory anxiety in such a patient would then diminish and the patient would leave home more frequently.⁶⁹

Self-transcendence allows the human person to discover meaning by reaching beyond herself. Frankl views this process as part of an open system, and thus spiritual, noetic, rather than as part of a closed instinctual, biological system that characterizes the existence of animals. He contrasts the capacity for self-transcendence with the homeostasis principle that he closely identifies with Freud's pleasure principle; i.e., pleasure is the fulfillment of desire and the function of the psyche is to bring desire to a rest.⁷⁰ In Frankl's view, true human existence is found in reaching beyond the self. For him, happiness cannot be pursued through pleasure, but, rather, ensues as the result of the discovery of meaning in life.⁷¹

Frankl's clinical technique of *dereflection* is based on the self-transcending ability.⁷² Whereas paradoxical intention focuses humor on the symptom, the process of dereflection diverts attention away from the symptom and toward a meaningful person or cause. One of many clinical examples involves a case of impotence. The patient focused his attention on whether or not he was achieving an erection, with the result that he did not. The Franklian solution is to help the patient stop focusing on sex as technique and to begin viewing sexuality as a striving for love, that is, as a self-transcendent phenomenon. According to Frankl, such symptoms then resolve themselves.⁷³

⁶⁹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 105-106.

⁷⁰ Freud, *op. cit.*, 3, 55.

⁷¹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 31-38.

⁷² Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 99.

⁷³ Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 127-128.

Chapter 2

The Placement of Logotherapy within Psychiatry and Psychology

Logotherapy and Viennese Psychiatry

Logotherapy has been called the "Third School of Viennese Psychiatry" after Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's individual psychology.¹ Frankl restates Freud's motivational principle, the "pleasure principle,"² as the "will to pleasure." He refers to Adler's "superiority goal"³ as the "will to power." He contrasts his own "will to meaning" with each of these motivational constructs; in fact, he sees the will to pleasure and the will to power as derivatives of the will to meaning, confusing the means of pleasure or power with the ends of finding and fulfilling meaning and purpose. Only if the will to meaning becomes frustrated does the human person become content with either of these derivatives.⁴ He sees the will to pleasure as characteristic of the infant and young child, the will to power as characteristic of the adolescent and the will to meaning as characteristic of the mature adult. Thus, the schools of Viennese psychiatry replicate human development as each builds upon the work that preceded it.⁵ He also criticizes each school for attempting to reduce the meaningfulness of human experience to these

¹ Soucek, W. (1948). Die Existenzanalyse Frankls, die Dritte Richtung der Wiener psychotherapeutischen Schule. *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, 73, 594.

² For Freud's definition of the pleasure principle, see Freud, *op. cit.*, 55.

³ For Adler's definition of the superiority goal, see Adler, A. (1924). *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology* (P. Radin, Trans.). New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 13-14.

⁴ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 34-35.

⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 41.

baser constructs. Frankl writes: "No one will be able to make us believe that man is a sublimated animal once we can show that within him there is a repressed angel."⁶

Frankl began a correspondence with Freud when Frankl was still a high school student. He met Freud by chance as a university student. When he introduced himself, Freud reportedly knew Frankl's mailing address by heart. Sadly, the correspondence written by Freud to Frankl was confiscated by the Gestapo when Frankl was deported to Theresienstadt. Also confiscated were some case histories hand written by Freud that Frankl had in his possession.⁷ Freud had been so impressed with the young Frankl that he published a paper Frankl had shared with him in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.⁸ Frankl was always very gracious in his remarks concerning Freud. Despite his dispute with aspects of psychoanalysis, he praised its objectivity.⁹ He held that his own work was an addition to the foundation that Freud had laid. Dubois, in a translator's note, states that Frankl was always learning from others and was at pains to be eclectic.¹⁰ Frankl's respect for Freud can be seen when he writes, "And so Freud's contribution to the foundation of psychotherapy abides, and his achievement is thereby incomparable...no one will ever be able to measure up to him."¹¹

Frankl spent two years associated with Adler's school of Individual Psychology, from the time of his first publication in the *Journal of Individual Psychology*¹² to the time Adler expelled him from the Society in 1927. Frankl felt that Individual Psychology had fallen prey to the reductionist tendencies of psychologism, but also felt that the discipline

⁶ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 65.

⁷ Frankl, *Recollections*, *op. cit.*, 48-51.

⁸ Frankl, V. E. (1924). Zur mimischen Bejahung und Verneinung. *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, 10, 437-438.

⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 25.

¹⁰ Dubois, J. M. (2004). Preview - Part II. Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. In Frankl, *On The Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 165.

¹¹ Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 239.

¹² Frankl, V. E. (1925). Psychotherapie und Weltanschauung. Zur grundsätzlichen Kritik ihrer Beziehungen, *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie III*, 250-252.

could be reformed from the inside. Consequently, he did not leave the Society when two of his like-minded colleagues¹³ did so. Frankl reports that Adler never spoke to him again after Frankl failed to publicly defend him when they left. He was expelled a few months later.¹⁴ Frankl responds to the criticism that logotherapy is not substantively different from Individual Psychology by stating: "Who is best qualified to decide that logotherapy is still individual psychology, or that it is not - who more than Adler himself? It was he who insisted that I be expelled from the society. *Roma locuta causa finita.*"¹⁵

Logotherapy and Existential Analysis

Frankl coined the term "*Existenzanalyse*" in 1938 as an alternative to the term "logotherapy."^{16,17} This term was translated into English as "existential analysis." Beginning in 1942, Binswanger's "*Daseinanalyse*"¹⁸ also came to be translated as "existential analysis." Frankl, who enjoyed an amicable relationship with Binswanger,¹⁹ wished to refrain from using the term "existential analysis" in his English publications to avoid confusion.²⁰ Frankl explained the difference between *Existenzanalyse* and *Daseinanalyse* in 1958 and noted that the two terms were translated similarly in Spanish, English and French. *Daseinanalyse* according to Frankl deals with the illumination of being, while *Existenzanalyse* deals with the illumination of meaning.²¹

In 1969, Frankl preferred the term logotherapy when referring to his ideas in English. He notes, "Often I speak of logotherapy even in a context where no therapy in

¹³ Rudolf Allers and Oswald Schwarz.

¹⁴ Frankl, *Recollections, op. cit.*, 60-63.

¹⁵ Frankl, *Recollections, op. cit.*, 64.

¹⁶ Frankl, V. E. (1938). Zur geistigen Problematik der Psychotherapie. *Zentralblatt für Psychotherapie*, 10, 33.

¹⁷ Frankl, V. E. (1939). Philosophie und Psychotherapie. Zur Grundlegung einer Existenzanalyse. *Schweizerische medizinische Wochenschrift*, 69, 707.

¹⁸ Binswanger, L. (1942). *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins*. Zurich: Munich/Bâle.

¹⁹ Frankl, *Recollections, op. cit.*, 113.

²⁰ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 5.

²¹ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness, op. cit.*, 81.

the strict sense of the word is involved."²² However, by the time of his death in 1997, Frankl wrote freely of both existential analysis and logotherapy, defining the latter as "the clinical application of our existential analytic approach."²³ The combined phrase "logotherapy and existential analysis" has retained currency, appearing, for example, in the subtitle of Batthyany's recent volume *Existential Psychotherapy of Meaning: Handbook of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*.²⁴ Moreover, he states flatly in the Introduction to *The Feeling of Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy* that "...Frankl gradually developed Logotherapy into the independent psychotherapy system that is known today as *Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*."²⁵

Like Frankl, Binswanger also hoped to build a new psychiatric structure on the foundation of Freud's psychoanalysis and, also like Frankl, he turned to philosophy to do so.²⁶ The term *Daseinsanalyse* is called untranslatable by Spiegelberg who offers the phrase "phenomenological anthropology" to describe it.²⁷ In essence, Binswanger was concerned with the inability of science to confirm the existence of the unconscious. He, therefore, hoped to demonstrate its existence phenomenologically.²⁸ He believed that to understand a specific mental disorder the psychiatrist needed to not only understand the biology and the symptoms of the patient, but also the phenomenological worlds in which the patient lived.²⁹ Central to these worlds are the phenomena of freedom and love.³⁰

²² Frankl. *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 5. Unlike books published prior to 1969, *The Will to Meaning* was first published in English rather than German and has been called Frankl's "American book." Perhaps this is the occasion for Frankl's greater reflection on English terminology at this time.

²³ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 67.

²⁴ Batthyany, A. and Levinson, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Existential Psychotherapy of Meaning: Handbook of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*. Phoenix: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen.

²⁵ Batthyany, A. (2010) Introduction - Viktor E. Frankl and the Development of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. In Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, (p. 7).

²⁶ Spiegelberg, H. (1972). *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 200.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁹ Binswanger, L. (1958). The Existential Analysis School of Thought. In Rollo May, Ernest Angel and Henri F. Ellenberger (Eds.), *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (pp. 200-201). New York: Clarion.

³⁰ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 219-220.

The difference between *Daseinsanalyse* and Frankl's *Existenzanalyse* is sharp for Frankl. The former is an analysis of being-in-the-world, a construct that replaces Freud's libido in Binswanger's thought.³¹ The latter is an analysis of meaning in life. Frankl argues that his existential analysis surpasses *Daseinsanalyse* specifically because it leads to a concrete application, logotherapy, that *Daseinsanalyse* does not.³² Although Frankl is usually content to compare and contrast logotherapy with the theories of Freud and Adler,³³ he does at least once include *Daseinsanalyse* along with psychoanalysis and individual psychology as theories having been complemented and completed by his own logotherapy and existential analysis.³⁴

Frankl's Answer to Jung

Although Frankl and Binswanger had a gracious relationship,³⁵ and Binswanger worked under Jung at one point,³⁶ there is no record that Frankl and Jung ever met. This is all the more surprising when one considers the similarities between them. Both men worked to extend psychoanalysis through the inclusion of the spiritual aspects of the human person, Frankl through an inner spiritual unconscious³⁷ and Jung through a deeper collective unconscious.³⁸ Both men included a concept of transcendence in their work.^{39,40} Given Frankl's contention that logotherapy could be combined with many

³¹ Binswanger, *op. cit.*, 206.

³² Frankl, *op. cit.*, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, 81.

³³ As, for example, in Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 35. The will to meaning is defined over against the will to pleasure and the will to power in numerous places throughout Frankl's body of work with no reference to Binswanger.

³⁴ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 194-195.

³⁵ Frankl, *Recollections*, *op. cit.*, 113.

³⁶ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 196.

³⁷ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 31.

³⁸ Jung, C. G. (1958). *The Structure of the Psyche*. In *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 8* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). London: Routledge, ¶321.

³⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 59.

⁴⁰ Jung, C. G. (1958). *Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation*. In *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 9* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). London: Routledge, ¶524.

other forms of therapy,⁴¹ including Freudian dream analysis,⁴² it seems curious to this writer that more work comparing the two schools of thought have not been done.

Frankl credits Jung for discovering religious elements within the unconscious, but criticizes him for considering them to be instinctual and impersonal, that is, archetypal, and collective. Frankl calls this Jung's "great mistake."⁴³ For Frankl, unconscious religious elements belong to an existential and personal area. This spiritual unconscious is not part of the psychophysical organism. It operates through decisions rather than drives; it is personal rather than collective. Indeed, Frankl refers to religious belief as the most personal decision that a human being makes. While religious forms are transmitted to future generations through culture, each individual must embrace these forms and fill them with her own existential meaning.⁴⁴

Frankl recounts the following exchange: "Once I was asked after one of my lectures whether I did not admit that there were such things as religious archetypes, since it was remarkable that all primitive peoples ultimately reached an identical concept of God, and this could after all only be explained with the help of a God-archetype. I asked my questioner whether there were such a thing as a Four-archetype. He did not understand immediately, and so I said, 'Look here, all people discover independently that two and two make four - we do not need an archetype for an explanation - perhaps two and two really do make four. And perhaps we do not need a divine archetype to explain human religion either - perhaps God really does exist.'"⁴⁵

Logotherapy and American Psychology

⁴¹ Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 185.

⁴² Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 47.

⁴³ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 70.

⁴⁴ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 70-72.

⁴⁵ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 219.

In the United States, logotherapy is situated within Third Force psychology, an umbrella term describing a variety of humanistic and existential approaches. The central feature of these approaches over against psychoanalysis (First Force) and behaviorism (Second Force) is an emphasis on the application of specific philosophical principles to clinical work.⁴⁶ While all such schools tend to emphasize the therapeutic relationship over testable procedures, logotherapy is distinguished from its peers by the development of defined clinical techniques.⁴⁷ The term transpersonal psychology is sometimes used to describe a Fourth Force. The Viktor Frankl Institute places logotherapy between the humanist-existential schools⁴⁸ and the transpersonal schools⁴⁹ owing to Frankl's emphasis on self-transcendence.⁵⁰

Frankl does not specifically disagree with behaviorism, in much the same way that he does not specifically disagree with psychoanalysis. Rather, he sees behaviorism as a discipline belonging to lower dimensions of research; logotherapy surpasses it without contradicting it. He uses the analogy of an airplane: the fact that an airplane is capable of flight does not contradict its ability to move on the ground like an automobile.⁵¹ Frankl's interest, however, is in the specifically human capacity of noetic flight: "How should a psychotherapy that derives its conception of human nature from experiments with rats deal with the fundamental anthropological fact that persons, on the one hand, in the midst of an affluent society commit suicide, and, on the other hand, are prepared to suffer as long as that suffering has meaning?"⁵²

⁴⁶ Garfield, S. L. (1980). *Psychotherapy: An Eclectic Approach*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 28.

⁴⁷ Corey, G (1991). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 177.

⁴⁸ These include work done by Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Irvin Yalom and others.

⁴⁹ These include work done by Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof, Michael Washburn, Fritjof Capra and others.

⁵⁰ Barnes, R. C. (2005). *Franklian Psychology: Meaning-Centered Interventions*. Abilene, Texas: Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy, 17-18.

⁵¹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 26.

⁵² Frankl, *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, *op. cit.*, 12.

Frankl takes issue with Maslow's notion of self-actualization.⁵³ Indeed, he sees a concern for self-actualization as evidence of the frustration of the will to meaning and as a contradiction of the quality of self-transcendence. Like happiness, he sees self-actualization as something that cannot be pursued directly, but as something that ensues as a result of self-transcendence.⁵⁴ For Frankl, the true actualization of the self comes about only in the context of reaching beyond the self, in serving a cause solely for the sake of the cause, or in loving another solely for the sake of the other. Self-actualization reduces such causes or persons to mere means for its own ends.⁵⁵

Frankl makes special mention of Crumbaugh,⁵⁶ who made the first psychometric attempt to validate Frankl's notion of a noogenic neurosis.^{57,58} Other attempts have resulted in the development of six psychometric tools commonly used in psychological research on meaning.⁵⁹ While early validation attempts have been criticized on factor analytic grounds, especially surrounding the difficulty in differentiating the measurement of the existential vacuum from the measurement of depression,⁶⁰ research continues to move forward on the development of the psychometric assessment of personal meaning.⁶¹

⁵³ For Maslow's definition of self-actualization, see Maslow, A. H. (1960). *Toward a Psychology of Being, Second Edition*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 25.

⁵⁴ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 38, 41.

⁵⁵ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness, op. cit.*, 94.

⁵⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 89.

⁵⁷ Crumbaugh, J. C. and Maholik, L. T. (1964). An Experimental Study in Existentialism: The Psychometric Approach to Frankl's Concept of Noogenic Neurosis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 20, 200.

⁵⁸ Crumbaugh, J. C. (1968). Cross-Validation of Purpose-in-Life Test Based on Frankl's Concepts. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 24, 74-81.

⁵⁹ These are the Purpose in Life Test, the Life Regard Index, the Sense of Coherence Scale, the Life Attitude Profile, the Life Attitude Profile - Revised and the Purpose in Life subscale (Steger, M. F., et. al. (2006). The Meaning in Life Questionnaire: Assessing the Presence of and Search for Meaning in Life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53, 81.

⁶⁰ Steger, M. F., et. al. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire: Assessing the Presence of and Search for Meaning in Life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53, 81.

⁶¹ Schulenberg, S. E. and Melton, A. M. A. (2010). A confirmatory factor-analytic evaluation of the Purpose in Life test: Preliminary psychometric support for a replicable two-factor model. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 11, 95-111.

Positive traits and psychological strengths have been of increasing interest in psychology in recent years.⁶² The positive psychology movement reflects a shift of emphasis away from pathology and toward resilience. While this movement is not founded on logotherapy, the two approaches do share such a similar orientation that at least one writer describes logotherapy as "anticipatory" of the new movement.⁶³ These similarities include an acceptance of human spirituality, an emphasis on human strengths and values, an appreciation of beauty, gratitude and humor, and an interest in a fulfilling and meaningful life.⁶⁴

Two institutes officially bear Frankl's name and continue his work today. Founded in 1977 as the Institute of Logotherapy, the Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy is governed by a seventeen member international board of directors. The Institute maintains offices in 22 countries, publishes the *International Forum for Logotherapy*, awards the Diploma in Logotherapy and hosts biennial World Congresses on Logotherapy.⁶⁵ Founded in 1992, the Viktor Frankl Institute - Vienna is overseen by a seven-person board of directors that includes members of the Frankl family.⁶⁶ Having access to Frankl's home and original manuscripts, the Institute is working to complete publication of Frankl's remaining unpublished work.⁶⁷

⁶² Steger, *op. cit.*, 80.

⁶³ Klingberg, H. (2009). Logotherapy, Frankl, and Positive Psychology. In Batthyany, A. and Levinson, J. (Eds.), *Existential Psychotherapy of Meaning: Handbook of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*. Phoenix: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen, 197.

⁶⁴ Klingberg, *op. cit.*, 208-212.

⁶⁵ Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy. (2010). Retrieved December 15, 2010 from <http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org>.

⁶⁶ Viktor Frankl Institute. (2010). Retrieved December 15, 2010 from <http://www.viktorfrankl.org>.

⁶⁷ David A. Hallowell, Viktor Frankl Institute - Vienna, Science and Research Committee, personal communication.

Chapter 3

The Philosophical Background of Logotherapy

Frankl identifies logotherapy as "existential"^{1,2} and "phenomenological."^{3,4} The focus of existentialism is on understanding the way in which an individual experiences the world. Phenomenology holds that existence can be studied as one phenomenon among others.⁵ These terms have largely converged within the fields of psychiatry and psychology⁶ where they apply to multiple theories that emphasize human experience over natural-scientific approaches.⁷ Frankl does not define existentialism within logotherapy, though he does wryly remark that "... there are as many existentialisms as there are existentialists."⁸ He does define phenomenology: "Phenomenology, as I understand it, speaks the language of man's prereflective self-understanding rather than interpreting a given phenomenon after preconceived patterns."^{9,10}

¹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 5, 6.

² Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 29.

³ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁴ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 108.

⁵ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, xxix.

⁶ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, xxvii-xxix.

⁷ Halling, S. and Nill, J. D. (1995). A Brief History of Existential-Phenomenological Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 26, 1-2.

⁸ Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, ix.

⁹ Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, 2, note 2.

¹⁰ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 108.

Spiegelberg argues that phenomenology allowed Frankl to free himself from the preconceived patterns of psychoanalysis and individual psychology. Consequently, Frankl was able to develop logotherapy by hearing his patients instead of offering them interpretations.¹¹ As such, Spiegelberg argues, Frankl was not interested in the development of phenomenology *per se*, but rather, in its application to psychiatry.¹² For example, Frankl bases his three assumptions of logotherapy (freedom of the will, the will to meaning, and meaning in life) on his understanding of phenomenology.¹³

Existential phenomenology is a movement deriving from multiple sources, though Kierkegaard is generally regarded as the first existentialist while Husserl is seen as the founder of phenomenology.¹⁴ Kierkegaard emphasizes the concrete existence of the human person in a concrete life situation and argues against abstract understandings such as those based on the philosophy of Hegel. Kierkegaard views despair, for example, as the result of denying one's true self and one's true situation, or the insistence that one should be who one is not.¹⁵ Frankl likewise argues that each unique human person is called to accomplish a unique concrete task that no one else can accomplish.¹⁶ Husserl's phenomenology emphasizes methodology in the study of things as they appear (*zu den Sachen selbst*¹⁷), especially the relationship between consciousness and the objects of perception; he specifically argues against psychological reductionism and relativism.¹⁸ Frankl sets overcoming psychological reductionism as a specific task of logotherapy.¹⁹

¹¹ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 353.

¹² Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 245, 352.

¹³ Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, 2, 11, 14.

¹⁴ Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 2-3.

¹⁵ Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 3-4.

¹⁶ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 108-109.

¹⁷ "to the things themselves"

¹⁸ Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 3, 5-6.

¹⁹ Frankl, *Recollections*, *op. cit.*, 59-60.

Frankl often quotes his own translation of Nietzsche: "He who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*."²⁰ His use of the term "will to power" is also clearly drawn from Nietzsche though applied to Adler's "superiority goal" in a way that Adler might disapprove.²¹ Nietzsche's concept of the "overman" (*Übermensch*) can be understood as one who creates and lives out authentic values.²² Kaufmann describes the overman as he "who has organized the chaos of his passions, given style to his character, and become creative. Aware of life's terrors, he affirms life without resentment."²³ Much the same could be said of Frankl.²⁴

Though Heidegger did not consider himself to be an existentialist, he combined existential concerns with phenomenological method in addressing the question of Being. He uses the German term *Dasein* in a specific and philosophically rich manner. *Da*, meaning here or there, is used to signify that transcendence is intrinsic to the human person. *Sein*, or being, means to Heidegger that the human person is the being who questions Being. Heidegger uses the word *Dasein* in place of the words person, conscious, or subject. Heidegger's *Dasein* is partly revealed and partly hidden; he suggested a phenomenological hermeneutics by which *Dasein* reveals itself.²⁵ This hermeneutics is indistinguishable from ontology.²⁶ The partly hidden nature of *Dasein* became a basis for understanding the unconscious among some psychotherapists.²⁷ As with Kierkegaard, Heidegger sees *Dasein* as a concrete phenomenon in space and time.

²⁰ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 104 and many other places.

²¹ Adler, in *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, *op. cit.*, 15, states the goal of Individual Psychology: "For the aim of this point-of-view is to gain a reinforced sense of reality, the development of a feeling of responsibility and a substitution for latent hatred of a feeling of mutual goodwill, all of which can be gained only by the conscious evolution of a feeling for the common weal and the conscious destruction of the will to power."

²² Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 7.

²³ Kaufmann, W. A. (1967). Friedrich Nietzsche. In Edwards, P. (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5-6 (p. 511). New York: Macmillan.

²⁴ Redsand, A. S. (2006). *Viktor Frankl: A Life Worth Living*. New York: Clarion, 75, 81.

²⁵ Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 8-10.

²⁶ Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*. (Joan Stambaugh, Trans.). Albany: State University of New York Press, 398-401.

²⁷ Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 9.

Recognition of the finality of death allows the human person to become aware of one's unique individuality.²⁸ Frankl takes a similar point of view when he writes, "...the transitoriness of our existence in no way makes it meaningless. But it does constitute our responsibility; for everything hinges upon our realizing the essentially transitory possibilities."²⁹

The psychiatric theories most closely associated with Heidegger's thought are Binswanger's *Daseinanalyse* and Boss's *Daseinanalytik*,³⁰ the former of which is considered a freer interpretation of Heidegger than the latter.³¹ Frankl sees logotherapy as moving beyond Heidegger and Binswanger when he states: "*Existenzanalyse* aims to complement these previous theories, to remodel and surpass them, and to complete a truer picture of the 'complete' man, namely, 'being man' as essentially spiritual *Existenz*."³² Frankl does not discuss Boss to any great extent, but supplements his argument for logotherapy by quoting Boss as saying, "Daseinanalysis has nothing to do with psychotherapeutic practice."³³ Frankl further explains, "Logotherapy is concerned not only with being but also with meaning - not only with *ontos* but also with *logos* - and this feature may well account for the activist, therapeutic orientation of logotherapy. In other words, logotherapy is not only analysis but also therapy."³⁴

One of the greatest influences on the development of logotherapy is the phenomenology of Scheler.³⁵ In writing about his final days of association with the Society for Individual Psychology, Frankl states: "At that time I finally saw through my own psychologism. My ultimate shakeup came from Max Scheler whose *Formalismus in*

²⁸ Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 10.

²⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 120-121.

³⁰ Halling and Nill, *op. cit.*, 14-15.

³¹ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 333, note.

³² Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, *op. cit.*, 195.

³³ Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, 134.

³⁴ Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, 1.

³⁵ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 348, 352.

der Ethik [Formalism in Ethics] I carried with me like a bible."³⁶ Scheler's phenomenology had wide influence on a number of psychiatrists and psychologists.³⁷ The influence of Scheler on Frankl may best be seen in Frankl's concept of dimensional ontology and in the development of his categorical values.

Frankl gives credit to Scheler and to Hartmann for inspiring his dimensional ontology.³⁸ Scheler's contribution in this regard is his stratification of feeling based on the vital, the mental and the spiritual. Each stratification has its own relationship to values.³⁹ Scheler explains, "A *spiritual* level also exists for this analysis, one that has nothing to do with the sphere of the sensible or the sphere of the vital or of the lived body, which is to be sharply distinguished from the sensible sphere."⁴⁰ Hartmann's contribution to Frankl's dimensional ontology may be found in his general doctrine of ontology that states that higher strata are supported by lower strata while remaining autonomous from them. He applies this law to the relationship between psychological phenomena (the lower strata) and spiritual phenomena (the higher strata).⁴¹ Frankl draws from each the notion of a spiritual stratum separate from the psychophysical layers, but speaks of dimensionality as a way to maintain the unity of the human person.⁴²

Spiegelberg notes that while Frankl's categorical values are original to Frankl, they do owe some degree dependence on Scheler.⁴³ By use of his stratification system, Scheler allows for value hierarchies to be deliberately considered.⁴⁴ He explains, "In the *totality* of the realm of values there exists a singular order, an "*order of ranks*" that all values possess among themselves. It is because of this that a value is "*higher*" or "*lower*"

³⁶ Frankl, *Recollections*, *op. cit.*, 62.

³⁷ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 16.

³⁸ Frankl, *The Will the Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 22.

³⁹ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 17.

⁴⁰ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 65.

⁴¹ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 22.

⁴² Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 22.

⁴³ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 351-352.

⁴⁴ Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, 17.

than another one. This order lies in the essence of values themselves..."⁴⁵ Frankl states: "The rank of a value is experienced together with the value itself. In other words, the experience of one value includes the experience that it ranks higher than another. There is no place for value conflicts."⁴⁶

For both Scheler and Frankl, values must be lived. Scheler explains, "It is not only in 'inner perception'...but also in the felt and lived affair with *world*...in the course of *performing* such intentional functions and acts, that values and their order flash before us!...A spirit limited to perception and thinking would be absolutely *blind* to values..."⁴⁷ Frankl, likewise, explains, "However, the experience of the hierarchical order of values does not dispel man from decision making. Man is pushed by drives. But he is pulled by values. He is always free to accept or to reject a value he is offered by a situation."⁴⁸

Close correspondence between the writings of Scheler and Frankl may be found in a number of areas. Although Scheler is not specifically credited with the logotherapeutic concepts below, it is possible that Scheler's work had an important influence. Some key areas for logotherapy include the understanding of the conscience, Frankl's realization of the weakness of Freud's pleasure principle and possibly even the clinical technique of dereflection. These examples follow:

Frankl and Scheler share similar ideas regarding the nature of the conscience. Frankl defines conscience as "essentially intuitive" because it must anticipate that which has not yet been actualized. He explains, "It is the task of conscience to disclose to man the *unum necesse*, the one thing that is required. This one thing, however, is absolutely unique inasmuch as it is the unique possibility a concrete person has to actualize in a

⁴⁵ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 86-87.

⁴⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 57.

⁴⁷ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 68.

⁴⁸ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 57.

specific situation."⁴⁹ This may be compared with Scheler's formal definition of conscience: "(1) it represents the *individual form of the economization* of moral insight, and (2) it represents this insight only insofar as it is directed to the *good as such* 'for me.'"⁵⁰ Moral struggle for Scheler is not a matter of logic, but is a matter of correct or deceptive estimates of the ranks of values. Thus, Scheler's hierarchy of values, his "order of ranks," is as integral to his analysis of moral struggle,⁵¹ as the "one thing that is required" is for Frankl.⁵² Scheler explains how these estimates of value may be discovered: "There is a depth in man that always silently tells him what the 'relativity' of felt values is, no matter how much he may seek to cover it up by means of judgments, comparisons, and induction."⁵³ Scheler also states: "Interconnections are, like essences, *"given."* They are not a 'product' of 'understanding.' They are *intuited*, not 'made.'...The *logos* permeating the universe can be grasped only through them."⁵⁴

Frankl's rejection of Freud's pleasure principle as nothing but a derivative of the will to meaning⁵⁵ is similar to Scheler's explanation of the relationship between contentment and pleasure. Scheler explains, "...it is a quite peculiar phenomenon that sensuous enjoyment or a harmlessly trivial delight (e.g., attending a party or going for a walk) will bring us full 'contentment' *only* when we feel 'content' in the more central sphere of our life, where everything is 'serious.' It is only against this background of a deeper contentment that a fully content laughter can resound about the most trivial joys. Conversely, if the more central sphere is not content, there arises a 'discontentment' and a restless search for *pleasure values* that at once replace a full contentment in feeling the lower values concerned. One can even draw a conclusion from this: the many forms of hedonism always reveal a token of 'discontentment' with regard to higher values. There

⁴⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 40-41.

⁵⁰ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 324.

⁵¹ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 84, 85.

⁵² Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 40-41.

⁵³ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 99.

⁵⁴ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 68.

⁵⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, *op. cit.*, 35.

exists a reciprocal relation, then, between the degrees of *searching* for pleasure and the depth of contentment in a value of the value-series in question."⁵⁶ Compare this to Frankl's notion that happiness cannot be pursued, but must ensue from a life lived with meaning.⁵⁷

It is possible that even the clinical technique of dereflection owes something to Scheler. As with values, Scheler develops a stratification of levels of feeling. These levels are the "sensible" (feelings of the senses), "feelings of the lived body" (states and functions of the body), "psychic" (related to psychological processes), and "spiritual" (related to the personality).⁵⁸ Scheler believes that the closer a feeling is to the spiritual the less it can change while the closer it is to the sensible the more it can change. This change is brought about by a "displacement of oversight."⁵⁹ The displacement of oversight sounds much like a description of Frankl's dereflection, or the process of diverting attention away from a symptom (that may be a feeling, such as anxiety) and toward a greater meaning to fulfill.⁶⁰

Frankl has been closely identified with Scheler in much the same way that Binswanger has been identified with Heidegger. In neither case can a theory of psychology be identical with a system of philosophy. However, Frankl and Scheler both argue that "meanings" are real phenomena, just as music, art, dance, love and other forms of human experience are real and true at the level of the human person who experiences them. Perhaps more than any other European psychiatrist, Frankl has ensured that existential-phenomenological ideas continue to influence clinical practice.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 96-97.

⁵⁷ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, op. cit.*, 34.

⁵⁸ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 332. Note also the possible relationship to dimensional ontology.

⁵⁹ Scheler, *op. cit.*, 337.

⁶⁰ Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul, op. cit.*, 253.

⁶¹ Sahakian, W. S. (1979). Logotherapy's Place in Philosophy. In Joseph B. Fabry, Reuven P. Bulka and William S. Sahakian (Eds.), *Logotherapy in Action* (p. 67). New York: Jason Aronson.

Chapter 4

Selection of Clinical Examples

In accordance with ethical principles on the use of case material, all personally identifying information has been obscured or altered.¹

Attitude Modification through Socratic Dialogue

Although Frankl mentioned using a Socratic Dialogue, it was Lukas who developed Attitude Modification through Socratic Dialogue as a specific logotherapeutic technique.² It is illustrated in the following example:

The client is an 11-year old African-American female referred to the clinic by her mother for anxiety. I met first with the child's mother who explained the urgency. The child had been talking repeatedly that she wanted to forget her past and that she could not stop thinking about the past. At one point, she pleaded with her mother in tears to never drink again. The mother, with considerable embarrassment, explains that she drinks very rarely, but that the father used to have a drinking problem. He has since received help for this problem.

¹ American Psychological Association. (2002). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (fifth edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 9.

² Lukas, E. (1998). *Logotherapy Textbook: Meaning-centered Psychotherapy consistent with the principles outlined by Viktor E. Frankl, MD* (T. Brugger, Trans.). Toronto: Liberty Press, 86, 148.

I next brought in the little girl and spoke with her privately. After introductions, she sat very primly at the edge of the oversized chair in my office. With her hands folded politely in her lap, she addressed me by my first name and said, "Marshall, I have a problem that I hope you can help me with today." "I want to forget the past, just the bad parts, not the good parts," she went on to explain.

I first asked her what she wanted to forget. She identified three things that were bothering her: the death of her dog Zippy, her parents' separation when she was younger, and the time she lived apart from her father. I then asked her about the good parts of her past. She identified two particular Christmas celebrations, some birthday parties, and her animals. I told her that I was not able to make her forget about her past, but that I thought that I could help her deal with her past so that it would not bother her as much anymore.

I suggested that we start with the death of Zippy. The little girl then brightened a bit and said, "Oh, I think I have already dealt with that!" I asked her how. She explained that, while she missed Zippy very much, she would not have met her new dog at all if Zippy had not died. She also volunteered that ever since Zippy died, she has known that she wants to be a veterinarian. I praised her for the good job she has done in dealing with this and I asked her if there was any lesson she could learn from it. She thought for a minute and said, "I think the lesson is that sometimes good things can come out of bad things."

We then turned our attention to her other concerns. She filled me in on some history. According to what she understands, her father developed a very bad drinking problem. Eventually, her mother forced him out of the house because of it and he moved to a different city for about a year. The couple have since reconciled and the father has moved back into the home, after getting help for his alcohol problem. The little girl is now afraid this will happen again.

We talked a bit about how we could not guarantee the behavior of another person, but that we could be in control of our own attitudes and behaviors. I reminded her that she had done such a good job of finding the meaning in Zippy's death, I wondered if it were possible that she could find a meaning for herself in the time of her parents' separation.

She thought about this for a few minutes. Finally she said that she thought the meaning for her was that, when she got older, she should not drink. Moreover, she thought that when she got old enough to be interested in boys, she would not let herself be pressured into drinking or hang out with those who did. She went on to explain that she did not want to repeat the mistakes of her parents.

I praised her for the amount of thought that she had put into her answers and for the lessons she had been able to learn. We chatted for a few more minutes about the end of the school year and her plans for the summer. As we ended, she said, "Thank you, Marshall. I think I've dealt with the past and it doesn't bother me anymore." She then rejoined her mother in the waiting room.

Attitude Modification through the Discovery of Meaning

"Mark" is a 57-year old white male referred to the clinic by his employer due to increasing attention problems at work. He is recently widowed and has no other living family. Mark was married to his wife for the past 30 years. She struggled with the illness that led to her death for about 18 months. During this time, Mark was devoted only to the care of his wife and to his work to support them. She passed away two months ago.

Over the past two months, Mark has become increasingly withdrawn. He goes to work, but does not keep his mind on his job. He has no social life or activities. When he comes home from work, he drinks beer and watches television. His alcohol consumption

has increased. He has daily crying spells, depressed mood, no interest in activities (and no activities). He denies feelings of hopelessness or excessive guilt. He denies sleep and appetite disturbance. He denies suicidal ideation.

Mark feels as if he has already realized that he must back away from the alcohol and make some decisions to get his life on track. He is wondering what to do with the rest of his life. He reports that his wife told him that he must go on with his life and find another wife. Mark has no interest in this right now. In this case, most of the session was spent in listening to the client speak of his wife, his love, and his loss.

Mark reports that he now keeps his wedding band along with his wife's wedding set on a chain around his neck. He states that sometimes the rings, especially the diamond, feel like they are poking him in the chest. He says that he imagines that his wife is poking him in the chest. Mark was asked what he thought she would be trying to tell him. He replied, "To get off my butt and figure out what to do with my life." He mentioned that others had made fun of him for attaching any meaning to this occurrence and that it was one of the reasons his employer thought he needed professional help. We discussed that our culture is not very open to finding these kinds of meanings. We also discussed that his relationship with his wife does not end with death and that, if thinking of his wife poking him to go in the right direction is meaningful for him, then he should not let anyone take that away from him.

The therapist's acceptance of the meaning Mark had found gave him the motivation he needed to make the changes in his life that he already knew he should make and that his wife would have wanted for him.

Dereflection through Values Clarification

The following case uses Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)³ and values clarification to accomplish the goal of dereflection. Values clarification is done with *A Workbook to Increase Your Meaningful and Purposeful Goals* by Hutzell and Eggert.⁴

"Jose" is a 47-year old Hispanic male, a skilled laborer who moved to Oklahoma 6 months ago along with his wife and their four young children. Jose and his family reportedly had a good and satisfying life in their home state of New Mexico until he was laid off from work. He came to Oklahoma with the promise of good work at a local light industrial manufacturing company. After about a month into his new job, Jose was fired because of interpersonal conflicts. Jose now works for another, similar company.

Jose presents for therapy because of lack of motivation and a feeling of despair. He meets DSM-IV-TR⁵ criteria for Major Depressive Disorder, single episode, mild to moderate. He admits to depressed mood almost every day, loss of interest, insomnia, hopelessness, excessive guilt, and loss of concentration, especially at work. There is no eating disturbance or suicidal ideation. There is no prior history of depression, no history of mania, anxiety, substance abuse, or general medical concerns. Jose has tried to increase his motivation on his own without success. Jose is agreeable to psychotherapy and chooses to avoid psychopharmacology based on his religious faith.

Jose views himself as a "screw up." He "screwed up" his job opportunity in Oklahoma which has resulted in financial hardship for him and his family. He states that he "screwed up" his job in New Mexico. Upon further questioning, however, he admits that he was laid off in New Mexico due to the economic downturn and through no fault of his own. In fact, he had worked successfully for that company for over 25 years and

³ Ellis, A. (1994). *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy, Revised and Updated*. New York: Birch Lane Press.

⁴ Hutzell, R. R. and Eggert, M. D. (2009) *A Workbook to Increase Your Meaningful and Purposeful Goals, 2009 PDF Version*. Retrieved March 27, 2010 from http://www.viktorfrankl.org/source/hutzell_workbook_2009.pdf.

⁵ American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (4th ed., text revision)*. Washington, DC.

had made a good life for himself and his family. His present job pays poorly. Jose finds the work repetitive and unchallenging. He dreads going to work in the morning. He does not wish to look for a more satisfying job because he believes he will just "screw it up" and end up in worse shape. His wife works by necessity to help support the family, further evidence of Jose's failure. Finally, he admitted to himself that he needed help through psychotherapy, also evidence of his "screw up."

REBT was first used as a means of self-distancing. Jose hyper-reflected upon his failure and generalized this failure invalidly to other setbacks. By learning to identify types of irrational thoughts and then to dispute them, he was able to distance himself from his negative self-statements.

Dereflection was then applied by providing Jose something new to think about - the values clarification method. We began the workbook in session. Focusing only on the first questions, dealing with work, Jose made a preliminary identification of some of his top values: security/financial stability, interesting work that requires skill, being a good provider. We then brainstormed on some tasks that could fulfill these goals. Jose left session 2 with the plan to complete the workbook, to discuss the family's financial future with his wife (a task he had been avoiding due to embarrassment), and, depending upon that discussion, possibly following-up on another job lead back in New Mexico.

In session 5, Jose reported that he had found a new job in New Mexico that was more in line with the values that he had identified within himself. His wife had also been working with the workbook and had agreed that the best thing that could be done for Jose and for the family was to accept this job offer. Jose had some apprehension about once again moving after having so recently arrived here, but, with his wife's encouragement and with confidence in his identified values, stated that he was ready to make a "leap of faith."

Paradoxical Intention and Obsessive Blasphemy

"Teresa" is a healthy, slim and energetic 45-year old white female actively involved in her church and her community. She has been diagnosed with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder for over 10 years. Ten years ago her obsessions so distressed her that she became suicidal. She was first diagnosed at that time. Since then, she has been treated primarily through psychopharmacology with good results. She seeks psychotherapy from time to time during periods of increased stress or increased symptomology.

In our first session, Teresa explained that she was thinking of obscene, mostly sexual, words during prayer. She also had unbidden mental images of obscene sexual acts with sacred statuary. These obsessions had led to increased depression. Teresa had stopped praying and had nearly stopped going to church. She was avoiding her friends because she did not want to explain why she had withdrawn. She had experienced some brief, transient suicidal ideation, but Teresa assured me that she had resolved that problem years ago and would never again think of acting on such a thought. Teresa was educated on emergency procedures if she thought she would act on a suicidal impulse.

Also during the first session, I told Teresa about a similar case in a logotherapy book I had just read. Teresa was especially fascinated by this and wanted to know what had happened. I then explained paradoxical intention (PI). As I did not know Teresa well, this being our first session, I explained that it was very important that PI was not done in a way that made her feel like she was making fun of anyone with this problem, or not taking her spiritual life seriously. We also discussed, and Teresa admitted, that God would know the difference between true blasphemy (blasphemy of the inner spiritual core) and the symptom of a psychiatric disorder (blasphemy of the mind). We then agreed that we could use humor to exaggerate and even stimulate this "blasphemy" as a

cure. Teresa then devised some humorous blasphemous and risqué thoughts that she would will herself to have in the coming week.

In session #2, Teresa reported that PI had not worked well for her. She had a hard time forcing herself to think of blasphemous thoughts. Nevertheless, she had begun praying again. Not wishing to push the issue, but believing that we were moving in the right direction, I explained that PI works best when one is relaxed and that PI, relaxation, humor, and a variety of other things can all be thought of as incompatible responses to anxiety (or blasphemy!). Teresa considered all of these options and decided that she would continue trying.

In session #3, Teresa reported that the symptoms had gone away. She was now praying regularly as she used to, was going to church, was once more involved in her community and not feeling particularly anxious or depressed. Teresa wished to reschedule in six weeks to make sure the symptoms had not returned.

Six weeks later, in session #4, Teresa continued to do well. She did not wish to reschedule, but to return to her medication-only regimen. She stated that she would return to therapy, as usual, if her symptoms returned.

Reestablishment of Goals through Socratic Dialogue

"Alejandra" is a 58-year old Mexican female living in the United States on an expired travel visa. She followed her husband to the U.S. The family moved to this country both for reasons of financial stability and out of a concern for the safety and future of their three children. In doing so, Alejandra gave up easy visitation with her family of origin as well as a law practice. Believing in traditional Mexican values, it was Alejandra, and not her husband, who would change her career path.

Alejandra presented with depressed mood nearly every day, loss of interest in activities, withdrawal from friends and family, insomnia, loss of appetite, a sense of hopelessness. She denied suicidal ideation, stating that she believed it was an unpardonable sin. She was considering divorce and returning to Mexico, though was torn over wanting the children to remain in the U.S. She met DSM-IV-TR criteria for Major Depressive Disorder, recurrent, moderate.

Socratic Dialogue made the most difference with Alejandra. The question "What are your dreams?" awakened in her the realization that she was doing nothing to actualize her creative value. Lacking a work visa, she stayed home all day, every day, tending to domestic concerns. From this question, Alejandra realized that she needed to once again become involved in the professional world. Her legal specialty had been civil rights. She began volunteering with immigrant groups and causes. She pursued the task of getting an official translation of her transcripts from Mexico so that she could return to school in the U.S. She is now studying for entry into a new career in the U.S. During her last visit she left me a small card: "*Gracias por dejarme soñar.*" Thank you for letting me dream.

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In addition, Marshall is a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) in the Center for Jewish-Christian Studies at the Chicago Theological Seminary. His dissertation develops a hermeneutic, or means of interpretation, based on logotherapy and then applies that hermeneutic to the Book of Job. The dissertation is scheduled for completion in 2012.

Finally, Marshall does not consider himself to be as stuffy as his writing style would suggest.