

## FRANKL'S EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

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*Since this paper was published in German fourteen years ago, Viktor E. Frankl has become known to the English speaking world through the translation of several of his books and various journal articles. He has been on several lecture tours to the United States and has most recently lectured at the Harvard University Summer Session, June 26 to August 18, 1961. It is for these reasons that we consider it appropriate now to publish a translation of this paper by one of Adler's closest co-workers who died the year this paper first appeared.*

The viewpoint of Individual Psychology means in the present connection—in addition to the usual meaning of the term: to see from the perspective of a person who puts aside, in as far as he can, any critical disputatiousness in favor of the commitment to cooperation. From this perspective it must be said that Viktor E. Frankl is one of the kindest and bravest men who ever was a pupil of Alfred Adler. We all remember him as contributor to Adler's journal (4, 5), and we remember that within its frame he found the striking characterization of the neurotic symptom as a form of "expression and means."

Today, Frankl describes himself as having overtaken Individual Psychology, and as the founder of his Existential Psychology. Frankl propagates the thesis that his Existential Psychology is the third of three steps which he designates by the names of Freud, Adler, and his own. According to this, Freud created modern psychotherapy; Adler recognized that man can no longer be understood from the zoological point of view, not in an animal milieu, but only in his social milieu which he created himself with his own kind. Frankl's sentence with which the Individual Psychologist is decisively concerned reads:

Especially under the impression of Individual Psychology theses—although actually misunderstanding and misusing them—the neurotic's fatalism sometimes appeals to what educational and milieu influences "made" of him during his childhood, how they became his fate, etc. Thereby such people want to create an alibi for their weaknesses. They accept them as something given, instead of recognizing in them a task for re-education or, better, self-education (7, pp. 98-99).<sup>2</sup>

Thus, on this point of not being an environmentalistic theory Existential Psychology does not differ from Individual Psychology which only by error could be regarded as a milieu psychology.

<sup>1</sup>Translated and edited from "Viktor E. Frankl's Existentialpsychologie individualpsychologisch gesehen," *Int. Z. Indiv. Psychol.*, 1947, 16, 145-152. The references have been supplied by the editor.

<sup>2</sup>While the translation is directly from the German, the reference is to the corresponding pages in the English edition.

In which respect, then, has Frankl developed further? And what must we think of his contribution?

#### EXPERIENTIAL VALUES VERSUS SOCIAL USEFULNESS

If I understand Frankl correctly, he has arrived at the one new conclusion that social usefulness can no longer be the sole criterion for the right conduct of life.

##### 1. According to Frankl:

There are values the realization of which must be carried out beyond and independent of any human community. Especially regarding what we have called experiential values, the criterion of use for the community can claim no validity. The richness of values which is opened to the individual from artistic or nature experiences, even in his loneliness, is essentially and fundamentally independent of usefulness to the community—which would in any event be difficult to conceive.

One may certainly say, the community can derive no direct benefit from a lonely man's experience of the dawn. But one may regard these experiential values as re-creational values, as an aid for the enhancement of others or of oneself, which is what they probably essentially are.

Furthermore, community can be understood as the idea of human solidarity, although in our present social structure the experience of such human solidarity is still largely lacking. Adler never meant by social usefulness only what is for the momentary welfare of those in the present.

2. There are situations, which Frankl himself has sorrowfully experienced, in which no possibility of social usefulness can be found. In these life situations in which not a single pleasure value nor a single productive value remains, since life has really lost its value, Frankl senses that only two aspects of meaning are left: the religious meaning—and, one might say, the "para-religious" meaning.

#### PARA-RELIGION VERSUS RELIGION

The para-religious aspect of meaning is the fulcrum in Frankl's theory. Kant gave his answer long ago when he said: "I can only will that there be meaning." But by willing that there be meaning I must commit myself to its realization.

Through his logotherapy Frankl leads the patient to the experience of responsibility, i.e., by letting him experience his inescapable responsibility.

What is the meaning of this responsibility as such? Frankl has the courage to formulate it in theistic terms. He has everywhere admitted as his private credo the courage "to assign to conscience a

person who sends it." In this way Frankl is able to give the patient a new kind of psycho-hygienic safeguard in the form of a philosophical proposition (by which man actually becomes responsible toward himself).

Is that indeed the step beyond Adler? Adler's theory conceives of man as man, as man going in the right direction or in the wrong direction. Frankl sees man as a substitute for God: a responsibility toward oneself is self-idolization. The image of human responsibility toward a God father has in itself the same significance as that of responsibility toward the community. But the responsibility toward oneself would be mere arrogance. Adler certainly drew no one away from pastoral care; he also referred no one from psychotherapy to pastoral care. What he did do, was to show the way to the human community, knowing that every religious way apart from humanity is by necessity magical-egotistical.

#### PHILOSOPHY VERSUS PSYCHOLOGY

This is where the proper comparison between Adler and Frankl sets in: Thinking about Cain's question, "Why should I love my brother?" Adler, in one of his most ingenious moments, said: "I cannot answer your question; but I can tell you why you are asking this question."

By dismissing such a question Adler proved himself to be an existence psychologist. And we should like to say that because Frankl believes he can answer this question, we think we recognize him to be on a wrong path. Phyllis Bottome was fully right when she called Adler the founder of an existence psychology (3, p. 198), and I have also expressed this in my funeral oration for Adler. Mrs. Bottome points to Pascal who attempted to put science into faith; to Kant who believed he could build the whole of science into human consciousness; to Kierkegaard who believed to be building the bridge between faith and science through the paradox; to Przywara, Heidegger, Bauer, et al. For all that, the decisive point is: "Either I believe in God, or I go to a scientist. If I go to a scientist, he robs me of my faith—but I *must* believe!" (3, p. 198). Adler has pointed out this dilemma: while he accepted the need to believe, he rejected any particular modification of faith as such and when it claims to be more than a modification.

When Adler speaks of the meaning of life, he conceives of a kind of natural law, the human living together as part of biological life, still of this world. But Frankl would like to give experimental support to

that which is religious. From his lifelong devotion to suicide prevention, through his suffering in the concentration camp, he reached a deepening of his religious attitude. Having experienced the joy of his positive believing attitude, he would like to make it available to all those who severely suffer psychologically. But how can this be done without making converts—without avoiding the way of science? Where the nucleus of a specific religious attitude exists, Frankl tries to deepen it. Where such a nucleus does not exist, Frankl looks for a para-religious attitude and encourages that in the patient. He finds the model for such an attitude in the cosmic feeling of Adler in his late years. For this para-religion which, however, in contrast to others is not meant to block the way to an historical form, but to facilitate it, Frankl constructs a kind of dogma.

The real problem of Frankl's ministry lies in the para-religious attitude which he develops in the patient by giving to existential-*psychological* questions, existential-*philosophical* answers. The neurotic puts philosophical questions. But he means the existential-psychological question, what life attitude will satisfy him individually. To this Frankl gives an existential-philosophical answer in which he himself does not believe. His own entirely personal God becomes the mere releaser of a para-religious attitude in the patient. The danger here would seem to be that the life problems may be put aside.

Regarding the meaning of life Frankl declares: "A generally valid task of life, applicable to all, must in the view of existential analysis appear impossible. In this respect the question of 'the' task in life, of the 'meaning' of life is meaningless." Frankl gives possibly an "existential-romantic" answer: "In the responsibility of existence the answer ensues, in the existence itself man 'carries out' the answer to his own questions."

Adler referred to his three, perhaps four life questions, the fourth being: What have you as an artist done to help create a prototype of united mankind? Basically Adler's answer is, if anything, more religious than Frankl's romantic answer. To help build the world which we want to come to us, Adler's position, has existential psychological relevancy. The attitudinal values of which Frankl speaks, derive from mere constructs.

#### APPRECIATION AND RECONCILIATION

According to Frankl, Existential Psychology is indicated in three situations: (1) "Where a patient practically forces his spiritual need upon one," as in cases of religious doubt. (2) "Where we are dealing

with a person, who is equal to discussions of world philosophy, i.e., a person from whom we may expect that 'psychotherapy from the spiritual direction' represents the method of choice." (3) "Where-ever in the life of the patient in question it is a matter of fate, i.e., in view of crippling and incurable disease, or chronic lingering illness, as well as other unalterable situations."

Existential Psychology wants to teach the art of suffering, suffering for the sake of purification. This is a viewpoint from the religious world. Frankl admits this openly and proudly.

Let no one misunderstand us: Frankl's work is valuable. It is valuable because there are patients whose thinking is concerned with ultimate problems. It is valuable because it recognizes and emphasizes the psychotherapeutic problem really as an existential problem. But Adler did just this, too. One does Adler an injustice if one overlooks his works on the meaning of life (1, 2).

The structure of Frankl's existential psychological theory shows itself as an application of Individual Psychology to definite cases of aging—like the therapy of Jung with its cases "after the prime of life." But God is a God of the living. To the extent that religion abdicates from the social mandate to advance the community, it becomes magic. Certainly Frankl wants to affirm life—as shown even in the title of one of his books (6)—but the educational orientation, the orientation toward youth suffers.

Adler starts from education: The child is to be formed so that he may fulfill in his individual manner the demands of the law of social relatedness. Frankl starts from the great loneliness of the dying: He should be able to die more easily, not by suicide, but through a reversal of that which leads the child toward the community. Thus develops before our eyes gradually the understanding of man from two poles: from child study and education, and from the study of termination. It would be a pity if the beginnings toward this study of the entire life span could not meet.

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