

Viktor Emil Frankl

Alfried Längle

International Society of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis, Vienna

alfried.laengle@existenzanalyse.org

Viktor Frankl (1905 in Vienna - 1997 in Vienna), Austrian psychiatrist, neurologist, psychologist, founder of logotherapy and existential analysis. Frankl's work is centered around the question of meaning. After first interests in Freud's psychoanalysis, in 1924 he joined the Society for Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler. In 1927 he was excluded on account of "deviating thoughts," influenced by Max Scheler's philosophical anthropology on which he later based his logotherapy (therapy through finding meaning). During World War II, Frankl worked as a psychiatrist at the Rothschild hospital. Although he was granted an exit visa to the United States, he stayed in Austria in order to protect his Jewish parents. In 1942 he and his family were nevertheless deported to concentration camps. For him, the two and a half years in the concentration camp were an experimental confirmation of the "survival value" of the question of meaning.

From 1945 to 1970 Frankl headed the neurological department of the Vienna polyclinic and wrote his main theoretical works. The invitation of Gordon Allport to Harvard (1961) was followed by further guest lectures at 208 universities around the world. He was distinguished professor for Logotherapy at the United States International University in San Diego. Frankl received 28 honorary doctorates and many other important awards. His 31 books were published in 24 languages. Frankl lectured until 1996.

Frankl's books include *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*; *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*; and *Psychotherapy and Existentialism: Selected Papers on Logotherapy*. In addition to these works, much has been written about Frankl including Längle's *Viktor Frankl: A Portrait* and Längle and Sykes' "Viktor Frankl – Advocate for Humanity: On his 100th Birthday" in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

Theoretical Orientation and Development

Frankl originally understood existential analysis and logotherapy as a complement to any psychotherapy in order to overcome its reductionist tendencies (that is, as an anthropological corrective to psychologism). By making reference to the philosophical anthropology of Max Scheler, Frankl intended to "rehumanize" psychotherapy by working explicitly with the "spiritual dimension," which consists in the capacity of deciding, taking over responsibility and finding meaning. As a "spiritual being," the primary aim of the human is not lust (Freud) or power (Adler), but an understanding of his existence (especially in suffering) for being able to realize oneself as a free person. The "will to meaning" is considered the primary motivational power. Existential analysis / logotherapy offers by its philosophical foundation an anthropological concept and methods for prevention and therapy. The paradoxical intention (playful, humorous wish of the feared) in the treatment of fear and the dereflexion (concentrating on meaning instead of thinking about wished goals, applied mainly in sexual disorders) are amongst the most well-known techniques. The phenomenological approach of existential analysis was methodically enhanced by the development of personal existential analysis (Längle). The lack of methods in logotherapy was ultimately balanced out by developments of Uwe Böschmeyer, Elisabeth Lukas and Alfred Längle.

SEE ALSO: Existential psychology; Meaning; Personal responsibility