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**EXISTENTIALISM, PSYCHOLOGY AND  
RELIGION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
VIKTOR FRANKL AND PAUL TILLICH**

© A Thesis submitted by Britt-Mari Sykes  
in April 1999 in partial fulfilment of  
the Master of Arts degree in the Department  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This master's thesis explores the dialogue between religion and psychology in the writings of psychologist Viktor E. Frankl. The thesis proposes a possible bridge between these two discourses by comparing the similar existential style in Frankl's writings and psychological theory with the religious philosophy of theologian Paul Tillich. Tillich's religious philosophy provides a theoretical foil to explore the religious themes within Frankl's work. Frankl and Tillich share a similar existential style and approach that influences their respective analysis of human nature. The thesis explores psychological and religious perspectives on the following: an existential analysis of human existence, universal religiousness and finally, psychological healing and religious salvation. The thesis proposes that Frankl's psychological model, known as Logotherapy, may also provide a theoretical answer to Tillich's own attempt to find a compatible bridge between both psychological and religious discourse and the role of psychologist and the minister and/or priest.

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**CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION****THESIS**

In a passage from the essay, "Experiences from a Concentration Camp", Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl poses several questions that highlight the philosophical and religious foundations of his psychological writings and theory. His comments also reflect the distinguishing character of his thought from many theoretical positions within the field of psychology. He writes,

But what about human liberty? Is there no spiritual freedom in regard to behaviour and reaction to any given surroundings? Is that theory true which would have us believe that man is no more than a product of many conditional and environmental factors - be they biological, psychological or sociological nature? Is man but an accidental product of these? Most important, do the prisoners' reactions to the singular world of the concentration camp prove that man cannot escape the influences of his surroundings? Does man have no choice of action in the face of such circumstances?...in the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, and not the result of camp influences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him - mentally and spiritually.<sup>1</sup>

Frankl's work is a dialogue between psychology and religion, philosophy and ethics. Although he maintains an ambiguous position throughout his work over the very question of whether a compatibility indeed exists, or should, between psychology and religion, Frankl's work is imbued with a philosophical and religious context that distinguishes it from purely clinical and

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<sup>1</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Experiences from a Concentration Camp", in Man's Search for Meaning, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1985), p.86-87

applied psychology. Frankl may have clarified his position in his recently published autobiography in which he admitted that his work is in fact an exploration of the "mutual boundaries" between psychology and religion.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Leslie, a former professor at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA, once commented that Viktor Frankl's psychological theory, known as Logotherapy, expressed a compatibility between psychotherapy and his own Christian beliefs and religious training. It was a compatibility Leslie had not found in other psychotherapeutic models.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Rabbi Reuven Bulka recently noted that "Frankl made the connection between psychology and religion a very real and viable one."<sup>4</sup> The comments of Professor Leslie and Rabbi Bulka imply that a compatible relationship can in fact exist between psychology and religion. If Frankl was able, as these two suggest, to bridge these two discourses, an initial question would be whether his work convincingly expresses this compatibility. If so, how does his work distinguish itself from a purely psychological or religious discourse? A second question we might ask is what makes a psychological theory, in this case Frankl's Logotherapy,

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<sup>2</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, Viktor Frankl Recollections: An Autobiography, (New York: Plenum Press, 1997), p.57

<sup>3</sup>Robert C. Leslie, "Dialogue between Robert C. Leslie and Viktor E. Frankl: April 22, 1971", Audiotape #13, The Frankl Library and Memorabilia, Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley, CA.

<sup>4</sup>Reuven Bulka, "The Meaning of Life", in The International Journal of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis, Vol.6, No.1, (Spring\Summer 1998), p.19.

qualitatively different from other psychological theories if its fundamental presuppositions are based on a dialogue between psychology and religion, philosophy and ethics? This thesis will take the position that the existential structure of Frankl's thought provides a bridge between psychology and religion. The focus of the thesis will therefore be confined to an analysis of how Frankl's work expresses this compatibility and will not attempt to compare this with other psychological theories and/or therapies.

One way to explore a bridge Frankl seems to have made between psychology and religion is to compare his work, and particularly the existential style that characterizes it, with the writings of theologian Paul Tillich. There are striking similarities between Frankl and Tillich's thinking; the most obvious being the existential style and approach that influences their respective analysis of human nature. This existential style is the point of intersection; the point which allows for a comparison and analysis of how their work, particularly Frankl's, develops from, and incorporates, the dialogue between psychology and religion.

Three specific themes from Frankl's work will be compared. The thematic comparisons made between Tillich's religious philosophy and Frankl's psychological theory provide a platform for exploring precisely how Frankl's psychological theory distinguishes itself from clinical psychology and second, how his theory is enhanced and broadened by the inclusion of religion and philosophy. The first theme to be explored is the existential view of human existence. Frankl and Tillich begin with a similar existential

question; what makes a human being truly human? Each answers this question with a similar style of argumentation. Existentially, human existence is described as inherently ambiguous, or inherently paradoxical. To illustrate this point, focus will centre on the existential relationship between freedom and responsibility, an important relationship Frankl and Tillich both address. Second, a comparison will be drawn between Tillich's notion of ultimate concern and universal religiousness, and Frankl's psychological concept of the will to meaning and his view towards a "monanthropomism"<sup>5</sup>, which he defines as a universal humanity. A third and final line of comparison will focus on the theme of psychological healing and religious salvation. In the concluding chapter, focus will centre on how Frankl's Logotherapy provides a theoretical answer to Tillich's own attempt to bridge psychology and religion.

#### **COMPARING PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION**

Comparing psychology and religion raises the important and ongoing dilemma in the field of psychology of religion over the degree to which comparisons and links can be made between these two discourses without reducing religion and religious experience to a psychological category. The similar existential style that influences Frankl and Tillich's writings certainly leaves room for an easy and misleading opportunity to subsume Tillich's religious

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<sup>5</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Logotherapy as Medical Ministry: October 7, 1963", Audiotape #8, The Frankl Library and Memorabilia, Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley, CA.

philosophy to psychological interpretation, or in the alternative, to subsume Frankl's psychological theory to religious philosophy. However, with this dilemma in mind, this thesis will explore the mutual enhancement that results from the comparison and study of psychology and religion rather than assuming a reductionistic outcome.

Comparing Frankl and Tillich requires an important qualifying remark. Comparisons cannot be made based on the entirety of their work. In order to find, analyze, and convincingly argue that a bridge between psychology and religion can in fact be found within the structure of Frankl's Logotherapy and Tillich's religious writings, only a narrow slice from the body of their respective work can be highlighted. In Frankl's case, this excludes all clinical theory, research and application. In Tillich's case, this excludes his strictly theological writings and sermons.

These exclusions however do not diminish the comparisons or the fascinating bridge Frankl and Tillich make between psychology and religion. Frankl's psychological theory is unique precisely because it incorporates religion, philosophy and ethics. Similarly, Tillich possesses a penchant for depth psychology which mingles with his religious philosophy and contributes to the unique character of his theology. Tillich's own comfort with several differing perspectives enables the reader of his work, for example, to focus on his religious philosophy without necessarily having to be bound to his theological system.

Frankl and Tillich approach their analysis and description of

human existence initially from a psychological and religious context respectively. Both seem to suggest, however, that neither religion nor psychology alone can adequately analyze human existence. In an essay entitled, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", Tillich states, "there is no theistic and non-theistic existentialism or psychoanalysis. They analyze the human situation."<sup>6</sup> Frankl similarly suggests that "the appropriate and adequate approach to existence is not psychological, but existential."<sup>7</sup> What mediates between the seemingly separate discourses of psychology and religion in their respective work is a particular and similar existential approach towards human existence.

To analyze this similarity in its proper context, however, one must state the differences between Tillich and Frankl from the outset. Tillich, for example, remains a theologian concerned with the historical and contemporary interpretations of Christian truth despite his use of psychoanalytic discourse. Tillich utilizes a psychoanalytic framework to articulate his definition of religion as "ultimate concern" to a twentieth-century audience. J. Heywood Thomas comments that Tillich sought out psychologists and artists, for example, in order "to sharpen and deepen his *theological*

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<sup>6</sup>Paul Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", in Theology of Culture, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.125.

<sup>7</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Psychiatry and Man's Quest for Meaning", in the Journal of Religion and Health, 1 (1961-62), p.95.

understanding."<sup>6</sup> Psychoanalytic discourse allows Tillich to reformulate what he considers to be a distorted Christian theology into an existentially conceptualized religious discourse that accounts for the complexity and ambiguity of human existence. Only an existential analysis, in Tillich's view, addresses and accounts for the reality of this ambiguity. This ambiguity is religiously explained as the separation, yet continual connection, between human existence and what Tillich terms the "ground of being", or between the existential and the essential. The chapters to follow will explore the relationship between the existential and the essential in greater detail.

The existential character of Frankl's Logotherapy, similarly stresses the ambiguous nature of human existence. His psychological theory, however, is not predicated on religious truth, Christian or otherwise. Although one could argue that the ambiguous stance Frankl takes towards religion in his writings certainly leaves room for a religious interpretation, unlike Tillich, he is not confined to a specifically Christian theological world view. As such, Frankl is able to integrate a broader religious discourse with psychology (albeit still very much steeped in a Judeo-Christian sensibility). Frankl, like Tillich however, uses a secondary discourse to "sharpen and deepen" his ideological position. In Frankl's case, religious and philosophical discourse is used to enhance his *psychological* understanding.

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<sup>6</sup>Paul Tillich, On the Boundary, (London: Wm. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1967), p.xix

Although Frankl's use of religious discourse is an attempt to expand and challenge the parameters of applied psychology, he remains a psychoanalyst interested in the therapeutic use and application of his theory. One must always keep in mind that Frankl comfortably wears two hats as both a doctor of neurology and psychiatry. Critics of Frankl's work, however, feel that his inclusion of religion and philosophy diminishes the scientific objectivity, and therefore the viability, of his theory. Frankl's own ambiguous stance towards a religious discourse he obviously utilized, may be his own intellectual and theoretical struggle with a multidisciplinary approach he favours; an approach that continues to be considered precariously perched between dialogue (or mutual enhancement) and reductionism. In Frankl's case, critics feel his approach reduces psychological theory to philosophical psychology or religious psychology.

Finally, the significant similarities between Frankl and Tillich's writings lead one to speculate that they were both familiar with, and perhaps utilized, each others' work. However, in the body of work researched for this thesis, there are no specific citations which refer to the others' work. Two of Frankl's books have brief references to Tillich which suggest perhaps a passing familiarity with his work. The first reference comes from Frankl's book, The Will to Meaning wherein a footnote makes reference to Tillich being in the audience at a lecture Frankl gave at Harvard Divinity School. He writes, "I well remember how insistent and inquisitive the late Paul Tillich was in

the question-and-answer period following my presentation of dimensional ontology at a faculty luncheon of Harvard's Divinity School. He was satisfied only after I had defined the higher dimension as a more inclusive one."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately there is no further reference to the content of Tillich's specific question nor Frankl's response. The higher dimension to which Frankl is referring is what he terms the spiritual dimension of the psyche, of which more will be said. In a second reference from Frankl's recent autobiography, he recalls being asked during a question period following a lecture at an American university what he thought of Tillich's concept, "the God above God". Frankl replied that he was not familiar with this concept.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, articles by Frankl and Tillich do appear side by side in a 1961 addition of the "Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry".<sup>11</sup>

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Frankl and Tillich's writings emerged from a similar historical and cultural context. Both were European scholars influenced by the existential philosophy predominant during the early to mid-twentieth century. As stated, there is a similar thematic emphasis within their work that explores a fundamentally

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<sup>9</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, The Will to Meaning, (New York: Meridian, 1988), p.26.

<sup>10</sup>Frankl, Viktor Frankl Recollections: An Autobiography, p.38.

<sup>11</sup> Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol.1 (Jan. 1961).

existential question; what makes a human being truly human? There is little doubt that the psychological and religious analysis Frankl and Tillich bring to this question is deeply influenced by their respective experiences during World War II.<sup>12</sup> Frankl spent several years in concentration camps, the last being Auschwitz, in which he lost his entire family and first wife. Although the theoretical foundations of Logotherapy had been established prior to the War, Frankl believes that his personal experiences, and his observations of the experiences of his fellow inmates, confirmed much of what he had previously outlined. Frankl in fact entered his first concentration camp in 1942 with the completed manuscript of what would later be published in English as The Doctor and the Soul, hidden in the lining of his overcoat. The manuscript was lost when Frankl's belongings were confiscated. During the two and a half years that Frankl was incarcerated in various camps, he painstakingly re-constructed the manuscript by memory and wrote notes on any available scraps of paper.<sup>13</sup>

Frankl's personal experiences and enormous loss during the war have a marked influence on his writings. His psychotherapy has an ethical context within it that advocates both individual and social responsibility. A wonderful written example of Frankl's own

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<sup>12</sup>For Tillich this would also include his experiences in World War I.

<sup>13</sup>I have given a rather sweeping summary of these events. Almost all of Frankl's books include a chronology of these events. See for example: The Doctor and The Soul, Man's Search for Meaning or The Will to Meaning.

psychological and philosophical turmoil during his years of incarceration coupled with an exploration of the foundational themes of his Logotherapy can be seen in the play he wrote in 1945 shortly after his release from Auschwitz. The play, entitled "Synchronisation at Buchenwald"<sup>14</sup>, is both an autobiographical case history of Frankl's experiences and a universalization of this same case history into a drama that explores the meaning of suffering, individual consciousness, as well as individual and collective responsibility.

The structure of the play is divided into two dimensions and two simultaneous dialogues; one taking place *in eternity*, the other *in time*. *Eternity* represents a dimension of unity or wholeness. *Time* represents the dimension of human existence and is therefore characterized by its contingent nature. There is however, a fluidity between the two dimensions which parallel the fluidity between the unconscious and conscious dimensions of the human psyche. In Frankl's "dimensional ontology"<sup>15</sup> a fluidity exists between the somatic, psychic and spiritual dimensions of the psyche. The play begins *in eternity* with the philosophers Socrates, Spinoza and Kant watching and discussing the human world below *in time*. The opening dialogue represents both the philosophical and ethical side of Frankl's thinking. As the play

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<sup>14</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Synchronisation at Buchenwald", unpublished play, 1945, The Frankl Library and Memorabilia, 89-5-012 Box 11 4\H\1, Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley, CA.

<sup>15</sup>Frankl, The Will to Meaning, p.23.

begins, the three philosophers are heard discussing how humanity is ever going to learn, why humanity does not believe, and how one might go about teaching humanity the truth. Socrates laments the lack of belief humans have in both themselves and in others.<sup>16</sup> The consequence arising from this lack of belief, adds Spinoza, has led humanity to be "abused and misled".<sup>17</sup> How then, the philosopher Kant asks, can truth be taught to humans?

In the opening dialogue, Frankl plays with and juxtaposes the concepts of truth and reality against each other. The philosophical and religious ideation of truth is juxtaposed against the reality of human capability. In the play, truth exists only *in eternity*, overseen by philosophers. *Eternity* represents the dimension of wholeness or complete knowledge and is, therefore, impervious to the structures of time and space. Truth and reality *in time*, however, are subject to the structures and contingency of time and space and because of this, Frankl suggests that they also become illusory constructions. For Frankl, the danger lies in placing our faith, belief and obedience in these constructions.

As the play unfolds, the philosophers decide they must construct a test in order for humanity to discover truth. Socrates suggests that they, "present humanity with a picture of hell, and prove that man can remain a man even in hell". Two aspects of Frankl's thinking are highlighted here. First, Frankl is emphasizing the freedom each individual has to affirm or negate his

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<sup>16</sup>Frankl, "Synchronisation at Buchenwald", p.2.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.2.

or her own humanity through the attitude he or she adopts even in the most brutal of circumstances. Second, the "picture of hell" the philosophers present to humanity is the concentration camp. The camp represents a psychological symbol for extreme closure on human experience, potential and consciousness. Interestingly, the aim of Frankl's Logotherapy is to guide an individual toward a greater, more integrated consciousness of their responsibility. A person's experience of meaninglessness is a psychological form of closure; closure and alienation from oneself and others. Logotherapy guides a patient from closure to an awareness of potential. Frankl's focus on a more integrated consciousness is inextricably linked with a moral warning of the dangers, if not the very real capacity, for humanity to abandon its consciousness, its very "humanness". Each of us, according to Frankl, is questioned (or tested as the philosophers suggest) by life and must answer by being responsible. Frankl defines responsibility as a "response-in-action".<sup>18</sup> In the play, individual responsibility carries with it a universal ethical imperative for "no one can vouch for anyone else"<sup>19</sup>, as Socrates states.

The dialogue between the characters *in time* explore several themes which represent Frankl's personal experiences in the camps. These include guilt, finding personal redemption, and having an unconditional faith in what Frankl terms the "unconditional

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<sup>18</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, The Unconscious God, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1985), p.24.

<sup>19</sup>Frankl, "Synchronisation at Buchenwald", p.13.

meaning" of life. In the final scene of the play, the character of Franz, an inmate in Buchenwald and the character most closely associated with Frankl himself, questions why he is the one to "survive this dying"<sup>20</sup>. This parallels Frankl's personal feelings of guilt over his survival.<sup>21</sup> The question switches to a realization that he, the character of Franz, has been "sentenced to life".<sup>22</sup> In abandoning the "why" of his suffering, Franz accepts the paradoxical nature of human life, realizing that life calls out for an individual response at every moment. To ignore this call is to abandon one's individual freedom and responsibility, to also abandon one's consciousness, rendering one susceptible to a belief in an illusory truth or reality. Frankl might state that the ethical imperative is to believe and respond for a belief without individual responsibility leads to the Holocaust.

Tillich's writings prior to, and during the war, similarly address issues of individual consciousness, freedom and responsibility. Tillich's writings, teachings, political stand against the Nazi government, and friendships with Jewish academics culminated in his being "...among the first professors whom the

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.30

<sup>21</sup>In 1946 Frankl wrote a poem expressing his feelings of guilt over his being the only member of his family to survive. The poem begins, "You weigh on me, you whom I lost in death. You've given me the silent charge to live for you...", and ends with the line, "...Until I hear that every bird's song is your voice sounding out to bless me and perhaps to say that you forgive me that I live". From Frankl, Recollections, p.101.

<sup>22</sup>Frankl, "Synchronisation at Buchenwald", p.31.

Nazi regime dismissed from the University of Frankfurt in 1933".<sup>23</sup> Although Tillich had been approached by several American scholars to teach in the United States, he had resisted leaving Germany unless the authorities demanded his exile. Tillich's wife Hannah recalls the decision "whether he [Tillich] could stay without endangering his own life and, more importantly, the lives of his friends in the political underground."<sup>24</sup> Tillich "wanted to join the underground movement, to write for them", Hannah recalls, but "his political friends felt he was already too well known, his style was unmistakable, and he would endanger them more than he could help. He ought to get out of the country and work for them there."<sup>25</sup> When Tillich was summoned to a meeting before the secretary of education and expressed his views on the situation in Germany at the time, "the secretary proposed that he leave the country for two years."<sup>26</sup>

From 1942-1944, Tillich wrote 112 speeches for radio which were broadcast in German over "Voice of America" into occupied Europe. A predominant theme that runs through the majority of these speeches focuses on collective guilt and individual

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<sup>23</sup>Ronald H. Stone and Matthew Lon Weaver eds., Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p.6.

<sup>24</sup>Hannah Tillich, From Time to Time, (New York: Stein and Day, 1973), p.155.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p.155.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.155.

responsibility. Ronald Stone comments that, "the essays from March 1942 to May 1944 detail the guilt of all responsible Germans, and Tillich's own guilt fuels the passion of his writing...responsibility [Tillich argues] rests on those who allowed themselves to be enslaved by Hitler. The majority of the addresses urge Germans to act to liberate themselves from the Nazis."<sup>27</sup>

In a radio broadcast on May 11, 1942 entitled "Justice and Humanity", Tillich delves into the very question of what constitutes the essence of our humanity. Although Tillich utilizes a political forum to explore this issue, his stand is very similar to Frankl's warning of the psychological, ethical and cultural repercussions when individuals abandon their consciousness or their very humanity. Tillich wrote,

What did the German nation lose when justice was taken from it by its rulers? Much, in every way! First, we lose ourselves when we lose our justice. We cease to be a person when our justice is taken from us; by person, I mean a special, unmistakable essence, with special possibilities and special duties. Our justice, in which we exist, is the acknowledgment that we demand as a person. Whoever is deprived of rights, as the German people now are, has become a thing with which one can do what one desires. He has lost his dignity. He has become an instrument for strange ends, a slave of tyrants, a tool of arbitrariness, and an object of violation. Your rights are the acknowledgment that you are a person, that you have dignity that is inviolable, that you are a uniquely irreplaceable self. They are the acknowledgment that you are human. Deprivation of justice is deprivation of humanity. Human dignity is one with its justice. Without dignity, representatives of the German people have dispensed with their rights and, with that, have surrendered the dignity of the nation and every

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<sup>27</sup>Stone and Lon Weaver eds., Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany, p.7.

single individual. Reclaim your rights again, German people, and with it yourselves!<sup>28</sup>

In another broadcast dated September 20, 1943 entitled "Puppets and Puppet Masters" Tillich stated,

Something profound and horrifying lies behind this National Socialist puppet game. It is a frightfully serious game, a game with everything that is human - above all, with that which turns a human being into a human being: his freedom. If everything were to be taken from each German person after the war but that which is human in each person were to be returned, he would not have lost through the defeat but rather won! He would be liberated from a dominion that has to turn people into puppets in order to be able to use them. It was the goal of the National Socialist education to rob the entire German nation of its human freedom, step by step, to turn it into a nation of wire-drawn puppets. It is the goal of the National Socialist policy to create puppets in all lands that would dance by means of its wires. In many cases, it has succeeded at that. In most, it has not. A storm fed by the forces of human dignity and freedom has risen against the National Socialist puppeteers in which they are now breaking into pieces. And you, the German nation? Have the forces remained living in you that have resisted being transformed into machines of National Socialist dehumanization and puppet creation?<sup>29</sup>

The European intellectual heritage Frankl and Tillich share, coupled with their personal experiences during the War, had a profound effect on their writings. In fact for most European intellectuals, the experiences of World War II challenged both individual and cultural assumptions about the nature of humanity. Much of Frankl and Tillich's writings, for example, centre around the existential emphasis on the value, uniqueness and dignity of

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p.27.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p.196.

individual life. An example of this is the relationship between freedom and responsibility, between an individual's unique freedom and the simultaneous responsibility each individual has to the wider social world around them. The historical and cultural context that influences the style and disciplinary perspective each of these writers brings to the analysis of human nature is both fascinating and a potentially important piece of research. This research direction is, however, well beyond the scope of this particular thesis. The historical context outlined above merits mention though, as it provides an additional framework for understanding the existential language and philosophical perspective that Frankl and Tillich similarly utilize.

#### **FRANKL'S MODEL OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE AND THE BASICS OF LOGOTHERAPY**

Frankl's Logotherapy is founded on his belief that the primary motivation behind all human endeavour is the "will to meaning", or the active and deliberate search for meaning in one's life. A characteristic of being human, according to Frankl, is the ability to both question and reflect on the meaning of one's existence. In other words, being human is being conscious of one's existence. Frankl is very careful to distinguish between meaning in the singular form (referring perhaps to an ultimate meaning) and meanings(s) in the plural form. Frankl would answer the age old question, "what is the meaning of my life?", with "what are the meaning(s) to be discovered in my life?". This shifts the emphasis for example, from a passive assumption that the meaning of life is

externally "given to me", to a more active interpretation that meaning(s) are continuously discovered within the dynamics of human endeavour, such as our active participation in the world around us. Meaning(s) are discovered within the continuous interplay or dialogue between the individual and the objective or social world.

From its existential foundation, Logotherapy stresses that psychological growth and development is predicated on the subjective meanings discovered and experienced through and within the continuous dialogue between self and world. Further, within the parameters of therapeutic technique, Logotherapy focuses on an individual's ability to continually construct and experience unique and subjective expressions of meaning and belief from this mutual interplay or dialogue. From an existential perspective, psychological development is seen as a continuously unfolding process. This process includes the individual's continuous encounter with the world, their participation and contribution to the world, their assimilation of certain aspects of that world, culminating in a unique and subjective expression of this same process or dialogue.

Meanings(s) are not only discovered through this process of dialogue, they also find concrete expression (in behaviour, affect or cognitions, for example) through the actualization of three values. These values are: (a) creative values (what we give to the world), (b) experiential values (what we take from the world and give subjective expression to) and (c) attitudinal values (the freedom we have to adopt an attitude or take a stand towards

situations and events, particularly those of unavoidable suffering and death). This last value plays a particularly important role in Frankl's theory.

Frankl's famous adage, the "will to meaning", is deliberately cast against what he believed to be an overemphasis in Freudian and Adlerian psychoanalysis on the "will to pleasure"<sup>30</sup>, or an emphasis on the instinctual unconscious, and the "will to power" respectively. Frankl's initial and foundational training in psychiatry was based on these two formative schools of psychoanalysis. Frankl had had frequent and lengthy correspondence with Freud from an early age. During his twenties, while studying neurology and psychiatry, Adlerian psychoanalysis became Frankl's theoretical focus. The seeds of Logotherapy, however, were beginning to emerge for Frankl during the 1920's. He was expelled from the Adlerian Society for Individual Psychology in 1927 because of his open reservations about many of Adler's ideas.

Frankl's intention behind the development and introduction of Logotherapy was never to subsume Freudian or Adlerian psychoanalysis. Frankl was both reliant on, and comfortable with, the structures of an established psychological discourse. He had always intended his therapy to complement, rather than replace, other forms of psychoanalysis.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, in addition to the somatic and psychological dimensions of the human psyche, Frankl

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<sup>30</sup>I believe Frankl coined this term; it is therefore not a term Freud ever used.

<sup>31</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul, (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), p.xii.

introduced a third dimension which he referred to as the spiritual. This third dimension represents the foundation of uniquely human phenomena. For Frankl, the inclusion of this third dimension is necessary in order to complete a realistic psychological picture of human existence and experience. Our ability to consciously experience, respond, reflect and interpret the world around us constitutes uniquely human phenomena. Our subjective expression of these experiences and the meanings we ascribe to them are the focus of Frankl's Logotherapy and the material for analysis within therapy.

The philosophy at the foundation of Logotherapy is in part a reaction against the twentieth century tendency towards systematized and scientifically oriented psychological theories. Frankl's response to this disciplinary trend was and is an open question which asks how one accounts for the uniquely human capacity for subjective construction or creation of meaning(s), belief and value systems. This uniquely human capacity is existentially explained in part by an inherent freedom of choice each of us possesses. Inherent freedom, however, is always paired with responsibility. As stated, Frankl defined responsibility as a "response-in-action". By this he meant that individual responsibility is a response to life, concretized in the attitudes we adopt (are free to adopt) towards situations we encounter and through the decisions and choices we continuously make throughout life. Frankl argued that psychological theory, particularly therapy, must recognize this continuous and changing process as a

reality of human existence. Further, the subjective experiential manifestations of this process provide the material for analyzing psychological growth and development within therapy. Logotherapy therefore focuses on the present and future manifestations of these subjective experiences.

Underlying the main tenants of Logotherapy is a distinctive ethical stance. Logotherapy, as a psychotherapy, focuses on the unique meaning structures an individual subjectively constructs. But the aim of therapy, the very process of therapy, is also geared towards guiding an individual toward a more unified, or expanded consciousness. Unlike certain strains of existential philosophy that focus solely on the subjective self, Frankl argues that psychological development does not take place within the individual psyche exclusively. Psychological growth for any individual is predicated on a "transcendence" of our subjective selves. One of Frankl's central theoretical concepts is called "self-transcendence". Frankl's definition of transcendence is a person's continuous response to, and participation in, the world around them. Psychological development occurs within, and because of, the continuous dialogue we have with the world around us. Our subjective "reality" is an assimilation and construction, influenced by this dialogue. This "reality" in turn becomes concrete form in our individual decisions, choices and attitudes. The ethical argument follows that a greater or more expanded consciousness of our individual responsibility will ultimately produce a more ethical social environment as neither the individual

nor the objective or social world is mutually exclusive; each is dependent on the other. Frankl states, "...the value of the individual is dependent upon the community. But if the community is to have meaning, it cannot dispense with the individuality of the individuals that make it up."<sup>22</sup>

#### CRITICISMS OF LOGOTHERAPY

Frankl defended his primary focus as both a neurologist and psychiatrist; but it is hard to ignore the philosophical and religious views that permeate his theory. One can speculate that while Frankl wanted to expand the parameters of psychological theory by adopting this multidisciplinary approach, he also wanted Logotherapy to be accepted as a legitimate psychological and scientific therapy. In a 1977 television interview for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Frankl addressed the issue of whether Logotherapy was a secular or "religiously" oriented psychotherapy. He stated, "...you must understand that as the one who happens to have created that system called Logotherapy and as a psychiatrist I have to see to it and stick to it that, say, Logotherapy be available to each and every person and patient; that it be available to the religious patient as well as the irreligious one. And more than that: that it be usable in the hands of each and every doctor or therapist, the agnostic as well as the

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.71.

religiously oriented person."<sup>33</sup>

A review of several lectures Frankl gave in the United States during the 1960's and 1980's provides an interesting glimpse into how Frankl presented his theory to different audiences. Interestingly, the lectures he gave, for example, at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California find a much more receptive and comprehending audience than similar lectures given to psychological associations like the American Psychological Association.<sup>34</sup> Once again, the question arises as to why Frankl's theories and writings find a seemingly compatible home with religious discourse while scholars and clinicians within the field of psychology (especially American scholars) criticized what they saw as an untenable psychological theory.

Frankl's psychological theory has been criticized precisely for its synthesis of several discourses. His writings have been characterized by one reviewer as "quasi religious beliefs"<sup>35</sup> with another stating, "it is the unclarity about the ground of meaning that leads Frankl to self-contradictions about

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<sup>33</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Man Alive" in the International Journal of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis Vol.6, No.1 (Spring\Summer, 1998), p.91.

<sup>34</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Logotherapy as Medical Ministry: October 7, 1963", Audiotape #8, and "Man in Search of Ultimate Meaning: May 23, 1985", Audiotape #38, The Frankl Library and Memorabilia, Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley, CA.

<sup>35</sup>Anonymous British Review of The Doctor and the Soul, by Viktor E. Frankl, "Psychiatry and Social Science Review", June 2, 1970.

the relation of therapy to religious concerns."<sup>36</sup> Yet another review stated, "you [Frankl] have unabashedly related secular therapeutics to matters of ultimate concern, about which Tillich has written so much..."<sup>37</sup> Psychologist Paul Wong recently commented that, "...in spite of his rise to prominence in psychology and his ever-increasing influence on the general public, Frankl's impact on research and academic psychology has been limited by the philosophical and religious approach favoured by Frankl and his followers. Frankl's writings are faithfully proclaimed by many of his disciples as if they were the sacred scriptures. Within the Logotherapy movement, there is little evidence of critical self-examination and creative tension."<sup>38</sup>

Certainly Frankl's concepts of the "spiritual unconscious", "unconscious religiousness" and the "unconscious God" may seem difficult to reconcile with scientific or empirically focused psychological theory, but his critics are too harsh and overgeneralize his thinking. Frankl's theory is a challenge to, rather than a dismissal of, these same scientifically oriented theories. By integrating religious language and symbols, Frankl

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<sup>36</sup>Rev. Daniel D. Williams, review of Psychotherapy and Existentialism by Viktor E. Frankl, "Journal of Religion and Health", Vol.7 (1968), p.288.

<sup>37</sup>Bernard Steinzor, review of The Will to Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl, "Psychiatry and Social Science Review", Vol.3, 9 (1969), p.28.

<sup>38</sup>Paul T.P. Wong, "Meaning-Centered Counselling" in Paul T.P. Wong and Prem S. Fry eds., The Human Quest for Meaning: A Handbook of Psychological Research and Clinical Applications, (New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1998), p.400.

expands the borders of psychology and raises questions as to the efficacy of scientifically based theories that reduce or neglect the value of an individual's unique experience within the therapeutic setting. This unique experience includes the subjective assimilation and construction of belief and value systems. Frankl would argue that these science based theories tend towards a compartmentalized and static interpretation of human existence, an interpretation that attempts to create an observable object of human behaviour. In so doing, Frankl would argue, these theories not only neglect an individual's continuous construction of meaning and belief systems but they further neglect the continuous and reciprocal relationship the individual has with the society or culture around them. Frankl states, "man has been presented as constrained by biological, by psychological, by sociological factors. Inherent human freedom which obtains in spite of nature, has been overlooked. Yet it is this freedom that truly constitutes the essence of man."<sup>39</sup> Inherent human freedom, according to Frankl, is precisely the individual human psyche's ability to subjectively comprehend, experience, interpret and respond over and above an individual's given biological, psychological or sociological determinants. Frankl is suggesting that an analysis of human existence should begin with the experiences, meanings, values and beliefs that emerge from the continuous dynamic between individuals and their community or culture. A more fruitful analysis of Frankl's work, therefore,

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<sup>39</sup>Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul, p.20.

would explore the direction and contribution his synthesis of psychology and religion, philosophy and ethics brings to the discipline of psychology. How, for example, might psychological theory and therapy change with the inclusion of religious and philosophical discourse?

**CHAPTER II - AN EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE:  
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS APPROACHES**

The similar existential style that influences the thought and writings of Viktor Frankl and Paul Tillich provides a framework to compare their work and reveals a bridge that can be made between psychology and religion. This similar existential foundation also reveals a bridge between Paul Tillich's religious philosophy and the religious and philosophical themes that permeate Viktor Frankl's psychological theory.

What lies at the core of Frankl's psychology and Tillich's religious philosophy is an existential approach in analyzing human nature. This particular approach begins with the premise that human nature is comprised of complex and varied elements that simultaneously come together to form an integrative whole. Tillich describes this reality of human existence as the "multidimensional unity of life".<sup>40</sup> It follows therefore, that any undertaking to analyze or describe human nature must necessarily include a variety of perspectives if one is to better understand the relationship these varied and complex elements have to one another. An existential line of argumentation would conclude that to approach human nature from only one perspective, as many academic disciplines do, distorts the reality of human existence.

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<sup>40</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol.III, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p.15.

Despite the theoretical contradictions such a broad approach might inevitably reveal, Frankl and Tillich similarly argue that any attempt to analyze human nature must deal with, and incorporate, these inherent contradictions from the start. Existential examples of these contradictions include: an individual's conscious awareness of both their being and non-being or an individual's freedom despite the finitude (or destiny) of human life. Frankl sees psychological growth as predicated on how we subjectively experience and assimilate these contradictions or ambiguities. Frankl and Tillich would agree that these contradictions are in fact realities of human existence. At the heart of their argument is a strong reaction against the impact scientific models of human nature have had on both psychological and religious discourse throughout the twentieth century. The scientific model is characterized by its theoretical emphasis on a unilateral (relying on one perspective such as behavioral or cognitive) view of human nature. Further, the very process of compartmentalizing perspectives or disciplines reduces the dialogue and relationship between these "realities". Frankl believes that every discipline, such as science, psychotherapy, religion or the arts, are all avenues to truth, each is engaged in the same pursuit. Therefore, even if each discipline utilizes a different theoretical language, the ability to translate, and therefore facilitate dialogue, should always exist.<sup>41</sup> The writings of Frankl

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<sup>41</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Comments and Questions on Synchronization at Buchenwald: January 27, 1978", Audiotape #27, The Frankl Library and Memorabilia, Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley, CA.

and Tillich are by contrast, an attempt to bring several perspectives together in dialogue in order to create a more realistic and integrated picture of human nature. To understand this picture and to fully grasp what Frankl and Tillich mean by the contradictory or ambiguous nature of human existence, one must first unravel the existential structure that binds their respective work.

In the broadest sense, the existential structure utilized by Frankl and Tillich focuses on the unique human ability to consciously experience and interpret feelings of meaninglessness, anxiety and guilt, to name but three. These particular feelings and experiences are thought to be inherent, and therefore, universal characteristics of human nature. Further, these universal characteristics find concrete expression (through behaviour, cognition or affect, for example) in very individualized and subjective form. Already we see that one of the foundational paradigms in existential thinking is the ambiguous yet complementary relationship between universality and individuality. Existential psychology, for example, assumes that the ability to experience meaninglessness is a universal reality of human life. Therefore, the subjective experiences of meaninglessness articulated by a patient in therapy, for example, would be considered a legitimate question of the human mind. Questioning the meaning and value of life are not, according to Frankl, signs of pathology. These questions and their experiential manifestations reside on a universal philosophical level that

psychology as both a discipline and practice does not fully address. Frankl states,

Every psychotherapist knows how often in the course of his psychiatric work the question of the meaning of life comes up. It helps us little to know that the patient's feeling of futility and philosophical despair has developed psychologically in this or that fashion. No matter that we may be able to disclose the inferiority feelings which were the psychic origin of his spiritual distress; no matter that we may "trace" the patient's pessimistic view of life back to certain complexes, and even convince him that his pessimism springs from these and these alone - in reality we are only talking around the patient's problems...Our patient has a right to demand that the ideas he advances be treated on the philosophical level. In dealing with his arguments we must honestly enter into these problems and renounce the temptation to go outside them, to argue from premises drawn from biology or perhaps sociology. A philosophical question cannot be dealt with by turning the discussion toward the pathological roots from which the question stemmed...<sup>42</sup>

A thematic thread that runs throughout Frankl and Tillich's work is that of dialogue. The universal reality of meaninglessness and its subjective expression is a good example of this. Every individual experience is a derivative of both internal and external factors. The polarity at the heart of human experience is bridged by the continuous dialogue and relational influence between the individual "self" and the external world, or the specific context in which the "self" exists. The existential relationship between universality and individuality is an important point to keep in mind throughout this chapter and the two chapters to follow.

The existential style that characterizes Frankl and Tillich's

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<sup>42</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy", in Pastoral Psychology, VII (1956), p.58.

work centres on a very specific vocabulary. Their writings are replete with words such as freedom, finitude, decision and responsibility. For Tillich, the existential meaning of these words help mediate between his religious concept of "ultimate concern", for example, and concrete human experience and endeavour, the usual domain of psychology in the twentieth century. Frankl utilizes the same existential framework, only in a theoretically opposite direction; one that mediates between human experience and a metapsychological concept of "ultimate meaning". Both, however, use the existential style and vocabulary to facilitate the construction of a viable analysis (for Frankl a viable theoretical analysis) that better reflects the full range and reality of human experience.

As stated, the existential model of human nature that Frankl and Tillich rely on assumes that human life is characterized by inherent contradictions or ambiguities. The following existential line of thought, using the specific vocabulary emphasized in their work, typifies this point. Human life is finite. Finitude is existentially defined as the awareness of human mortality. But it can also be defined as an awareness of the contingencies and fragility of everyday events and circumstances. The ability to be both aware of, and experience, this particular reality of human existence is another example of what makes us uniquely human. Despite the reality of finitude however, human life, indeed individual lives, are also characterized by a capacity for infinite potential. Infinite potential can be described as the individual

freedom to become, the freedom to actualize one potential over another. Freedom, however, is simultaneously framed by the finitude or destiny of each individual life. It is the reality of this constant ambiguity or polarity that Tillich describes as both the "greatness and the pain of being human, namely one's standing between one's finitude and one's potential infinity."<sup>43</sup> Infinite potential becomes finite reality when potentials are actualized and concretely expressed through human endeavour and experience. Our ability and freedom to choose who we want to be or become includes the freedom to decide which potentials we will actualize to the exclusion of others.

Again, we see how the existential argument stresses the continuous ambiguity at play within human life. This ambiguity, which Tillich describes as both the "greatness and pain of being human", is psychologically described by Frankl as the foundation of existential anxiety and frustration. Although our choices are individually and freely chosen, the act of choosing itself inevitably includes a process of exclusion. The very act and freedom of choosing is also an expression of our individual selves. Existential anxiety results from the responsibility we singularly bear when we place our very subjectivity, our very uniqueness as an individual, in a precarious position whenever we exercise our freedom to choose, to decide and to act. Tillich describes the experience of this ambiguous state as, "...man's anxious awareness

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<sup>43</sup>Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p.18.

of his finite freedom."<sup>44</sup> He goes on to state, "man experiences the anxiety of losing himself by not actualizing himself and his potentialities and the anxiety of losing himself by actualizing himself and his potentialities."<sup>45</sup>

For Frankl, certain individuals will avoid this singular responsibility through extreme forms of conformity, neurotic escapism, even the relinquishing of one's very humanity. We can alleviate the extreme forms, or psychological manifestations, of existential anxiety by accepting the ambiguities of human existence. One of the aims of Logotherapy is to help bring the patient to a greater level of psychological consciousness or integration by helping them become more aware and accepting of these ambiguities as realities of life. Psychological growth or development occurs when an individual moves from awareness, to acceptance (one could say responsibility), and finally to action. In Frankl's psychological model, acceptance of these realities is also an acceptance of the challenge these same realities place on us at every moment. According to Frankl, it is our responsibility to meet these challenges, respond to them, and grow from them.

The freedom to choose, to decide and to act are all expressions of our unique subjectivity. This subjectivity is, however, simultaneously shaped and influenced by the continuous and reciprocal relationship or dialogue we have with the world around us. "I" may express a choice or preference for something that

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<sup>44</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol.II, p.35.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p.35.

indicates my unique psychological make-up. That make-up to a certain extent has been biologically pre-determined and connects me to a specific genetic heritage. Further, my choices and decisions are also influenced by specific cultural, educational and economic contexts, for example. As an individual, I participate in, and contribute to, all these contexts simultaneously. I am influenced by them as they are by me. Within this reciprocal relationship, individual freedom may seem a very precarious point. Frankl argues, however, that within the dialogue between self and world, individual freedom does in fact find unique and concrete expression in our choices, attitudes and decisions. The importance of this uniqueness or subjectivity within existential reasoning takes on another conceptual layer when individual freedom is linked with responsibility.

The concept of responsibility, especially its existential use by Frankl and Tillich, has several meanings. First, linking responsibility with freedom implies that every individual act is simultaneously imbued with an ethical imperative. This ethical imperative compels us individually to be aware of the responsibility that goes hand in hand with the decisions and actions we "freely" choose to take. Although our decisions and choices may be subjectively constructed and articulated, they are never exclusively separated from the objective world around us.

Second, Frankl and Tillich always place subjective experience and individual freedom in relation to an "other". Both describe individual freedom as a freedom "towards" something rather than a

freedom "from" something. The word "towards" implies a response, a relationship, an act of communication between the individual and the "other". As stated previously, Frankl in fact defines responsibility as a "response-in-action", denoting the continual relationship between the individual and his or her world. For Tillich, the freedom and response "towards" something has an obvious religious meaning. Tillich describes a similar and continuous relationship between existence and essence; between our existential reality and the foundation or ground of being. From Tillich's religious perspective, human existence, indeed human development, lies within a linear and historical progression "towards" the "other", towards a reunion with the ground of being or our essential selves. Like Frankl, every human endeavour, every individual choice, decision and action is a reflection of our reaching out and responding to what Tillich calls the "new being". The "new being" is defined by Tillich as the manifestation of the Christ figure within human existence now and in the future, a symbol of unity or integration, uniting infinite possibility with finite reality.

Frankl places individual psychological development within a similar linear process. Psychological development is viewed as a continuous and meaningful process unfolding towards the future. Further, this process is facilitated by the ongoing dialogue between the individual and his or her world. Our psychological development is the outcome of continuous communication, interpretation and response with an "other". Frankl always leaves

ample room for interpretation of who and what the "other" could be. However, from a Logotherapeutic perspective, Tillich's religious symbol of the "new being" finds parallels in Frankl's explication of the experiences of greater psychological integration from which psychological growth ensues. We are psychologically transformed by these experiences. The emphasis in Logotherapy on the present and future is similar to the linear progression of human existence towards an embodiment of the "new being".

Third, the idea that human existence is directionally pointed, or motivated, "towards" something other than the self is described by both Frankl and Tillich as an inherent "self-transcendent" quality of human existence. Individual existence is therefore not static, rather, individual experience and endeavour is relational and continuously responds, and is directed towards, something other than itself. Frankl states, "the self-transcendent quality of the human reality in turn is reflected in the "intentional" quality of human phenomena...human phenomena refer and point to "intentional objects". Reasons and meanings represent such objects. They are the logos for which the psyche is reaching out."<sup>46</sup> Tillich similarly expresses this "intentional" quality as a continuous movement forward. He states, "...existence is not directed toward the past at all. It is the attitude not of the detached spectator, but of the actor who must face the future and make personal

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<sup>46</sup>Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul, p.58.

decisions."<sup>47</sup> For both Frankl and Tillich, responsibility resides in every intention, every attitude and every decision. This responsibility stretches beyond the individual. Because our individuality is in constant dialogue with the world around us, every decision we make, for example, also carries with it a universal ethical imperative. This style of argument is precisely what Frankl and Tillich use to warn of the dangers to humanity as a whole (the Holocaust being the primary example they each use) when individuals relinquish or lose the experience and expression of responsibility.

To summarize, an existential analysis of human nature, whether applied to a psychological or religious discourse, has several core themes. The first is a desire to get beyond a unilateral approach to human nature. Psychoanalysis, according to Frankl, "...tends to see in a human being nothing but pleasure-seeking and instinct-determinism. It leaves out value-seeking and meaning-orientation."<sup>48</sup> Existential analysis, by contrast, "...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*"<sup>49</sup> In order to complete this "truer picture", existential analysis takes into account several contexts of an individual's reality. These

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<sup>47</sup>Tillich, "Existential Philosophy: Its Historical Meaning", in Theology of Culture, p.101.

<sup>48</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "Religion and Existential Psychotherapy", in the Gordon Review, VI, 1961, p.2.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p.4.

contexts include not only psychological, sociological and biological determinants, an existential analysis distinguishes itself further by focusing on, and taking into account, those characteristics which mark us as uniquely human. Existential analysis takes into account the human capacity for self-awareness, the ability to reflect and articulate that self-awareness, as well as the capacity for creativity and imagination. These uniquely human capacities are what Frankl would classify as fundamentally spiritual.

The philosophical and religious questions about who we are and the meaning of our lives require answers that go far beyond psychic and somatic determinants. The questions themselves derive from what Frankl refers to as a specific and unique dimension of the human psyche, namely, the spiritual dimension. The answers we discover and construct to these specifically "human" questions of value and meaning are expressions of these "spiritual" qualities. A theoretical model that takes this added dimension into account, according to Frankl, is a step towards a more realistic picture of human nature.

Second, human development is seen as an open-ended, but meaningful, process. Although each individual life is framed by certain fixed determinants (that life is finite), psychological and spiritual development are viewed in terms of a continual process of "becoming". This process is based on a continuous and reciprocal dialogue between the individual and his or her world. Tillich echoes Frankl's criticisms of many schools of psychology by

stating, "the interdependence of man and man in the process of becoming human is a judgment against a psychotherapeutic method in which the patient is a mere object for the analyst as subject."<sup>50</sup>

As stated, both Frankl and Tillich link the process of becoming, or the human orientation towards the future, with what they term the inherent "self-transcendent" quality of human existence. Despite the contingencies or finitude of human life, an individual can, according to Tillich, transcend these same contingencies "...in any direction, in imagination, thought and action."<sup>51</sup> For Frankl, the attitude an individual can freely adopt towards any given situation is the key towards psychological transcendence or psychological growth. The attitude we choose to take or adopt even towards those determinants that cannot be changed or altered can challenge us to transcend the psychological level we may be at.

Third, an existential approach, whether expressed psychologically or religiously, highlights an inherent "separation" within human existence. Tillich states, "...the focus in both existentialism and depth psychology is man's estranged existence, the characteristics and symptoms of this estrangement, and the conditions of existence in time and space."<sup>52</sup> Individual

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<sup>50</sup>Paul Tillich, "Existentialism and Psychotherapy", in Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, 1 (Jan. 1961), p.15.

<sup>51</sup>Paul Tillich, Morality and Beyond, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p.19.

<sup>52</sup>Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", in Theology of Culture, p.117.

experiences of meaninglessness and anxiety are examples of psychological "separation". Cultural or community expressions of "separation" take form in political, racial, or violent conflict, for example.

In a Logotherapeutic setting, the affective, behavioral and cognitive manifestations of anxiety, isolation and meaninglessness that a patient describes, are experiences of separation that not only hinder individual growth, they hinder the relationship and communication between the self and others, between the self and the world around them. Our primary motivation, therefore, to search for and experience meaning(s), is similar to what Tillich describes as the "...drive toward a self which transcends every contingent state of its development..."<sup>53</sup>

From a religious perspective, Tillich describes existence itself as separation, specifically a separation from the "Ground of Being", or separation from our essential self. Tillich states that one "...cannot remove the imperfection which is implied in man's existential situation, his estrangement from his true being"<sup>54</sup> although we seek a level or dimension in which this estrangement is overcome. However, because of the ambiguity at the heart of human existence, we are incapable of fully experiencing an integration, or in strictly Tillichian terms; a reunion, with the essential self. At the level of human existence, fragmentary experiences of

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<sup>53</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol.111, p.235.

<sup>54</sup>Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p.75.

integration (much like Frankl's explication of the discovery of meaning(s) which are partial yet fragmentary experiences of psychological integration or unity) are mediated by a divine source. In other words, experiences of partial reunion with our essential selves is the outcome of the dialogue implied in the Christian concept of grace and faith.

In Frankl's psychological model, the will to meaning or the search for meaning is a similar motivation towards an experiential level in which the vicissitudes of existence are overcome. However, we are incapable of achieving or experiencing total psychological wholeness (incapable of experiencing an integration of consciousness and unconsciousness). While the process of psychological development, the very process of becoming, unfolds and reveals degrees of greater psychic integration, it does not require a relational union of divine grace and faith. Frankl argues that it does require faith in an "unconditional meaning" of life, that it requires faith in the dialogue between oneself and others. Once again, however, Frankl leaves ample room to interpret this act of faith as either a faith in human existence alone, or a faith in a divine presence which mediates the experiences of psychological integration.

Fourth, the concept of "separation" implies that human existence is both connected to a foundational or primary structure and that we have some conceptual and experiential perception of it. Tillich describes this foundational dimension from both an existential and religious perspective as, "trying to find a level

on which the contrast between subject and object has not arisen...but in order to penetrate to this stratum we must leave the sphere of objective things and pass through the corresponding subjective inner structure, until we arrive at the immediate creative experience or Source."<sup>55</sup> Tillich, however, is not specific in how this is done or what the level would be. Frankl comes close in his description of the "spiritual dimension" as a foundational and integrated psychic level in which "the contrast between subject and object has not arisen". The spiritual dimension of the human psyche is described as the well-spring, or "source", of uniquely human potential. The search for meaning(s), our primary motivation according to Frankl, derives from this foundational and integrative source of creativity and potential.

Tillich is specific in defining the Source as both divine and as preceding human existence. The Source is what Tillich also refers to as the essential. The essential denotes ultimate divine wholeness and is juxtaposed against the reality of separation, or ambiguity, within human existence. The foundation of human existence, and indeed the foundation of uniquely human endeavour, is a derivative of the essential, or in Tillich's quote, the Source. Therefore, human existence and every individual endeavour participates in a universally divine foundation. John Dourley states, "it is difficult to read Tillich on the crucial point of the relation of the essential to the existential without coming to

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<sup>55</sup>Tillich, "Existential Philosophy: Its Historical Meaning", in Theology of Culture, p.92.

the position that in some very real sense the essential precedes the existential in power and importance...for in Tillich's usage, the essential functions to give that which exists its native inherence or participation in the divine."<sup>56</sup> Dourley goes on to state that "in his [Tillich's] vision, this radical sense of the essential permeating the existential means that every existent participates in the being of the divine."<sup>57</sup>

Frankl uses a similar argument with respect to the spiritual dimension. The spiritual dimension can be seen as the foundational source of the human psyche and therefore has precedence over the psychological and somatic dimensions. Further, our human potential derives from this universal dimension. Like Tillich, our uniquely human endeavours point to our participation in a universal foundation, but as always Frankl is rather ambiguous as to whether the actualization of our potentials is simultaneously a participation "in the being of the divine".

Throughout this chapter, several existential themes have been highlighted which are pertinent to understanding the relationship this thesis is attempting to make between Frankl's psychology and Tillich's religious philosophy. The existential view of human nature and the specific language and style of argumentation utilized by Frankl and Tillich provide a contextual base for the

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<sup>56</sup>John P. Dourley, "The Problem of Essentialism: Tillich's Anthropology versus his Christology", in Paul Tillich's Theological Legacy: Spirit and Community, ed. by Fredrick J. Parella, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1995), p.126-127.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p.127.

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next two chapters.

**CHAPTER III - UNIVERSAL RELIGIOUSNESS**  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS**

The addition of the spiritual dimension in Frankl's model of the human psyche is meant to intentionally expand pre-existing psychological models which confine human experience to the somatic and psychological dimensions. The spiritual dimension represents the unity of all three dimensions of the psyche thereby symbolizing the core of human potential and experience. Frankl does not want to suggest that the dimensions of the psyche ascend in a hierarchical fashion. He wants to convey the idea that each dimension is successively included in the next in ever more expanded layers (representing a model of expanded consciousness, or an increasing unity between conscious and unconscious elements). Therefore, the somatic is included in the psychic, while both in turn are included in the spiritual. In the last chapter, however, we saw that it is also possible to interpret the spiritual dimension as a foundational dimension of the human psyche that precedes the psychic and somatic dimensions.

From a strictly psychological perspective, Logotherapy challenges psychology as a discipline to recognize that a person lives in all three dimensions; the somatic, the psychic, and the spiritual. Frankl states,

"misconceptions concerning the psychosomatic unity and the holism of man have made their own contributions to psychologism by contending that man is a mere psychic-corporeal unity. In our opinion this unity is not what

makes man a man; it does not constitute his wholeness. True human wholeness must include the spiritual as an essential element. Moreover, the spiritual is precisely that constituent which is primarily responsible for the unity of man."<sup>50</sup>

Tillich could easily be describing Frankl's model of the human psyche when he states, "...man lives in an environment, but he has a world. Theories which try to explain his behaviour solely by reference to his environment reduce man to the dimension of the organic-psychological and deprive him of participation in the dimension of the spirit..."<sup>51</sup>

Frankl and Tillich are putting forth a similar proposition. Regardless of the discipline or approach, understanding the complexity of human existence must necessarily include those uniquely human experiences that go beyond the borders of the "organic-psychological". From an existential perspective, getting beyond this theoretical border requires acknowledgment and understanding of the universal human capacity to experience meaninglessness, anxiety and guilt, for example. This chapter will argue that Frankl's psychological and Tillich's religious understanding of these universal, or existential, human experiences also point to a universal religiousness at the foundation of human existence.

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<sup>50</sup>Frankl, "Religion and Existential Psychotherapy", in the Gordon Review, p.2.

<sup>51</sup>Tillich, The Courage to Be, p.81.

**UNIVERSAL HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS - MEANINGLESSNESS, ANXIETY AND GUILT**

From an existential perspective meaninglessness, anxiety and guilt are universal expressions of being human. Frankl is critical of psychological theories that categorize anxiety, for example, under pathology and attempt to "cure" or remove it. He argues that with the exception of certain neurotic and psychotic manifestations (where a person exhibits a severe distortion of reality), anxiety cannot be removed, rather, it should be acknowledged as a reality of human existence and experience. Frankl's Logotherapy focuses on both a patient's subjective interpretation and experience of anxiety, as well as observing the external behavioral, cognitive and affective manifestations of these same experiences. Expanding the psychological focus provides valuable insight into the full depth and complexity of a patient's experience. Interpreting these experiences as mere psychological categories robs the patient of an opportunity to gain insight and meaning from the experience. In other words, it robs the patient of an opportunity for psychological and spiritual growth.

Psychological growth or development, according to Frankl, occurs through self-transcendence. Our very humanness is predicated upon our ability, desire and need to reach beyond ourselves towards something (meanings) or someone. Our individual psychological development, in other words, is dependent upon a mutual and continuous relationship or dialogue with the external world. Many psychological theories ignore this dialogue altogether

thereby ignoring the context and implication this dialogue has on individual experience. Frankl suggests that,

"...motivational theories [for example] depict the human as a being basically concerned with intrapsychic conditions - be it an inner equilibrium or a feeling of inferiority versus a feeling of superiority. But this is not a true human picture. Actually, being human always means reaching out beyond oneself - reaching out for something other than oneself - for something or someone to love; for a meaning to fulfil, or for another human being to love. In other words, being human always means transcending oneself, and unless this self-transcendent quality of the human reality is recognized, psychology degenerates into some sort of monadology."<sup>60</sup>

Tillich similarly suggests that a "doctrine of man" is needed in science that recognizes the universality and existential reality of anxiety.<sup>61</sup> Tillich's definition of existential anxiety from a religious perspective provides a good comparison for understanding Frankl's psychological definition of existential anxiety and its relational importance to the spiritual dimension.

### **EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY**

Tillich outlines three specific forms of existential anxiety. The first form of anxiety stems from the awareness of our finitude. This includes both the awareness of death and the awareness of the contingency and fragility of life at every moment. The second form is the anxiety of meaninglessness. The third form of anxiety is that of guilt and condemnation. The first form of anxiety is characteristic of existential thinking in general. We will focus

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<sup>60</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "On the Meaning of Love", in Educational Forum, Vol.54, No.3 (Spring 1990), p.242.

<sup>61</sup>Tillich, The Courage to Be, p.72.

on the latter two forms of anxiety as they provide a good opening to compare Frankl and Tillich's thought.

All three forms of anxiety, Tillich states, "...belong to existence and not to an abnormal state of mind as in neurotic and psychotic anxiety."<sup>62</sup> Tillich's description of the anxiety of meaninglessness sounds almost identical to Frankl's. Tillich states, "the anxiety of meaninglessness is anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings..."<sup>63</sup> The anxiety of guilt and condemnation stems from the feeling of responsibility we have towards actualizing our full potential and our simultaneous experience of guilt over the possibility that we have fallen short of this responsibility. In a previous chapter, existential responsibility was defined as an individual's freedom to choose and decide which potentials they would actualize into finite reality. Freedom and responsibility rest with the individual alone and is, as Tillich suggested, the greatness and the pain of being human. Each decision we make involves a discriminatory selection among the choices available. Further, since there is never any guarantee that our choices at any given moment and in any given circumstance will be the right ones, our freedom is also fraught with anxiety.

Two themes emerge here. First, the ambiguous relationship between freedom and responsibility is subjectively experienced on an emotional and intuitive level and not on a purely rational

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p.41.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p.47.

level. Further, responsibility implies a response-in-action, as Frankl states, to the world around us. The idea that we are constantly responding to the world around us situates our subjectivity in relation to an external referent. Tillich's perspective on this point is obviously religious. The objective referent implied in responsibility is our response to, and dialogue with, the ground of being, or our essential self. Frankl interprets this referent as life itself that poses questions to which we are individually compelled to respond and give answers. Whether responsibility is described psychologically as an individual's continual response to the world around them, or whether it is described religiously as an individual's response to a divine call, both highlight the continuous relationship or dialogue between self and "other".

Second, an ethical onus lies at the foundation of responsibility and plays out within the dialogue between self and "other". Tillich states, "man's being, ontic as well as spiritual, is not only given to him but also demanded of him. He is responsible for it; literally he is required to answer, if he is asked, what he made of himself. He who asks him is his judge, namely he himself, who, at the same time, stands against him."<sup>64</sup> Frankl addresses this ethical context in a similar fashion. To be conscious, Frankl states, "...presupposes the uniquely human capacity to rise above oneself, to judge and evaluate one's own

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p.51.

deeds in moral and ethical terms."<sup>65</sup>

### THE ANSWER TO EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY

Frankl's answer to existential anxiety is two fold. First, we must accept that anxiety belongs to existence and second, we are able to confront anxiety through the attitudes we are free to choose and to adopt towards any and every situation, particularly those of unavoidable pain and suffering. Frankl has himself adopted a theoretical attitude towards anxiety by making it a reality rather than a pathological state. Tillich describes the experience of anxiety as an experience of separation. The answer to existential anxiety lies within what he calls "courage". Frankl might answer Tillich by suggesting that through the attitudes we adopt towards the experiential manifestations of anxiety in our lives, an opportunity exists to understand ourselves more fully. The potential to discover meaning in these situations leads to greater psychological awareness and integration, a way of overcoming psychological separation.

Tillich's concept of "courage" is defined as the act of self-affirmation or self-acceptance in spite of our imperfections. Self-affirmation in turn leads to the experience of reconciliation.<sup>66</sup> From a religious perspective, reconciliation is

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<sup>65</sup>Frankl, The Will to Meaning, p.18.

<sup>66</sup>Once again, it should be stated that reconciliation or psychological unity are experienced partially. Just as we can never be fully conscious of ourselves, the structure of human existence precludes complete reconciliation with the essential self, or the ground of being.

the experience of grace and faith, a fragmentary experience of unity between the essential and existential self. In spite of our imperfections, we are accepted by a divine source through grace. Faith is the human response to, and acceptance of, a transcendent act of grace which enables us to accept ourselves.

Frankl's psychological interpretation of this experience would be that the attitude we adopt towards anxiety can either lead us to self-acceptance and self-affirmation in spite of its real presence in our lives, or we become psychological prisoners to the debilitating extremities of anxiety. Confronting anxiety with an attitude of self-acceptance in spite of our imperfections provides us with an opportunity to discover meanings within our experience. Discovering and experiencing meanings is a psychological form of reconciliation. We experience a moment of unity, of psychic clarity, one that reconciles us to the very core of our humanness, the core that Frankl refers to as the spiritual dimension. Neurotic and psychotic manifestations of anxiety are by contrast an attempt to escape reality, an attempt to escape the existential anxiety which is an inherent part of our very humanness. This extreme attitudinal position, and the ensuing behavioral, cognitive and affective repercussions of this form of anxiety, leads to the experience of psychological separation.

Tillich categorizes courage in two forms; the "courage to be as oneself" and the "courage to be as a part". Tillich highlights the importance of each as well as the necessary dialogue between the two. Tillich's definition of courage incorporates the

existential themes of subjective experience, the dialogue between self and world, and the relationship between individual responsibility and a universal ethic. The courage to be as oneself is the "affirmation of the self as the self; that is of a separated, self-centred, individualized, incomparable, free, self-determining self."<sup>67</sup> However, every individual self is concurrently situated and participates in the wider world. The courage to be a part "...points to the fact that self-affirmation necessarily includes the affirmation of oneself as participant..."<sup>68</sup> The answer to existential anxiety resides within the dialogue between the courage to be as oneself and the courage to be a part.

An overemphasis on the courage to be as oneself is a distorted affirmation of the self without any recognition that one simultaneously participates in, contributes to, and is shaped by the society or culture to which they belong. This overemphasis on the courage to be as oneself can lead to a relinquishing of our responsibility to others and to the world around us. It creates a separation between ourselves and others. If we are engaged solely in affirming ourselves, we devalue and separate ourselves from others. We separate ourselves from the creative and human process of dialogue. This is what Frankl and Tillich suggest as the first step towards both negating human potential and ultimately relinquishing our humanity. Conversely, an overemphasis on the

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<sup>67</sup>Tillich, The Courage to Be, p.86.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p.89.

courage to be as a part can severely limit the value and dignity of the individual to the point where conformism, for example, can lead to a relinquishing of the self, and totalitarianism has room to develop. The experience of reconciliation between human existence and essential being, or the psychological experience of expanded consciousness through the discovery of meanings, relies on the balance between both forms of courage.

An ethical principle also lies at the foundation of Tillich's concept of the courage to be a part. Tillich suggests that it is an individual's participation in the "creative activities of society"<sup>69</sup> that confronts anxiety and reduces its debilitating effects. Each individual, therefore, is responsible to their wider world. This responsibility takes the form of participation and action, much like Frankl's definition. In his war time radio broadcasts, Tillich warns against the danger to German society and culture when individuals abandon their freedom and dignity. Further, he implores his listeners to acknowledge the debilitating and dehumanizing repercussions not only to German society, but to humanity as a whole, when individual responsibility and participation are similarly abandoned.

Frankl uses the example of the concentration camp to illustrate a similar ethical point. He has described the concentration camp as the ultimate testing ground. In other words, the concentration camp "presented" the ultimate ethical question of existence to which each and every inmate had both the freedom and

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p.111.

responsibility to answer. Questions of an ultimate nature demand and elicit responses from the very core of human personality. These answers, Frankl argues, come from the spiritual dimension. The response to the ultimate questions of existence presented by the concentration camp were of course individual, expressed in the particular attitude a prisoner adopted towards the situation. The questions however stem from a universal foundation; a foundation that provides an opportunity for us to individually discover and experience meanings in our lives in each and every moment, even in situations like the concentration camp that seem to defy all justice. The answers, and therefore the meanings, we discover within these situations are subjective but they utilize our most human, and therefore universal, capabilities and potentials.

Frankl's concept of attitude and Tillich's concept of courage have a strong theoretical affinity. For Tillich,

"courage does not remove anxiety. Since anxiety is existential, it cannot be removed...courage is self-affirmation in spite of, namely in spite of non-being...he who is not capable of a powerful self-affirmation in spite of the anxiety of non-being is forced into a weak, reduced self-affirmation. He affirms something which is less than his essential or potential being."<sup>70</sup>

Frankl might define courage as the meanings discovered within the dialogue between the courage to be oneself and the courage to be a part since dialogue elicits our spontaneous and creative human potential. Whether it is the attitude we are free to adopt in any given situation, or whether it is the act of self-affirmation in

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p.66.

spite of anxiety and in spite of our imperfections, courage opens us to greater, or one could say more integrative, levels of human experience.

#### FROM EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY TO THE PROBLEM OF THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

One existential theme emphasized throughout Frankl's play "Synchronization at Buchenwald" and Tillich's wartime radio broadcasts is the threat to the uniqueness, value and dignity of the individual which they both see as a pervasive trend in the twentieth-century. Frankl and Tillich take this one step further and imply that the threat to the individual is also a threat to society or humanity as a whole. For Tillich, "twentieth-century man has lost a meaningful world and a self which lives in meanings out of a spiritual centre."<sup>71</sup> Notice that Tillich uses the plural form of meanings in this citation and that he is also suggesting that we draw these meanings from a spiritual foundation. Frankl would concur with Tillich's description of the problem of our age and its spiritual and psychological ramifications. He states,

"...it is the very problem of our time that people are caught by a pervasive feeling of meaninglessness, which is the most conspicuous symptom of the collective neurosis of our time. It is accompanied by a feeling of emptiness...Our industrialized society is out to satisfy all needs, and our consumer society is even out to create needs in order to satisfy them; but the most human of all human needs - the need to see a meaning in one's life - remains unsatisfied. People have enough to live by; but more often than not they do not have anything to live

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p.139.

for."<sup>72</sup>

For Tillich the answer to this twentieth-century predicament lies within the dialogue between the courage to be as oneself and the courage to be as a part. This answer addresses the realities, not pathogenic abnormalities, of existential anxiety, meaninglessness, and guilt that lie at the core of human existence. Tillich takes this human reality and places it within a religious context. The human expressions of courage (the behavioral, cognitive and affective expressions of self-affirmation, for example) have their roots in a universal religious source, namely the ground of being, or the essential self. Therefore, every act of courage, every human expression of self-affirmation, or in Frankl's terminology, the attitude or stand we take individually towards ourselves and towards any given situation, is a simultaneous participation in a universal foundation. For Tillich, this describes our participation in the ground of being. For Frankl, this describes our participation in the world around us although he always leaves room to stretch his theories to include a universal, spiritual or religious ground.

Whether it is expressed religiously or psychologically, Frankl and Tillich are both suggesting that every act of individuality is a simultaneous dialogue with an "other". Dialogue refers to an open and relational process. It requires degrees of faith, disclosure and trust. Whether the dialogue is with the divine or

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<sup>72</sup>Frankl, "On the Meaning of Love", in Educational Forum, p.241.

not is merely a qualitative difference in how an individual perceives it. For Tillich, the act of courage or self-affirmation provides the relational balance between the courage to be and the courage to be a part. This includes acceptance "by that which infinitely transcends one's individual self."<sup>73</sup> It requires the religious union of grace (the experience of a transcendent acceptance or affirmation) and faith (the human response to, and acceptance of, grace). Tillich describes faith as the "...state of being grasped by the power of being itself. The courage to be is an expression of faith..."<sup>74</sup>

Frankl also speaks of faith. Every act of self-transcendence, a reaching out beyond the self, and every encounter and dialogue with an "other" requires a degree of faith. In The Doctor and the Soul, Frankl refers to a faith in what he terms the unconditional meaning of life. Further, he suggests that faith or belief in a supra-meaning, a metaphysical concept or religious belief has a psychotherapeutic value.<sup>75</sup> The act of self-transcendence utilizes our most human qualities, qualities that stem from the spiritual dimension.

Frankl argues that psychological health, indeed individual survival, is predicated on a strong orientation towards the future. This orientation, Frankl argues, manifests itself in the goals and aspirations we wish to fulfil and those we bring into concrete or

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<sup>73</sup>Tillich, The Courage to Be, p.165.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p.172.

<sup>75</sup>Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul, p.33.

finite existence. By extension, if humanity as a whole is to survive, there must be a strong universal orientation toward a common goal or a common concern. Frankl's answer, therefore, to the problem of meaninglessness in the twentieth-century is a common faith, belief and commitment to what he terms "monanthropomism", a universal humanity. Frankl contends that we have a responsibility to maintain the unity of humanity.<sup>76</sup> The awareness of, and responsibility for, this universal unity reduces the degree and destruction associated with what Tillich calls the experience of separation between self and others. Individual faith in a monanthropomism coupled with a responsibility (a responsive action) for the actualization of this universal unity is an experience of reunion; an experience of overcoming the separation that threatens humanity. Frankl's concept of self-transcendence is the psychological path to a universal humanity.

The twentieth-century problem from both a psychological and religious perspective is existential separation. The answer is a universal unity or reunion.

#### **EXISTENCE AS SEPARATION**

Tillich describes human existence as separation; specifically the separation between essential being and existential being. Humanity moves in a linear progression from essence to existence through the act of consciousness. When we engage our freedom to actualize our human potential, for example, we move from the

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<sup>76</sup>Frankl, Audiotape #13.

infinite unity of essential being to the vicissitudes of finite existence. When we exercise our freedom (our consciousness), we are thrown into the existentially ambiguous dilemma between our freedom to actualize our potentials and the anxiety inherent in such freedom. This ambiguous state is indicative of human existence.” This ambiguous state is the state of separation. Tillich’s religious interpretation of separation can be equated with Frankl’s psychological interpretation of existential anxiety and meaninglessness.

The human experience and expression of anxiety and meaninglessness, for example, point to a schism, or separation, between the conscious and unconscious dimensions of the human psyche. Specifically, in Frankl’s model of the human psyche, the experience of meaninglessness points to an experiential separation between the somatic, psychic and spiritual dimensions. The experience of meaninglessness occurs when we cannot express our full human potential.

Tillich outlines three specific forms of separation. The first form of separation is between individuals; between the self and others. The second form of separation occurs within the individual themselves and the third form is the separation of humanity from the ground of being. The first two forms of separation are consequences of the third. Psychology addresses the first two forms of separation Tillich describes. Frankl’s Logotherapy goes one step further by addressing the third form of

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”Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol.11, pp.29-35.

separation. Tillich describes the Christian notion of "sin" as separation. For Tillich, however, sin does not denote acts of moral transgression, rather sin is the human (and therefore universal) experience of separation. Experiences of meaninglessness, anxiety and guilt fall under the category of sin because these experiences diminish our human potential and creativity. Tillich describes sin, in its universal meaning, as a transgression against our human potential, or a transgression against our essential self, rather than singular acts evaluated as either good or bad. Frankl's interpretation of sin would include the meaninglessness, anxiety and guilt (the experiential by-product of psychological separation) that occur when we relinquish our individual freedom and responsibility.

Frankl and Tillich argue that the experience of separation is a universal human phenomenon. The conscious experience of separation, however, presupposes our ability to conceptualize the opposite of separation, which is unity. Tillich calls this the universal desire for reunion. He states, "every individual since he is separated from the whole, desires reunion with the whole."<sup>78</sup> From a Tillichian perspective, we desire reunion with our essential being or the ground of being. From Frankl's perspective, the "will to meaning" is the human motivation towards the recovery and experience of psychological "reunion" between all three dimensions of the psyche. The discovery and experience of meanings in our lives are moments of psychological unity or reunion between the

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p.51.

conscious and unconscious dimensions of the psyche (the somatic and psychic reunion with the spiritual dimension).

## REUNION

The universal human desire for reunion with the essential self in Tillich's religious model has a strong affinity with Frankl's notion of a universal psychological motivation to seek meaning in our lives. Finding or discovering meaning in our lives is experienced psychologically as a partial reunion of the conscious and unconscious dimensions of the psyche. Frankl's concept of self-transcendence, for example, is the experience of reunion with others, an overcoming of the separation between the self and others. Of the term self-transcendence Frankl states, "by declaring that man is responsible and must actualize the potential meaning of his life, I wish to stress that the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche."<sup>9</sup> Individual psychological development is dependent upon the dialogue inferred by the concept of self-transcendence. Frankl's Logotherapy offers a psychological translation, and therefore a bridge between religion and psychology, for Tillich's religious formulation of the separation between human existence and essential being.

Tillich describes, "the religious dimension [as] the moral

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<sup>9</sup>Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, p.133. This quotation is also a good example of how Frankl's existential thinking differs from Sartre for example.

imperative itself".<sup>40</sup> This imperative motivates us "...to transform ourselves in the direction of reuniting the actual with the essential."<sup>41</sup> Frankl would answer this by stating that the opportunity to transform ourselves exists at every moment and in every situation. Frankl could easily provide a psychological equivalent for what Tillich describes as a motivation towards reuniting the actual with the essential. The will to meaning is the uniquely human motivation towards an experience of integration (or reunion) between psychological and biological determinants and human potential or possibility that stem from the spiritual dimension. Whenever we participate and respond to the world around us, we are also expressing our freedom as individuals to take a stand or adopt an attitude towards each and every situation. This freedom expresses our human potential in the face of objective reality. Further, our attitude and response can be psychologically transforming as every situation we encounter is potentially meaningful. Experiencing moments of meaning is equivalent to the experience of reunion. Such moments reunite us with the spiritual dimension; we grow or transform because we are accessing our human potential and creativity. Although Frankl at times denies there is an ultimate meaning,<sup>42</sup> he also concedes at times that there is "...some sort of ultimate meaning, [a] meaning of one's life as a

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<sup>40</sup>Tillich, Morality and Beyond, p.30.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p.30.

<sup>42</sup>When Frankl refers to an ultimate meaning, he is in fact referring to a religious notion of ultimacy.

whole" and that psychology, and particularly the therapist, "should not deny such long range meaning."<sup>43</sup> Frankl sees the therapeutic benefit for both the individual and humanity as a whole, in what he refers to as a necessary faith in the unconditional meaning of life. The experience and expression of faith accesses a deeper experiential level. It is at this level that psychological "reunion", or growth and transformation, occurs.

#### UNIVERSAL RELIGIOUSNESS

What does Frankl mean when he states, "...there is in fact a religious sense deeply rooted in each and every man's unconscious depths"?<sup>44</sup> For Frankl, the only difference between psychology and religion is dimensional. The dimensions of the human psyche progress from lower to higher (again Frankl wants to avoid any hierarchical ordering), each more inclusive than the former. They begin at the biological or somatic level, move through the psychological, to the spiritual and finally to the religious<sup>45</sup>. The spiritual dimension is the dimension of uniquely human qualities from which the will to meaning, the motivation to search for meaning in our lives, has its foundation. This is the dimension to which Frankl believes psychology as a discipline must

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<sup>43</sup>Frankl, "Man in Search of Ultimate Meaning", Audiotape #38.

<sup>44</sup>Frankl, The Unconscious God, p.10.

<sup>45</sup>Frankl's book The Unconscious God is one of the rare instances (of the English publications) in which he specifically names the religious dimension as a fourth dimension above (or higher than) the spiritual dimension.

open itself. Notice Frankl's inclusion of one more dimension, the religious dimension, which he places as the highest and most inclusive. If Frankl has each dimension of the human psyche included in the next in successive layer, then the spiritual dimension would be included within the religious dimension. As such, the unique and creative core of human endeavour which stems from the spiritual dimension, would also find a foundational source in the religious dimension.

Frankl defines religion as the search for ultimate meaning as opposed to the search for meaning or meaning(s) which are discovered and actualized through human endeavour and within the structures and boundaries of human existence. Religion, using Frankl's definition, implies a search for a "meaning" beyond the capabilities and experience of human endeavour. In other words, ultimate meaning can never be actualized into concrete existence. Religion does however, elicit different experiential responses. These responses point, for example, to our human ability to access levels of conceptualization and experience beyond what is immediately known to our senses. An individual's experience of belief and faith, for example, defy rational thought. Belief and faith are emotive responses that point towards both a depth dimension within ourselves as well as something or someone beyond ourselves. This places the deepest levels of our existence in relation to an "other". In The Unconscious God, Frankl describes human existence as "...essentially unconscious because the

foundation...is never and cannot be fully reflected upon..."<sup>66</sup>  
Such a statement presupposes the existence of a universal foundation from which and to which our existence points. Conceptualizing religion in this way connects the search and discovery of meanings within the framework of human experience to a universal, foundational and ultimate Meaning.

For Frankl, the human psyche is religious since it "involves the most personal decisions man makes, even if only on an unconscious level."<sup>67</sup> Frankl outlines three stages of existential psychology that lead to this conclusion. First, being human means being both conscious and responsible. Logotherapy therefore aims at making patients more conscious of their responsibility. Second, responsibility stems from the spiritual dimension, the dimension of uniquely human endeavour. And finally, an unconscious religiousness resides in the spiritual dimension."<sup>68</sup> Again, we see that Frankl is alluding to the existence of a universal foundation or dimension in which we "participate", to use a Tillichian phrase, but can only experience in fragments. Our participation in this universal foundation finds partial yet continuous expression in the actualization of our human potential. The freedom to choose, to decide, to contribute, to take a stand or adopt an attitude, are examples of human potential actualized into concrete form. If Frankl considers our human potential foundationally based in the

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<sup>66</sup>Frankl, The Unconscious God, p.26.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p.64.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p.60.

spiritual dimension, a dimension in which an unconscious religiousness also resides, then he might be making the claim that human endeavour is in fact a partial reflection of a religious foundation. Here, Frankl's dimensional structure of the human psyche comes very close to Tillich's description of religion as the "substance, the ground, and the depth of man's spiritual life. This is the religious aspect of the human spirit."<sup>8</sup>

Tillich's religious philosophy provides a useful framework to further conceptualize the spiritual dimension. As previously stated, the spiritual dimension of the psyche represents for Frankl a depth dimension in which uniquely human phenomena find their roots. He considers us to be unconscious of this dimension. Tillich would equate the depth dimension with the "ground of being", a dimension of unity from which human existence emerges but from which we are also separated. Existentially, Tillich will argue that although we are separated from the "ground of being", or our essential selves, we simultaneously participate in the ground of being, by "being". In other words, the foundation of human experience has its roots in the ground of being itself.

Frankl uses a very similar theoretical framework to describe our being unconscious of, or separated from, the spiritual dimension. We "participate", as Tillich would say, in the spiritual dimension through every act of human behaviour. If the spiritual dimension is included in a religious dimension, as Frankl

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<sup>8</sup>Tillich, "Religion as a Dimension in Man's Spiritual Life", in Theology of Culture, p.8.

suggests, the human motivation to seek meanings in our lives, is a constant, if partial, participation in what Tillich describes as the ground of being.

Meanings symbolize partial, or fragmentary, manifestations of an ultimate meaning because human experience (or existential reality) is separated from its depth. Our active discovery and concrete actualization of meanings is the continuous human motivation toward a greater unity of the unconscious and conscious realms of the psyche and point to a foundation from which human existence emerges. Tillich would state this as the partial and fragmentary reunion with the essential self as symbolised in the "new being" now and in the future. To exist precludes our ability to fully experience, or to be reunited with our essential self. Frankl might argue that our motivation towards, and actualization of, meanings throughout our life is the seeking of a similar "reunion" (in this case, a psychological reunion of the conscious and unconscious realms). Just as existence precludes our being fully reunited with our essential self, complete consciousness is impossible within the human psyche.

Frankl would argue that the philosophical question, "what is the meaning of my life", presumes that an answer will be given. Frankl counters this presumption by suggesting that life itself poses the questions to which we must respond. The meanings (or meaning) of life are discovered by transcending ourselves and responding in action to the world and to those around us. Further, meanings manifest experientially in the beliefs, values,

behaviours, cognitions and affects of the individual. If our primary motivation, according to Frankl's model, is towards finding and actualizing meaning in our life, it is also a motivation towards an ultimate psychic unity. The spiritual dimension in Frankl's model is the source from which uniquely human phenomena derive and the dimension that mediates between the "will to meaning" (the level of human experience) and an ultimate meaning.

### DEFINING RELIGION

Tillich's definition of religion helps to further illuminate the link between psychology and religion in Frankl's foundational concept of the "will to meaning". Tillich makes a definitional distinction between religion in its "largest" and "narrowest" sense. He states, "religion, in the largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern. And ultimate concern is manifest in all creative functions of the human spirit."<sup>90</sup> Further, religion is "an ultimate concern about the meaning of one's life and the meaning of being as such."<sup>91</sup> He states, "religion is not a special function of man's spiritual life, but it is the dimension of depth in all of its functions."<sup>92</sup>

Frankl goes as far as suggesting that life has an unconditional meaning, a meta-meaning, in which we participate but

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>91</sup>Paul Tillich, Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p.6.

<sup>92</sup>Tillich, "Religion as a Dimension of Man's Spiritual Life", p.5.

never fully experience. In Theology of Culture, Tillich states, "if religion is the state of being grasped by ultimate concern, this state cannot be restricted to a special realm. The unconditional character of this concern implies that it refers to every moment of our life, to every space and every realm."<sup>93</sup> Frankl's definition of religion as that which "involves the most personal decisions man makes", implies that these decisions and their unique expression involve the response of our total being (total psyche) at every moment. Experiencing and expressing our full human potential requires the "united" response of our psyche (the somatic, psychic and spiritual dimensions) and cannot, as Tillich suggests, be "restricted to a special realm". Frankl has stated that the concentration camp posed the ultimate question to each and every inmate,

"In these extremities the ultimate question was finding a meaning for life and accounting for the meaning of death. Man was compelled of his own will to render this account, so that he could stand upright and go ahead and die in a manner somewhat worthy of a human being...In these situations anyone who theorized in categories...would have simply missed the point. Talking about complexes and feelings of inferiority would have been useless and completely senseless."<sup>94</sup>

Frankl's description of the psychological response to questions of an ultimate nature is similar to Tillich's description of religious experience. Being religious is,

"asking passionately the question of the meaning of our

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<sup>93</sup>Tillich, "Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture", in Theology of Culture, p.41.

<sup>94</sup>Frankl, "Religion and Existential Psychotherapy", in the Gordon Review, p.9.

existence and being willing to receive the answers, even if the answers hurt. Such an idea of religion makes religion universally human, but it certainly differs from what is usually called religion. It does not describe religion as a belief in the existence of gods or one God, and as a set of activities and institutions for the sake of relating oneself to these beings in thought, devotion and obedience...It [religion] is the state of being concerned about one's own being and being universally."<sup>95</sup>

Although Frankl never explicitly links the will to meaning with an ultimate meaning, his definition of religion implies that the meanings we discover in our lives are partial experiences of an ultimate meaning. If the spiritual dimension; (a) represents an unconscious yet unified dimension of human experience and endeavour, and (b) mediates between the "will to meaning" and an ultimate meaning, then the primary motivation within the human psyche would be an inherent religious motivation which seeks an ultimate concern.

By using Tillich's religious philosophy as a theoretical structure to analyze the religious themes in Frankl's psychological theory, we can in fact answer the existential question they each ask, namely, what makes human beings uniquely human? The answer, from either Tillich's religious or Frankl's psychological perspective, is an inherent religiousness at the core of human endeavour. Human action, creativity, experience and reflection, for example, are fundamentally motivated by and towards, an ultimate concern. In the Will to Meaning, Frankl states that there

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<sup>95</sup>Church, Forrester F., ed. The Essential Tillich, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p.1.

is no "ultimate meaning" only "meanings" which are discovered and take shape within the realm of human existence."<sup>6</sup> However, in The Unconscious God, Frankl defines religion as the search for ultimate meaning. Psychologically, our search for meaning within the parameters of human existence is only qualitatively different from a search for ultimate meaning that religion expresses. The will to meaning implies that our primary motivation, indeed our human psyche, is engaged in a religious quest; a quest of ultimate concern.

Religion, according to Tillich is "...the aspect of depth in the totality of the human spirit."<sup>7</sup> The spiritual dimension in Frankl's psychological model represents, as suggested, a similar "totality of the human spirit". Frankl's psychological theory places all of human experience and endeavour in relation to, or dialogue with, a depth or unifying dimension. In Frankl's language, the meanings of life and what it means to be human are the same; both are of "ultimate concern". Frankl states, "...whether expressed or implicit, this is an intrinsically human question. Challenging the meaning of life can therefore never be taken as a manifestation of morbidity or abnormality; it is rather the truest expression of the state of being human, the mark of the most human nature in man."<sup>8</sup> Frankl's concept of the "will to

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<sup>6</sup>Frankl, The Will to Meaning, p.55.

<sup>7</sup>Tillich, "Religion as a Dimension in Man's Spiritual Life", in Theology of Culture, p.7.

<sup>8</sup>Frankl, The Doctor and the Soul, p.26.

meaning" implies not only a quest or motivation towards finding the meanings of one's existence, it also implies that such a quest is of ultimate concern, and therefore ultimately religious.

#### **SUMMARY**

In The Unconscious God, Frankl comments on the difference, if any, between religion and psychology. He states, "I have learned, and taught, that the difference between them is no more nor less than the difference between various dimensions." Religion, therefore, is a universal human endeavour that expresses the unique character of human existence. For Frankl, the concrete expressions of religion are however, individual and subjective. Religion elicits the expression of our individual freedom and responsibility. Tillich defined religious expression as "asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence". Frankl has taken this same fundamentally existential question and developed a psychological theory around the human quest for meaning. Within a therapeutic setting, Logotherapy focuses on both the individual's motivation towards finding meanings, and secondly, on the individual's concrete experience and expression of meanings and beliefs.

The similar existential structure in Frankl's psychological theory and Tillich's religious philosophy provides a bridge between religion and psychology. Further, the dialogue between these two

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"Frankl, The Unconscious God, p.12.

discourses expands the purely scientific analysis of human existence that is generally favoured. By bringing the existential question of the meaning of life to the forefront in therapy, Frankl preserves the dignity and value of each individual. From a Logotherapeutic perspective, psychological theory and therapy should focus on the uniquely creative and individual process involved in psychological development; this includes the unique relationship and dialogue the individual has with the world around them.

The dialogue between psychology and religion, philosophy and ethics, gives Frankl a much wider contextual base from which he can address the unique constituents of human existence both theoretically and practically within the therapeutic setting. By suggesting that our very existence, individually and collectively, participates in a deeper dimension, Frankl challenges the dependency psychology has come to have on objective science. Opening the discipline to a dialogue with religion and philosophy enhances our understanding of human nature and the psychological healing process to which therapy is committed.

**CHAPTER IV - PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALING AND RELIGIOUS SALVATION**

In the preceding chapters, this thesis has highlighted the striking similarities between Frankl's and Tillich's thought. Throughout their respective work however, Frankl and Tillich express reservations about whether the role of the psychologist and theologian should be compared. Without any explicit knowledge or reference to the other's work, they also concede that parallels exist between psychology and religion and that a dialogue between the two can be mutually beneficial.

Frankl and Tillich are both positioned "on the boundary"<sup>100</sup> between psychology and religion. As such, their work is both compelling and challenging. While their work defies any one theoretical position or model, it is also plagued with contradictions. Critics of Frankl's work have argued that his psychological theory is clinically untenable because of its inclusion of religious and philosophical questions. Ironically, Tillich was criticized by several American psychoanalytic societies when he appeared before them in the years following the war, for "...being too philosophical, too unconcerned with concrete methods of therapy."<sup>101</sup> Tillich's position and reason for appearing

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<sup>100</sup>Tillich, On the Boundary, p.98.

<sup>101</sup>Wilhelm and Marion Pauck, Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought, (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), pp.224-226.

before these societies was to show "...how untenable theological positions are which want to exclude philosophical and psychological problems from theology".<sup>102</sup>

In this final chapter, Frankl and Tillich are compared on the broad theme of psychological healing and religious salvation. Throughout this thesis, the similar existential style that permeates their work has been highlighted. This particular style, both of language and argument, mediates between psychology and religion and allows for a comparison of several important themes in Frankl's and Tillich's work. Further, comparing the religious and philosophical themes at the foundation of Frankl's psychological theory with Tillich's religious philosophy, illuminates the unique character of Frankl's Logotherapy within the discipline of psychology itself. This thesis will conclude by suggesting that Frankl's Logotherapy may in fact be a psychological theory that answers Tillich's own attempt to find a compatible link between the roles of psychology and religion in the area of healing.

By the 1960's, Tillich was of the opinion, as Pauck suggests, "...that existentialist thinking provided the best grounds for fruitful discussion and cooperation between clergymen and psychiatrists."<sup>103</sup> While Tillich wants to maintain a clear distinction between the role of the priest and that of the psychologist, he also contradicts himself and suggests that "on

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<sup>102</sup>Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", in Theology of Culture, p.114.

<sup>103</sup>Pauck, Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought, p.224.

occasion, the psychologist can be a mediator of the essential, that is, of salvation."<sup>104</sup> Tillich is not entirely clear about what these occasions would be. However, Frankl's Logotherapy may indeed provide a theoretical and practical link between healing and salvation. Frankl describes Logotherapy as; a) a philosophy and anthropology based on its specific existential concept of humanity; b) an existentially based psychoanalysis that focuses on the existential questions of life; and c) a therapy that focuses on the spiritual dimension, or what Frankl also calls the human dimension. Should a practising Logotherapist also be a psychiatrist or physician, Logotherapy can then be applied as a supplemental model to the medical model in cases in which existential distress becomes psychogenic neurosis.<sup>105</sup> Frankl distinguishes between the role of psychologist and theologian and therefore suggests that the theologian's role would be limited to the spiritual dimension.<sup>106</sup> Like Tillich, however, Frankl also contradicts his position by suggesting that Logotherapy and specifically the Logotherapist engages in this role as well. This would suggest that Frankl, like Tillich, is making a correlation between psychological and religious healing and between the role of the psychologist and that of the theologian.

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<sup>104</sup>John P. Dourley, "Issues of Naturalism and Supernaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious and Psychological Healing", in Studies in Religion\Sciences Religieuses, 26\2 (1997), p.217.

<sup>105</sup>Viktor E. Frankl, "The Pastor as Logotherapist: May 9, 1966", Audiotape #9, The Frankl Library and Memorabilia, Graduate Theological Union Archives, Berkeley, CA.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., Audiotape #9.

John Dourley's paper, "Issues of Naturalism and Supernaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious with Psychological Healing"<sup>107</sup> discusses this parallel. In his paper, Dourley outlines four key points within Tillich's religious philosophy that open the door to a potential dialogue with a contemporary "psychology of the self".<sup>108</sup> Frankl's Logotherapy has relevance for these four points.

#### **PARALLELS BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION AND THE ESSENTIAL SELF**

Frankl and Tillich, as we have seen, share a similar existential perspective towards human existence. Each stresses the inherent ambiguity of human existence. A predominant example Frankl and Tillich each utilize is the awareness (or consciousness) of our infinite potential despite our finite reality. The relationship between finite reality and infinite potential can be described from Frankl's psychological perspective as a continuous relationship (one might also call it a continuous dialogue) between our existential reality and our uniquely human potentials which derive from the spiritual dimension of the psyche. Tillich would describe this same relationship as one between our existential reality and the human potential represented by our essential self or the ground of being. This relationship or dialogue from an existential perspective frames all human activity. Tillich would

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<sup>107</sup>Dourley, "Issues of Naturalism and Supernaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious and Psychological Healing", in Studies in Religion\Sciences Religieuses, pp.211-222.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p.217.

suggest that all human activity is a symbolic representation of the boundary between finitude and infinitude.<sup>109</sup>

In Frankl's psychological model of the human psyche, the spiritual dimension represents an unconscious yet fully integrated foundation at the core or "ground" of the human psyche. In fact, Frankl refers to the spiritual dimension as the "essential ground".<sup>110</sup> The spiritual dimension is also the specific source of human potential and possibility and represents a depth of the human psyche that cannot be truly captured by the psychological or somatic dimensions alone. From a religious perspective, Tillich's concept of the "ground of being" or the "essential self" represents a similar foundational dimension of human potential. We access this dimension whenever we freely decide for or against something; whenever we take a stand for or against something, or adopt a particular attitude. In each instance, we are engaged in a process of actualizing and integrating possibilities into specific, and therefore finite, situations.

Frankl and Tillich similarly describe human existence in relation to a primary and foundational level of unity from which existence has its source. Further, each suggests that the human psyche has some conscious awareness of this foundation. This awareness, Tillich states, drives "the human mind to seek for unity in diversity..."<sup>111</sup> Tillich interprets this search or quest for

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<sup>109</sup>Tillich, On the Boundary, p.98.

<sup>110</sup>Frankl, The Unconscious God, p.29.

<sup>111</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol.111, p.12.

unity as a search or quest for reunion with the essential self. We seek reunion with a depth dimension from which we, in existence, are separated. Humanity's separation from this unity, the separation between essence and existence, is religiously symbolised by the "fall". Humanity falls from essence into existence, from essential unity to existential ambiguity. The separation, however, is never complete. The paradox at the heart of human existence is expressed both religiously and existentially as our permanent separation, yet constant union with our essential self. For Tillich, the fact that we seek reunion, that we search for unity within the realities (and therefore diversity) of existence, is an expression of our awareness or memory of the unity symbolized by the essential self.

The Christian concept of humanity's "fall" from essence to existence has psychological parallels. From a psychological perspective, the "fall" could be described as the schism between the unconscious and conscious realms of the psyche. Like Tillich, Frankl argues that we can never be fully conscious of the foundation of our existence. In other words, we can never fully experience the psychic integration symbolised by the spiritual dimension; we never fully experience a unity between the unconscious and conscious realms. We do however experience the psychological equivalent of "separation". Experiences of meaninglessness, for example, point to a disconnection in the relationship between reality and possibility. This experience compels us to seek a unity, or a renewed connection, between these

two poles. We seek (re)connection and unity not only within ourselves but with the world around us.

Frankl's theory, it can be argued, uses a similar theoretical style as Tillich (essential versus existential) to formulate a psychological theory that contrasts an existential view of humanity with a foundational dimension of unity. The adage of Frankl's Logotherapy is that psychological growth occurs as we become more and more conscious of our responsibility, as we become conscious of our ability and freedom to respond (transcend beyond our individual selves) to the community, or world, to which we belong. The drive (or motivation) towards psychological unity is the human response similar to what Tillich has referred to as the "search for unity within the diversity of existence". Frankl's famous phrase, "man's search for meaning", similarly implies a search for unity within the reality, dynamics and ambiguity of human existence.

We are, as Tillich would state, separated from our essential selves, separated from the experience of unity, and yet we paradoxically participate in this same unity. Psychoanalytically, this could be described as the fluidity between the unconscious and conscious dimensions of the human psyche. The dimensions are separate and yet we have access to unconscious material. This fluidity enables us to have some awareness, manifested either conceptually or experientially, of a psychic unity toward which we are primarily motivated.

Frankl and Tillich would agree that human existence is a continuous and unfolding process. As such, only degrees of reunion

or psychological unity can be experienced now and in the future. The search or quest for reunion with the essential self (Tillich), and the search for meaning(s) which bring us experientially closer to the unity implied in the spiritual dimension (Frankl), do not refer to a recovery of something from the past, integrated in the present. They refer to psychological or religious experiences of transformation and growth and therefore point towards the future.

Tillich's religious philosophy differs from Frankl's psychology at the point where partial recovery of, or reunion with, the essential self is predicated on a dialogue between human and divine. This is expressed more explicitly in the Christian concept of grace and faith. For Tillich, reunion with, or recovery of the essential self is, unobtainable by human agency alone.

Although Frankl's psychological theory has a closer affinity with Tillich's religious philosophy than pure psychology, Frankl believes that degrees of psychological unity can be restored through human agency alone. While psychological growth and development from a Logotherapeutic perspective is predicated on transcending our selves towards others and the world around us, this process, aided at times by therapy, does not require a relationship of faith and grace. Frankl concedes, however, that faith in an ultimate meaning, or in what he terms the "unconditional meaning of life", is a necessary ingredient of psychological health.<sup>112</sup> Frankl's concept of self-transcendence refers to the dialogue, and the mutual interdependence that is

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p.13.

necessary, between a unique individual and the world around him or her in order to facilitate the continual process towards becoming. Frankl, however, is not always explicit in delineating the difference between a psychological notion of a transcendent "thou" and its religious counterpart. He always leaves ample room to interpret this same dialogue, or the "I-thou" relationship necessary for psychological health, as a dialogue between human and divine.

#### **EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION VERSUS SCIENCE**

Throughout his work, Frankl is critical of psychological theories that adopt a purely scientific perspective towards human existence and particularly human development. He believes that many theories do not address the existential realities a patient experiences and brings to therapy. These include experiences of meaninglessness, loneliness and issues of mortality. Existential psychologist Irvin Yalom calls these experiences "existence pain"<sup>113</sup>, and like Frankl, believes "...the primal stuff of psychotherapy is always such existence pain - and not, as is often claimed, repressed instinctual strivings or imperfectly buried shards of a tragic personal past...basic anxiety emerges from a person's endeavours, conscious and unconscious, to cope with the harsh facts of life, the givens of existence".<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Irving D. Yalom, Love's Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989), p.3.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p.4.

Second, Frankl believes that many theories neglect the importance of meaning and belief systems the individual experiences and constructs subjectively. In turn, these theories will also neglect the fact that these highly subjective experiences are simultaneously shaped and influenced by the continuous relationship the individual has with the world. And finally, many clinical applications of psychological theory tend to categorize human behaviour in terms of normal or abnormal manifestations. The aim of clinical practice is therefore focused on reducing or eliminating these "abnormal" manifestations and restoring the individual to a medical standard of normalcy.

Frankl, as both a trained and practising psychiatrist and neurologist, is not immune to these kind of distinctions. Logotherapy is not designed to replace other therapeutic models despite Frankl's critique. As mentioned in the first chapter, Logotherapy challenges these theories to see the patient as a subject, continuously engaged in an ongoing process of psychological development rather than an observable object. Logotherapy is also designed to supplement other theories, thereby broadening their theoretical perspectives.

Frankl does distinguish between authentic and unauthentic existence (although he does not use this particular terminology often).<sup>115</sup> Frankl defines authentic existence as our becoming more conscious of our responsibility. An individual, Frankl states, "...only exists authentically when [he or she are] not

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<sup>115</sup>Frankl, The Unconscious God, pp.26-27.

driven but rather, responsible."<sup>116</sup> In other words, we exist authentically when we freely and purposely participate and respond to the world around us. The operative word in Frankl's definition of authentic existence is "becoming". Psychological development from an existential perspective is seen as a process towards authentic existence; a process towards becoming. Tillich's description of this same process is what he terms "essentialization". Essentialization is the human experiential process towards becoming; towards a partial recovery or reunion with the essential self symbolised by the "new being" or Christ figure, now and in the future. From either perspective, Frankl and Tillich are referring to the potential and ever present possibility for each of us to change and continuously grow towards becoming a "new being". This includes our experiences and integration of the existential realities of life and not their elimination.

To summarize, Frankl's Logotherapy deviates from many psychological theories in his emphasis on, and existential meaning of, responsibility. Second, Frankl emphasizes psychological development as a continual process of becoming, or what he calls a process "towards existence"<sup>117</sup>. Third, Logotherapy specifically addresses the human experiences and expressions of meaninglessness, guilt and anxiety which Frankl removes from pathological categories and classifies as existential realities. These realities, and how a patient experiences them, contain the seeds for psychological

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p.27.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p.54.

growth, healing and salvation.

Tillich describes these same universal existential realities as objects of salvation. Frankl would expand on this by stating that every situation which we encounter and in which we participate, is an opportunity to turn existential realities into possibilities for change and growth (this is particularly true in situations of unavoidable suffering). Frankl's famous examples of this remain his personal experiences from Auschwitz and the thematic thread of suffering and meaning that runs throughout his play, "Synchronisation at Buchenwald". In both examples, Frankl describes the human ability and freedom that always exists to transcend these situations and find meaning within them from the attitudinal stand we choose to take. This possibility and freedom, Frankl would argue, in the face of human reality, keeps our individuality, our dignity, our very humanity intact.

Tillich's reference to the boundary situation of all human activity resonates with Frankl's argument. Tillich would argue that it is precisely at the boundary between reality and possibility that human activity, both creative and destructive, occurs. Tillich's religious notion of salvation also finds a comfortable ally in Frankl's theory that the attitudes we adopt toward any given situation provide the possibility for psychological "salvation". The meaning(s) available to us from our experiences and attitudes towards existential anxiety, guilt and meaninglessness are potentially healing and psychologically unifying. Further, Tillich would agree with Frankl's critique of

many schools of psychology when he states,

"They [many psychologists] try with their methods to overcome existential negativity, anxiety, estrangement, meaninglessness, or guilt. They deny that they are universal, that they are existential in this sense. They call all anxiety, all guilt, all emptiness, illnesses which can be overcome as any illness can be, and they try to remove them. But this is impossible. The existential structures cannot be healed by the most refined techniques. They are objects of salvation."<sup>118</sup>

Frankl's Logotherapy is exactly what Tillich is calling for; a psychological theory that takes into account these universal "existential structures" and recognizes the possibility for salvation or healing that lie within these structures and not apart from them.

#### RELIGIOUS AND LOGOTHERAPEUTIC ANSWERS TO SCIENCE

Tillich argues that you cannot emphasize the existential realities, and therefore the fundamental schism (the inherent ambiguity) within human existence, without suggesting that a possibility exists, or a level exists, where this schism is overcome.<sup>119</sup> Frankl would expand on this point by arguing that existential questions can only be answered from the spiritual dimension (a level or dimension in which the schism between unconsciousness and consciousness is overcome) and are not therefore accessible from a scientific approach. Science, in Frankl's view, restricts itself to a particular cross-section of

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<sup>118</sup>Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", in Theology of Culture, pp.122-123.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p.119.

reality, but other cross-sections exist, or at least there is the possibility that they exist. The active discovery of meaning(s) in our lives brings with it the awareness that possibilities always exist against the background of reality, and this in turn leads us to have faith that we can change reality.<sup>120</sup>

In a lecture to the American Psychiatric Association in 1985, Frankl commented that, "ultimate meaning is missing in the world described by pure science."<sup>121</sup> He then posed the open question as to whether this automatically implied that the world is void of ultimate meaning. Frankl commented further that "what is unknowable need not be unbelievable...where knowledge gives up, the torch is passed on to faith".<sup>122</sup> Faith is a uniquely human experience which finds its roots in the spiritual dimension. The discovery of meaning(s) is dependent not only on our active decisions and attitudes; it requires an element of faith. What Frankl is getting at is the argument that science relies almost entirely on the so-called rational processes of human endeavour. Frankl counters that position by suggesting that the broad spectrum of human experience, especially subjective experience, defies pure rationalism. The experience of faith, for example, is not a "rational" and observable behaviour. Faith, Frankl would argue, derives from a deeper experiential core of the human psyche. As such, it is impossible to intellectually decipher (scientifically

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<sup>120</sup>Frankl, "Man in Search of Ultimate Meaning", Audiotape #38.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., Audiotape #38.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., Audiotape #38.

decipher) whether something is meaningless or whether there is in fact an ultimate meaning. Everything can be meaningful or meaningless depending on which side you choose (where you subjectively and experientially place your faith). As humans, we fill the unknowable with symbols and projections. These "irrational" acts involve our subjective decisions, choices, and attitudes as to whether we experience something as meaningful or not.

In therapy, a patient's experiences are an expression of the dialogue or relationship between possibility and existential reality. These experiences are expressed in overt forms such as behaviour, cognitions and emotions, including what Frankl calls the uniquely human ability to construct, experience and articulate belief and value systems that we constitute as meaningful. Psychological growth, and therefore change, from a Logotherapeutic perspective occurs when a patient becomes increasingly aware of the dialogue or relationship between reality and possibility and its potential for healing. When we experience our lives as meaningless, for example, we have in some sense lost our connection with possibility. The dialogue is not present and we feel disconnected from something that makes our lives feel authentic. The aim of Logotherapy is to help the patient re-connect with this inner dialogue which in turns helps the patient re-connect with the world around them. This dialogue, as stated, is a process towards what Frankl calls authentic existence; towards a reconnection between our psychic-somatic reality and the spiritual dimension.

Tillich would call this the continuous relationship between existence and essence and the potential for salvation that lies within it.

#### **MEDICAL MINISTRY VERSUS PASTORAL MINISTRY - PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALING AND RELIGIOUS SALVATION**

Tillich comments that "...with the development of psychotherapy as an independent way of healing, problems arose in the direction of both medicine and religion. Today psychotherapy often tries to eliminate both medical healing and the healing function of the Spiritual Presence."<sup>123</sup> Frankl's Logotherapy it can be argued resides in the middle of these two healing roles.

The psychoanalyst, Tillich argues, cannot "...bring salvation by means of his medical methods, for this requires the healing of the centre of the personality."<sup>124</sup> Frankl, the psychoanalyst, makes this same argument against the scientific emphasis within many psychological theories; an emphasis he believes renders them inadequate in providing the psychological "salvation" therapy can provide. Logotherapy is the middle ground between medicine (Frankl's own training in neurology) and a psychotherapy that sees healing or salvation possible from the "centre of the personality" in the spiritual dimension. Because science cannot answer the existential realities of human life, according to Frankl, the

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<sup>123</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol.111, p.281.

<sup>124</sup>Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", in Theology of Culture, p.123.

spiritual dimension which represents the core of the human psyche is also the core of "salvation" or healing. While we cannot ever fully experience the unity at this core, our strongest and most primary instinct, the will to meaning, directs us towards this centre. The aim of Logotherapy, to guide us individually towards greater consciousness of our responsibility, is also guiding us towards a centre of personal integration or healing. Frankl differs from Tillich only at the point at which he does not explicitly suggest a divine presence in the process of healing.

As a theologian, Tillich wants to delineate between the salvation offered by religion and the "salvation" offered by psychoanalysis. Tillich, for example, distinguishes between the role of religion in alleviating existential anxiety (although as a reality of existence it can never be completely removed), and the role psychology has in alleviating pathological anxiety.<sup>125</sup> Frankl, it can be argued, is proposing both roles within Logotherapy. In The Unconscious God, Frankl states, "...Logotherapy is not meant to substitute for psychotherapy but, rather, to supplement it. Likewise, we have often pointed out that what we call medical ministry is in no way supposed to replace pastoral ministry", although it can, and does supplement it in Logotherapy.<sup>126</sup> Frankl also sees doctors, ministers and

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<sup>125</sup>Dourley, "Issues of Naturalism and Supernaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious with Psychological Healing", in Studies in Religion\Science Religieuses, p.215.

<sup>126</sup>Frankl, The Unconscious God, p.73.

therapists as belonging to "one large vocation to help people become".<sup>127</sup> While Tillich suggests that the psychologist, "...is not concerned with nor able to alleviate existential anxiety"<sup>128</sup>, Frankl sees the Logotherapist as specifically engaged in a patient's experiences and expressions of existential anxiety and the potential for psychological healing that lies within these experiences rather than the alleviation of them. Logotherapy is in fact a psychotherapy Tillich would find compatible with his religious philosophy.

Tillich and Frankl each make strong arguments that the line between religion and psychology, between the theologian and psychologist, should not and cannot be merged. However, the similar existential arguments on which they rely, do in fact bring psychology and religion in close alignment with each other. Frankl's Logotherapy may indeed be one of the "contemporary psychologies of the self"<sup>129</sup> that answer Tillich's question of whether a compatibility can exist (and therefore enhance and enrich each discourse) between psychology and religion. Tillich concedes at times that a close relationship does exist between the two discourses. He calls the relationship between religion and

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<sup>127</sup>Frankl, "Logotherapy as Medical Ministry", Audiotape #8.

<sup>128</sup>Dourley, "Issues of Naturalism and Supernaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious with Psychological Healing", in Studies in Religion\Science Religieuses, p.216.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., p.217.

psychology one of "mutual interpenetration".<sup>130</sup> While an existential perspective stresses what Tillich calls an acknowledgment of the "multidimensional unity of human life", this acknowledgement requires its correlate in a "multidimensional unity of healing".<sup>131</sup> The multidisciplinary approach within Frankl's Logotherapy is a psychological theory that merges both ingredients.

John Dourley outlines four specific points a psychological theory would have to address in order to meet Tillich's "concession" that not only can a mutually enhancing dialogue exist between religion and psychology, but that on occasion the psychologist can mediate the essential, thereby merging the aim and role implied in psychological healing and religious salvation. First, the theory would have to acknowledge the relation between psychological healing and a transcendent agency.<sup>132</sup> From a psychological perspective, Frankl comes close to this idea in several ways. First, psychological growth and therefore "healing" can only occur, Frankl argues, when we transcend our individual selves (when we respond and dedicate ourselves) towards others, or towards something. His concept of self-transcendence alludes not only to a dialogue with the world around us, but to a dialogue with a transcendent and divine "thou". Second, Frankl's notion that we

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<sup>130</sup>Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", in Theology of Culture, p.114.

<sup>131</sup>Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol.111, p.281.

<sup>132</sup>Dourley, "Issues of Naturalism and Supernaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious with Psychological Healing", in Studies in Religion\Sciences Religieuses, p.217.

must have an unconditional faith in the unconditional meaning of life again alludes to a transcendent "thou" to which our experiences point, and in which healing, or growth, takes place. Third, Frankl specifically suggests that an unconscious religiousness resides within the spiritual dimension.<sup>133</sup> Frankl defines this unconscious religiousness as a "latent relation to transcendence inherent in man [or] a relationship between the immanent self and a transcendent thou."<sup>134</sup>

Second, Dourley suggests that a psychological theory would have to recognize "a power [that] is operative in the healing process" akin to Tillich's concept of the essential.<sup>135</sup> Again, one can argue that Frankl's concept of the spiritual dimension represents a power operating at the core of our very humanity that is directly linked with a psychological healing process. This power represents our most human potential. The will to meaning, our primary motivation, derives from this foundational core of the human psyche. This motivation which is actualized in the discovery and experience of meaning(s) throughout our lives, is an expression of the spiritual operating in the human psyche. The spiritual dimension is akin to a power "operative in the [psychological] healing process"; a power necessary for growth and change both individually and culturally.

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<sup>133</sup>Frankl, The Unconscious God, p.16.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., p.61.

<sup>135</sup>Dourley, "Issues of Naturalism and Supernaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious with Psychological Healing", in Studies in Religion\Sciences Religieuses, p.217.

Third, a psychological theory would recognize that the "processes of essentialization are fragmentary and ambiguous".<sup>136</sup> What Tillich is referring to is the idea that our desire (or motivation) for reunion with our essential self can only be experienced fragmentarily now and in the future, as existence and essence are in continuous dialogue and are never completely (re)united. Again, Frankl's theory addresses this point by suggesting that psychological growth and development is a continuous and unfolding process. Within this process lie meaning(s) which we discover and subjectively experience. Our experience of these meaning(s) give us momentary glimpses of unity (Frankl leaves room to interpret this as partial manifestations of an ultimate meaning, or of a fully integrated psychological unity). Further, the continuous discovery of meaning(s) in an individual's life is a process towards a more authentic existence, it is a process akin to what Tillich calls essentialization, the drive towards reunion, now and in the future, with the essential self.

Fourth, a psychological theory would "support Tillich's position that the essential functions not only as a source of religious healing but also the source of personal potential and creativity."<sup>137</sup> Once again, Frankl answers this with the spiritual dimension. The spiritual dimension represents the source and core of individual potential and creativity. As a universal dimension of the human psyche, it is also the well spring of

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., p.217.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., p.217.

universal religiousness. The spiritual dimension is a source of both healing and salvation not only of individual potential, it also directs us towards greater depths of human potential.

The Logotherapist may well be Tillich's "mediator" between psychological healing and religious salvation.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Existential analysis attempts to describe and account for the reality of human existence. By focusing on anxiety, guilt and meaninglessness, an open question might be: are Frankl and Tillich ultimately pessimistic about humanity? Unlike Sartre for example, who concluded that our existential nature could not be changed because "man's essence is his existence", Frankl and Tillich see the reality of humanity's existential nature in more positive terms. Each frames human existence in a continuous relationship to an "other". This relationship allows for possibility, potential and therefore change, to exist. Frankl and Tillich do agree that certain psychological, biological and sociological determinants cannot be changed; that there are undeniable "facts" within human existence. But they each contend that these same determinants cannot depict the entirety of human experience. Something must account for our ability to believe, to create, to imagine, to love, to hope, and to construct meaningful ways of living and experiencing. These uniquely human abilities, derive, according to Frankl, from a higher dimension (the spiritual dimension) of the human psyche. The search for meaning(s) involves the higher

aspirations of the human psyche. Humanity's existential reality is always seen in relation to a "transcendent" potential or possibility. While Tillich explicitly identifies this transcendent potential as divine, Frankl always leaves the door open for interpretation. In either case, each is suggesting that the possibility for an individual to "transcend", and therefore change, is always there.

Tillich believes that psychoanalysis is negative only when it views the individual in terms of existence only, and not in terms of the relationship between existence and essence.<sup>138</sup> Frankl would add, from a psychological perspective, that in neglecting the spiritual in humans, psychological theories neglect the existential questions. By ignoring these questions, psychology limits itself to seeing the individual from a very narrow perspective and ignores the relationship between reality and possibility. How this relationship manifests itself in the lives of individuals, communities or nations, is the seed of human change or destruction.

In his autobiography, Tillich comments that he cannot "...deny that there is a correspondence between reality and the human spirit which is probably expressed most adequately in the concept of meaning."<sup>139</sup> Frankl's psychological theory, with its foundational concept of the search for meaning, has captured the "correspondence" between reality and the human spirit.

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<sup>138</sup>Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis", in Theology of Culture, p.119.

<sup>139</sup>Tillich, On the Boundary, p.83.

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