

## UNCONSCIOUS RELIGIOUSNESS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS GOD

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Viktor Frankl adds the spiritually unconscious / to Freud's instinctively unconscious *It*. Thus he finds an unconscious religiosity or relatedness to God within human spirituality. "This unconscious religiousness," he writes, "revealed by our phenomenological analysis, is to be understood as a latent relation to transcendence inherent in man."<sup>6</sup>, p.61



Frankl incorporates God's existence in his terms "ultimate meaning" and "supra-meaning." These meanings transcend the human being and cannot be apprehended by rational processes. This must be done by an existential act that Frankl calls "basic trust in Being."<sup>4</sup>, p.27 And he goes on: "It is my contention that man really could not move a limb unless deep down to the foundations of existence, and out of the depth of being, he is imbued by a basic trust in the ultimate meaning."<sup>8</sup>, p.150

For Frankl, "basic trust in Being" and "basic trust in ultimate meaning," however dormant they may be, are transcendental. Hence they are indispensable for human existence.<sup>8</sup>, p.151

### Scientific Psychotherapy or Secular Religion?

"Unlike many European existentialists, Frankl is neither pessimistic nor antireligious," writes Gordon Allport. "On the contrary, for a writer who faces fully the ubiquity of suffering...he takes a surprisingly hopeful view of man's capacity to transcend his predicament and discover an adequate guiding truth."<sup>7</sup>, p.12-13

The uniqueness of Frankl is that he developed not only helping techniques, but also a philosophy of life. Logotherapy is a system of values and something like a "secular religion."

Even though Frankl deals with subjects like conscience, values, meaning, unconscious religiousness, and supra-meaning, logotherapy as a

secular theory and medical practice must restrict itself to factual statements. Logotherapy must leave to the patients the decision as to how to understand their own responsibility: whether along the lines of religious beliefs or agnostic convictions. "Logotherapy must remain available to everyone"<sup>5, p.54</sup> -- patient or doctor, believer or nonbeliever.

Again and again Frankl insists on neutrality because fusion "of psychotherapy and religion necessarily results in confusion, for such fusion confounds two different dimensions, ...anthropology and theology."<sup>8, p.144</sup> There is a dimensional difference between the divine and the human world just as there is between the human world and the world of animals.<sup>8, p.144-45</sup>

There is also a dimensional difference between psychotherapy, including logotherapy, and religion. When dealing with God we must be aware of the danger of making Being into a thing and remember Ludwig Wittgenstein's words, "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." "In other words, man cannot speak of God but he may speak to God. He may pray."<sup>8, p.146</sup> We must be aware of authoritarianism, rationalism, and anthropomorphism as stumbling blocks which try to conceptualize God.<sup>8, p.149</sup>

Frankl clearly sees the function of logotherapy, saying that it "does not cross the boundary between psychotherapy and religion. But it leaves the door to religion open and leaves it to the patient whether or not to pass the door."<sup>8, p.143</sup>

Any helper working with logotherapy should not try to outdo the priest.<sup>6, p.73</sup> But even Frankl acknowledges "that his system ultimately leads to faith."<sup>1, p.17</sup>

## **A Bridge between Religion and Psychotherapy**

We need to follow Frankl's advice to be careful and not mix different dimensions when we look at religion, psychotherapy, and logotherapy. Religion is our "awareness of the suprahuman dimension and the basic trust in ultimate meaning residing in that dimension."<sup>3, p.182</sup> The goal of religion is salvation.<sup>8, p.143</sup> True religion "is so forceful because it satisfies the oldest, strongest, and most urgent of all human longings"<sup>11, p.46</sup> --the search for meaning in each situation. Psychotherapy, on the other hand, is "a technique of stimulating and educating one to deal with problems"<sup>2, p.190-91</sup> with the goal of healing and mental health.<sup>8, p.143</sup>

Logotherapy, in going beyond the psychotherapies of Freud and Adler, incorporates the spiritual human dimension and works with terms like "meaning," "values," and "unconscious religiousness." It focuses on searching for meaning and purpose in life, and is regarded as "the most systematic of

all the existential approaches to counseling and psychotherapy."<sup>12, p.196</sup> It is "implicitly religious in the sense that it assists in the aspiration for the supreme good of human development, but is not explicitly religious as a presentation of sectarian religious dogma."<sup>9, p.23</sup> It is not a special Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish psychotherapy<sup>8, p.143</sup> even if many scholars such as Ungersma, Tweedie, Leslie, Bulka, and Böschmeyer connect it with these and other beliefs.

Frankl opens the psychiatrists' and psychotherapists' doors not to any particular religion, but to religion itself. Frankl is helping to overcome the spiritual crisis of our time with ways of thinking and the language of our time. "Thus logotherapy can be a true bridge between religion and psychotherapy for life-meaning that exists in one's situation and can help one to find therein a religious component, and in turn accept psychotherapy as a step in fulfillment of that meaning."<sup>2, p.191</sup> But logotherapy must stay apart from religion for the sake of its independence and scholastic future.<sup>10, p.24-25</sup>

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