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Ethical Paradoxes of Belief Systems: Viktor Frankl's Approach

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Abstract

While belief systems may have positive effects for some, they can also negatively affect human life. For example, although belief systems promote positive values, they also drive believers to commit violent acts against those who reject their beliefs or the group's authority. This essay identifies the paradoxical problems of some belief systems and how Frankl's open/balanced approach and placement of the locus of values on the individual open a path to resolve these paradoxes.

Introductory Summary

Belief systems of all kinds, including religions, conspiracy theories, and political ideologies, work as a religion or quasi-religion, complete with leaders, doctrines/theories, rituals, and a community of believers. Those components convince a believer to stay in the belief system by providing intellectual, emotional, and communal support. This article focuses on religious belief systems among the various types of belief systems.

Many belief systems work positively by healing wounded minds, providing values, building communities, and answering questions central to human life. However, some belief systems can be harmful and destructive for believers, their families, and societies. Such belief systems have tragic paradoxes or conflicts. First, while they preach/teach universal truths and compassion for all humanity, they often exclude and even attack those who challenge their religious authority and beliefs inhumanely. Second, zealots and those who are faithful carry out violence out of, at least in their minds, devotion. Such believers do not see and feel any

contradiction within themselves; belief systems that are supposed to promote the conscience can blind believers and paralyze their conscience.

In addition to the above paradoxes, there is an underlying issue: when such a belief system traps one, it is challenging to get out of it. Rational persuasion, emotional appeal, threats, and physical force do not necessarily affect the mind of believers, and internal self-reflection suspends. Education, social status, and the professional status of a believer also make little difference, as highly educated scientists and scholars trained in critical thinking can be trapped by belief systems all the same. Those believers seem rational, virtuous, emotionally sensitive, and equipped with social skills. In other words, they present as ordinary, regular individuals.

The believers of paradoxical belief systems tend to become inflexible and dogmatic in their conviction, intolerant to other views, and self-righteous in attitude. An underlying conviction maintains their attitude that their belief system is exclusively accurate, and believers are enlightened. In other words, those believers find they are chosen and have access to exclusive truth. Further, in their judgment of others, they may often use binary categorical distinctions, such as the holy and the secular, the legitimate and the heretic, God, and Satan, good and evil, and justice and injustice.

One of the critical factors constituting their sense of legitimacy is the conviction that their belief system is the indisputable truth. While they can acknowledge specific interpretations of claimed truths and limits of their understanding, they remain convinced that their belief system is the truth in essence.

There is a more fundamental question, however: What qualifies as truth? Or, reworded, what is required for the truth to be determined? The truthfulness of the belief system may be

different from whether one believes in the claims of a belief system. Nevertheless, it is a critical factor that supports their beliefs.

This article explores how Viktor Frankl's philosophy can shed light on the mechanisms of paradoxes or ethical conflicts of belief systems. I highlight two insights from Frankl's approach. First, Frankl's "dimensional ontology" opens a multi-tiered perspective for interpreting conflicts within unidimensional theories/perspectives. For example, Frankl's dimensional ontology allows one to reject supremacy claims of a specific psychotherapy, articulate the realm/boundaries of a theory, and allow various psychotherapies to co-exist and work together. Frankl accomplished this by rejecting the supremacy claim of his logotherapy. His balanced judgment of truth backs up his pluralistic approach. His spherical or multidimensional approach allows for a balanced judgment from multiple perspectives.

Frankl's perspective applies to ethical conflicts or paradoxes of belief systems. Frankl's spherical or dimensional approach can capture diverse forms of truth and render a balanced judgment when a belief system espouses an exclusive claim to supremacy in a one-dimensional approach with contradictory positions. It rejects any exclusive supremacy claim and allows multiple belief systems' co-existence or cooperative contributions. It makes it possible to respect the autonomy/integrity of each belief system and pursue harmonious co-existence and cooperation amongst various belief systems. It presents an open, inclusive approach instead of a closed, ideological framework.

Second, Frankl placed the primary locus of values and meanings on an individual's lived experiences (lived values) and presented a balanced approach to values and meaning. In paradoxical belief systems, values, meaning, and the transcendent capacities of love and conscience become belief system-dependent concepts. This exclusivity generates criteria for

judgment, and believers can use such criteria to devalue individuals who reject their beliefs.

While Frankl recognizes the role of a belief system, he rejects exclusive claims of supremacy by any group and the excessive dependency of values on a belief system. Within Frankl's dimensional ontology, everyone can incorporate value perspectives in a belief system according to his/her interpretive framework without excessive dependency.

This article highlights characteristics of Frankl's philosophy in contrast to paradoxical belief systems. An inclusive approach opens, allowing for authentic religiosity defined by everyone beyond discriminatory sectarianism, radical denominationalism, and fanaticism through logotherapy. While Frankl respected denominational faith, he rejected any exclusive supremacy claim. In other words, while he respected an individual's commitment to his/her denomination, he rejected denominationalism that strives for supreme claim over others. Frankl's perspective is consistent with his rejection of "reductionism," a philosophical position that unjustifiably reduces diverse phenomena to a single sphere based on an implicit exclusive supremacy claim of its truth. Frankl's philosophy can restore individual autonomy (freedom and responsibility) as a humane philosophy that allows individuals to thrive.

This article has two sections. The first analyzes the paradoxes/conflicts of belief systems and why and how they work. The second articulates how Frankl's approach sheds light on this complex problem. The article focuses on the thought process, values, and meaning from a philosophical/hermeneutic perspective. It does not deal with issues from psychological, sociological, or other perspectives.

Ethical Conflicts/Paradoxes of Belief Systems

The Ethical Conflicts/Paradoxes of a Belief System

Although belief systems can heal hearts and give hope to many, such systems also generate paradoxical phenomena. Specifically, belief systems can be both universal and exclusive. For example, belief systems often teach universal compassion for all people, inclusive of race, gender, and any other specific differences. When believers accept such teachings, they often see themselves as good and compassionate. While believers of one group can be kind and compassionate to those who do not challenge their belief system or its religious authority or legitimacy, they can demonize those who challenge the belief system or the religious authority of the group. Believers can label them as devils, heretics, and others. While they believe in having universal compassion for all, this belief has additional restrictions.

Relatedly, believers reject those who challenge the religious authority of the group, whether the authority rests with the leader or the truth claims of a belief system. This rejection can escalate to violence and other inhumane actions. Ironically, believers commit violence out of their devotion to the group with a sense of righteousness. Many belief systems enhance the conscience of believers, and so many believers are conscientious. They are often kind and compassionate to friends and other believers within their faith communities, and their conscience generally guides them to morally right actions. However, when it comes to those branded as heretics, their conscience appears to be muted or paralyzed. When individuals commit inhumane acts against others, their conscience appears silent.

In addition to the above paradoxes, when one accepts a belief system and joins the group, it can be challenging to change one's mind. Belief systems trap individuals, and an exit does not

exist. In part, the structure of belief systems reinforces an individual's adherence to a belief system. Many belief systems maintain a comprehensive structure of examples such as 1) a leader or an authoritative interpreter of a belief system; 2) doctrines, teachings, and theories; and 3) communities of believers. A belief sustains by its doctrinal or theoretical contents and communal or social relationships.

In some cases, financial reasons also play a role in sustaining adherence to a belief system. Therefore, even if a believer identifies questionable issues in one or two areas, other factors uphold a belief and the comprehensive structure act as a matrix for interpretation. Thus, changing a belief system entail changing one's paradigm, and it is far easier to stay within a paradigm than to give up and seek other alternatives. If you lived in a community of believers for a long time, your departure from the group means the loss of human relationships built over the years.

Turning to contradictory ideas within a belief system, mutually exclusive, incompatible truth claims within belief systems have survived centuries because, in principle, they are not testable definitively. In his efforts to articulate the demarcation of scientific and non-scientific knowledge, Karl Popper characterized science as a type of knowledge open to falsification. By its very nature, science is open to refutation; religious or quasi-religious knowledge is not. Non-scientific knowledge can always add ad hoc hypotheses against counterarguments and inconsistencies within a theory. Popper listed Marxism and Freudianism as such systems of thought and characterized them as pseudoscience or quasi-religious systems. Although his falsificationism could have been more solid, as shown through the history of the philosophy of science, his analysis of belief systems contains valuable insights.

Here, there is an underlying conviction in the truthfulness of the claims of a belief system. Human beings have a deep desire for authenticity. Believers hold that the claims of a belief system are valid, exclusive, and universal. This conviction in the truthfulness of a belief system stabilizes one's belief. Believers are often fixed on their beliefs and need help to be more flexible in their attitude. They selectively see evidence supporting and strengthening their beliefs but need help recognizing evidence challenging them. Perception, reasoning, and judgment are all carried out to avoid challenging one's belief system.

Criteria of Truth

One's acceptance of a belief system rests on a conviction in the truthfulness of the claims of that belief system, even when there are various paradoxes and mutually exclusive and logically incompatible truth claims. Therefore, one's adherence to a belief system despite its paradoxes/conflicts raises the question of what criterion determines truth.

In accepting a claim as true, there are four essential criteria or theories one may use in judging a truth claim: 1) correspondence between statements/claims and reality; 2) coherence within a given theory as well as with existing accepted claims; 3) practical/pragmatic effects of the claim; 4) experiences including existential transformative experience. These four theories, however, need to be completed in themselves.

For example, the correspondence theory of truth can check truth claims against reality. However, how does one confirm whether reality is actual? This theory can lead to an infinite regression. In a scientific discipline, each scientific community sets acceptable procedures, standards, and criteria for measuring reality, yet they are tentative and open to revision.

The coherence theory of truth checks a claim's logical consistency and coherence. Although conspiracy theories may have coherence and consistency, they are suspicious. The coherence of a claim is necessary, but more is needed.

Under a pragmatic/practical theory of truth, we can measure the truthfulness of a claim by examining a person's subsequent actions, changes to their character, and other positive contributions to society. If someone claims to have a revelation, we do not know whether that claim is a delusion or made up. However, we can measure the claim's truthfulness by its practical effects. Although this measure is not definitive, it can be one measure of the truthfulness of a claim.

Lastly, transformative experiences inform whether a claim is valid under an experiential-existential theory of truth. For example, when one has a unique experience, they experience it as a special event and may be convinced of the truthfulness of a claim. However, the human experience is finite and not sufficient for a claim to be a universal truth. One may have different experiences in that belief system if one joins a different group. Though experience is a good measure, it is not definitive.

No single criterion of truth is definitive, and the nature of the subject matter determines which criteria are primarily applicable. For example, coherence and constancy are primary in logic and pure mathematics. In psychotherapy, the practical effect of a theory may have greater weight as a measurement of the truthfulness of a theory.

Examining the truthfulness of claims reveals the limitations of any truth claim. It urges us to be flexible in our approach as our access to truth is necessarily limited and partial. Therefore, we must see an issue from multiple perspectives and make a balanced, integrated, and sound

judgment. However, the fixed attitudes of believers resulting from the loss of flexibility and balance in judgment since individuals who fall into a belief system may need to pay more attention to the criteria for judging foundational truths. For example, the claim that a belief system possesses an absolute, ultimate, and exclusive truth contradicts how human beings access truth as diverse phenomena—such a claim of exclusivity results from a failure to examine the criteria of truth-supporting belief.

Viktor Frankl's Multidimensional Approach to Truth and Values

Frankl's Dimensional Ontology and the Hermeneutic Sphere of the Individual

In psychotherapy, Frankl presented multiple dimensions (somatic/physical/physiological; psychological; neurological/spiritual) through which we can look at existing psychotherapies and their approaches in an open, broad manner. This approach allows one to reinterpret Freudian and other theories from a practical perspective while distancing dogmatic, reductionist truth claims; also, this approach allows individuals to incorporate the value perspectives of religions and other belief systems in their hermeneutic spheres. Frankl's dimensional approach allows for a holistic hermeneutic sphere, where neurological/physiological (somatic), psychological, and religious studies can contribute to an individual's interpretation. Frankl's approach is "multidimensional" because of its pluralist criteria of truth, made possible by his dimensional perspective.

A Multidimensional Approach

Viktor Frankl presents a balanced and integrated approach to a judgment of truth. His multidimensional approach is firmly grounded in his recognition of the diverse manifestations of truth and our limited access to truth.

First, Viktor Frankl recognizes the values of religion and respects the individual's choice of religious belief. Frankl rejects any exclusive claim of supremacy or even universality by any group. As Frankl (1988) points out, just as there is no superior language, there is no superior belief system and the possibility of errors and lies.

The enormous black hole contains symbols. Man is capable of creating symbols and a being in need of symbols. His languages are systems of symbols. So are his religions. What holds for languages is also true of religions. That is to say. Nobody is justified in claiming, out of a superiority complex, that one language is superior to another. It is possible in each language to arrive at the one truth—and equally, is it possible in language to err—and to lie (Frankl, 1988, p. 153).

Frankl's rejection of superiority claims results from his recognition of our limited access to truth. Although Frankl (1988) is open to the idea that truth is an aspect of deity, he clearly articulates the limitation of our access to truth.

One could say that in feeling close to the truth, we are justified to assume that truth is an aspect of deity. On a wall is the shield of Harvard University, and inscribed thereon is Veritas, meaning truth. A three-syllable word, Veritas can be interpreted as the total truth rather than the universal truth, for it is not accessible to everyone. Man must be satisfied with one single aspect of the whole truth. Such is also true of God, for whom truth is no more an aspect (Frankl, 1988).

Further, Frankl's recognition of the limitation of our access to truth relates to his multidimensional approach. Frankl illustrates this approach with an example of Joan of Arc, known as "The Maid of Orléans," a 15th-century heroine of France during the Hundred Years War. Upon hearing the voice of God and experiencing visions, she was canonized as a saint by

the Catholic Church in 1920. Frankl argues that she was a saint from a Catholic perspective, a heroine from the French perspective, and a schizophrenic from a psychiatric perspective. Frankl (1988) recognizes the validity of each characterization and rejects the primacy of one perspective over others. Frankl argues that her sainthood does not make her non-schizophrenic; her schizophrenia does not make her not a saint.

From the psychiatric point of view, the saint would have been diagnosed with schizophrenia just as Joan of Arc was "nothing but" schizophrenic. Dimensions beyond schizophrenia in such persons are not perceptible within the psychiatric realm. As soon as we follow her into the noological dimension and observe her theological and historical importance, it turns out that Joan of Arc is more than a person with schizophrenia. Her having schizophrenia in the psychiatry dimension does not detract from her significance in other dimensions. And vice versa. Even if we took it for granted that she was a saint, this would not change the fact that she also had schizophrenia.

Frankl's multidimensional approach embraces multiple perspectives and allows diverse characterizations of the same person or event.

Frankl (1988) presents his dimensional ontology's open, inclusive orientation in psychotherapy. He illustrates it using a diagram (figure 1; p. 23). A three-dimensional cone projected in horizontal and vertical dimensions appears as a circle and a rectangle. These two projections are contradictory; the cone's opening is invisible.

Frankl also points out the ambiguities in the projected images. Projecting a cylinder, cone, and sphere in the horizontal sphere, each appears as a circle. Using psychotherapy as an example, diagnostic symptoms may appear similar in different patients, but their etiologies can differ.

Accordingly, Frankl (1988) states, "The multidimensional etiology of neuroses requires what I would like to call a dimensional diagnosis. Therapy, too, must be multidimensionally oriented" (p. 28).

By dimensional ontology, Frankl means an inclusive, open perspective that consolidates and bridges multiple views using multiple theories. This approach is in sharp contrast from an exclusive, closed perspective. Referencing "Watsonian behaviorism, Pavlovian reflexology, Freudian psychoanalysis, and Adlerian psychology," Frankl (1988) points out that the multidimensional approach is built on recognizing those theories and attempts a broader, broader, inclusive framework of interpretation. "They are not nullified by logotherapy but rather overarched by it" (p. 26).

In his dimensional ontology, as Frankl illustrated using geometry, projecting an object to a "lower" dimension, the resulting shapes can contradict one another (rectangle and circle) and become ambiguous (a circle can be a cylinder, sphere, or cone). The multidimensional approach makes sense of apparent contradictions, and "the findings of these schools are reinterpreted and reevaluated by logotherapy – and rehumanized by it" (p. 26). Frankl notes that the designation of a dimension being "higher" or "lower" does not denote a value judgment. "A 'higher' dimension just means a more inclusive and encompassing dimension" (p. 26).

The multidimensional approach is open and inclusive in contrast with a closed, exclusive one. By contrast, reductionism tries to reduce diverse, complex phenomena to a single model. A theory is reductionist when it unjustifiably oversimplifies phenomena. Frankl (1988) criticizes reductionism as "a pseudoscientific approach" (p. 18) and cites Freudianism as an example (p. 19). He shows how Freudian reductionism reduces the human elements of love and conscience to the epiphenomena of desires.

Reductionism may interpret love as a mere sublimation of sex and conscience merely in terms of the superego. I contend that love is not a mere result of sex sublimation since love is a precondition. I offer that only to the extent that an "I" is lovingly directed toward a "Thou" is the ego capable of integrating the id, sexuality, and personality.

What underlies reductionism is a belief in the supremacy of the model that fails to recognize its limits. As Frankl noted, a scientific theory is necessarily unidimensional. Each theory determines facts from a specific perspective and interprets them within a specific framework of interpretation. For example, the measurements of electricity as 120 volts or 1 ampere are meaningful only in electromagnetic theory. Theory-laden data and knowledge have a hermeneutic limit, and the failure to recognize them deems the theory "pseudoscientific."

Frankl's multidimensional approach respects the autonomy of each discipline. Each discipline has standards for validating knowledge appropriate to the subject matter. Frankl's multidimensional approach accommodates multiple disciplines and theories in each discipline.

Although Frankl did not explicitly present his theory of truth, his dimensional ontology indicates a multidimensional approach, which implies the use of multiple theories in assessing truth. As his analysis of Joan of Arc indicates, he acknowledges multiple perspectives. Although multiple disciplines may render conflicting accounts and use different criteria for truth, an inclusive and open stance calls for a balanced judgment of truth using multiple theories.

As applied to belief systems, Frankl's multidimensional approach allows believers to examine the foundation of their conviction at a fundamental level. It presents the judgment of truth as a synthetic, balanced judgment. While believers honor perceived truth claims, they seldom examine the basis for this truth. Frankl's multidimensional approach provides an

inclusive, open space where believers can see the limits of their stance. There may not be a definitive way to help believers see their limitations, and Frankl's approach may maintain fixed attitudes. Nevertheless, the approach allows a new framework of interpretation.

Viktor Frankl's Lived Values

For some individuals, values are derived exclusively from a belief system. Believers derive meaning from the belief system, which defines values within a specific narrative, such as good and evil, right, and wrong, and others. Suppose values are derived exclusively from the belief system. In that case, believers can categorize those who do not accept a particular belief system as those who deny such values as love, virtue, and other human values. In other words, those who reject those values are categorized as anti-human and can be dehumanized, serving as the basis to justify violence against them.

Frankl challenges this extreme belief-centric value perspective by emphasizing lived values and identifying the primary locus of meaning and values as the individual instead of the belief system. Frankl's multidimensional approach views values from multiple perspectives. Values are, by their nature, multilayered phenomena. There are some common values, and there are also values unique to traditions and individuals. While each belief system provides a context for interpretation, values are empty until realized in an individual's life. In an interview with Huston Smith, a professor of world religions, asked Frankl if values can be teachable. Frankl (1988) answered that "values cannot be taught; values must be lived" (p. 87). The primary locus of values is neither what you believe nor in the fact of believing, but how you live. Frankl (2000) illustrates this using an example by an SS man in a Nazi concentration camp:

The head of the camp from which I was liberated was an SS man. After liberation, we heard what, up to then, only the camp physician (himself an inmate) knew.

This SS man had secretly spent considerable sums of his own money at the drug store in the nearby village, purchasing medications for the camp inmates. (pp. 102-03)

Frankl continues:

The story has a sequel. Jewish prisoners, after their liberation, hid this SS man from the American troops and told the commanding officer that they would deliver him only on condition that no harm would come to him. The American commander gave his word of honor, and the former inmates turned in the SS man. (p. 103)

What this SS man believed is irrelevant. His actions demonstrated who he was and how he manifested his values. Frankl's perspective of "lived values" presents one's life as the primary locus of values. Frankl (1988) points out that even if one loses their belief system, which some may see as the exclusive locus of values, one keeps the meaning of their life and the unique values generated. "However, even if all universal values disappeared, life would remain meaningful since the unique meanings remain untouched by the loss of traditions" (p. 64).

In Frankl's philosophy, respect for the individual's autonomy is indispensable to meaning and manifesting values. Believing in a belief system does not make life meaningful, and the meaning of life is lost if the individual's autonomy is lost. Frankl rejects "conformism" and "totalitarianism," which leads to an "existential vacuum." According to Frankl (2006), one can fall into an existential vacuum when "... he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism)" (p. 106).

As for the distinction between values and meaning, Joseph Fabry (2013) points out that Frankl developed this distinction over the years. Frankl used them synonymously in his early works, and in his later years, he defined values as "meaning universals." Fabry notes, "Meaning is 'what is meant,' he (Frankl: author) said, meant for you, in your present situation. It is specific, unique, and personal" (p. 48). Belief systems generally promote positive values. Individuals can adopt them into their framework of interpretation of their experiences, actions, and identities. Individual loss of moral autonomy entails the loss of meaning and the locus for values realization.

Self-Transcendence and the Individual

Frankl (2014) notes the importance of going beyond the self and serving others or a public cause. He calls this the "self-transcendence of human existence:

It denotes the fact that human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. (p. 110).

One may argue that total devotion and self-sacrifice to a belief system is an act of "self-transcendence." Whereas Frankl's thought respects individual autonomy as a precondition, in an abusive belief system, individuals become a means to an end. By contrast, Frankl emphasized the flourishing of the individual. Frankl (1988) presents three values in order to make life meaningful: "Meaning of life is composed of the second triad—creative, experiential, and attitudinal values" (p. 73). Ultimately, every individual has the freedom and responsibility to uniquely realize their values and meaning.

Frankl (1988) sees love and conscience as another manifestation of “self-transcendence”:

To give an example, let me take up two most human phenomena: love and conscience. These two are the most striking manifestations of another uniquely human capacity, the capacity of *self-transcendence*. Man transcends himself either toward another human being or toward meaning. Love is that capacity that grasps the other human being in his uniqueness. Conscience is that capacity that empowers him to seize the meaning of a situation in its very uniqueness. In the final analysis, meaning is unique, just like every person. Ultimately every person is irreplaceable and cannot be replaced in the life of loved ones.

Here, the ideas of love and conscience within some belief systems contrast Frankl's interpretation of love and conscience. For the former, love and conscience are confined within the belief system's values framework. In other words, the belief system sets the conditions for the conscience and the capacity to love; therefore, values are exercised by those accepting the belief system. For Frankl, love and conscience are the capacities to recognize each unique individual regardless of their belief system. Frankl (2000) recognizes religion as the manifestation of what he called the "will to ultimate meaning" (p. 153). His multidimensional approach respects unique manifestations of the divine in religions and the individual's choice of belief system. Nevertheless, he rejects any exclusive claim of superiority by a belief system, and the capacities of love and conscience transcend such belief systems.

Summary: Paradoxical Belief Systems and the Characteristics of Frankl's Philosophy

There are three key issues in the paradoxes of belief systems: 1) the locus of values and meanings, 2) the universalization of particulars, and 3) the dehumanization of love and

conscience. Applying Frankl's perspective to these paradoxes highlights some essential characteristics of Frankl's philosophy.

First, some believe their belief system is the sole locus of values and meanings. All values, such as good and evil, right, and wrong, love, loyalty, and others, stem from their belief system. This excessive reliance on the belief system may lead to the belief system becoming the standard upon which to judge whether individuals are worthy of consideration; those who reject the belief system are immoral. Further, this reliance on the belief system obscures the unique value of the individual.

By articulating the primary locus of meaning and values as the individual, Frankl rejects such extreme belief-dependent value perspectives. Frankl recognizes the role of belief systems and respects the individual choice of belief system. Nevertheless, by identifying the individual as the locus of meaning and values, Frankl's philosophy provides a balanced, multidimensional approach that can accommodate diverse belief systems.

Second, a belief system's exclusive claim of supremacy attempts to universalize particulars. Such claims generate a hierarchy of values by making the self the highest or ultimate standard. Exclusive supremacy claims, religious or otherwise, often need more scrutiny of the validity of truth claims. Frankl's multidimensional approach provides a flexible and balanced approach to a given phenomenon by applying multiple concepts of truth. In academic research, a multidimensional approach overarches diverse theories and disciplines and rejects any claim of supremacy.

Third, believers tend to confine love and conscience to a belief system. Frankl posits that love and conscience manifest in an individual's unique life and situations. If one loses this locus,

love, and conscience become abstract concepts. Frankl's philosophy remains present with each individual and recognizes that the primary locus of meaning and values lies in real individual lives.

Conclusion

Numerous belief systems continue to present conflicts/paradoxes, presenting the need for further philosophical, psychological, and sociological analyses. Frankl's philosophy highlights these paradoxes and challenges this complex field.

Frankl himself practiced a multidimensional approach. As a scientist, he clearly defined the boundaries and autonomy of logotherapy as a scientific discipline. While he respects religion, he rejects the denominationalization of logotherapy. Frankl (1988) articulates the difference between psychotherapy and religion:

Many writers in the field of logotherapy have pointed out that it is compatible with religion. However, logotherapy is not a Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish psychotherapy. Religious psychotherapy in the proper sense is inconceivable because of the essential difference between psychotherapy and on, which is a dimensional difference. (p. 143)

As a religious person himself, he pursued authentic religiosity beyond denominationalism. His multidimensional approach accommodates various religions and pursues an ultimate meaning. Though religious belief systems observe specific doctrines and traditions, Frankl (2011) offered a path toward authentic religiosity beyond denominationalism:

I admit that the concept of religion in its widest possible sense as it is here propounded goes far beyond the narrow concepts of God as they are promulgated

by some representatives of denominational religion. They often depict, not to say denigrate, God as a being who is primarily concerned with being believed in by the greatest possible number of believers and along the lines of a specific creed, at that. “Just believe,” we are told, “and everything will be okay.” But alas, not only is this order based on a distortion of a sound concept of deity, but even more important, it is doomed to failure: Obviously, there are certain activities that simply cannot be commanded, demanded, or ordered. (p. 150)

Frankl's philosophy offers flexibility and balance. His openness, however, is not an undisciplined laissez-faire relativism—his openness balances disciplinary rigor and the quest for truth. Frankl's openness allows him to capture diverse manifestations of truth in his quest for ultimate meaning.

From the perspective of hermeneutics, the conflicts and paradoxes of some belief systems result from the distortion of the individual's sphere of interpretation. Frankl's dimensional approach, presented by his dimensional ontology, opens a sphere of interpretation where each individual can build the self as the central sphere to integrate meaning and values.

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