Jean-Paul Sartre, Viktor E. Frankl and the Philosophy of Adult Education

Rauno Huttunen & Leena Kakkori, ECER 2016, 23 - 26 August, Dublin

Time: 24.8. 17:15-18:45
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Room: NM-F104
Chair: Ian Munday
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

- The Transcendence of the Ego, (La transcendance de l’ego 1934)
- Nausea, (La Nausée 1938)
- Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions, (Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions 1939)
- Being and Nothingness, (L’être et le néant 1943)
- Existentialism is Humanism, (L’Existentialisme est un humanisme 1946)
- Notebooks for an Ethics, (Cahiers pour une morale 1946-49)
- Materialism and Revolution, (Matérialisme et révolution 1946)
- What is Literature, (Qu’est-ce que la littérature ? 1947)
- Critique of Dialectical Reason, (Critique de la raison dialectique I-II 1960, 1985)
SARTRE: The Transcendence of the Ego
(La transcendance de l’ego, 1934)

Sartre claims that “the ego is not the owner of consciousness”. Sartre diverges from Husserl by stating that “the me” should not be sought in the states of un-reflected consciousness nor behind them. The me appears only with the reflective consciousness and the reflective intention. The I and the me are two aspects of ego and they constitutes the unity of infinite series of our reflected consciousnesses. Ego is transcendent unity of states, of actions and of qualities. Thus for Sartre there exist a consciousness and a transcendental ego. Two basic elements of philosophical (theoretical) humanism are present in this early work: Sartrean philosophy is 1) man-centered and 2) consciousness-centered.
SARTRE: Nausea
(La Nausée, 1938)

_Nausea_ is a philosophical novel where Sartre expresses many important themes of his existentialism; existential crisis, nausea or disgust towards existence, existential angst, existential freedom, alienation, search for meaning… _Nausea_ and Albert Camus’s _The Stranger_ are the most important novels of French existentialism.

“The Nausea is not inside me: I feel it out there in the wall, in the suspenders, everywhere around me. It makes itself one with the café, I am the one who is within it.”
SARTRE: Nausea (La Nausée, 1938)

“The radical humanist is a special friend of the civil servant. The so called ‘Left wing’
humanist’s chief concern is to preserve human values: he belongs to no party
because he doesn’t want to betray humanity as a whole ... He also loves cats, dogs,
all higher animals. The Communist writer has been loving men ever since the second
Five-Year Plan, he punishes because he loves ...The Catholic humanist, the late-
comer, the Benjamin, speaks of men with a wonderstruck air. What a beautiful fairy
tale, he says, is the humblest life, that of a London docker, of a girl in a shoe factory!
He has chosen the humanism of the angels ...Those are principal types. But there are
others, a swarm of others: the humanist philosopher who bends over his brothers like
an elder brother who is conscious of his responsibilities; the humanist who loves men
as they are, the one who loves them as they ought to be, the one who wants to save
them with their consent, and the one who wants to save them in spite of themselves,
the one who wants to create myths, and the one who is satisfied with old myths, the
one who loves man for his death, the one who loves man for his life, the happy
humanist who always knows what to say to make people laugh, the gloomy
humanist whom you usually meet at wakes. They all hate one another: as individuals,
of course, not as men.”
Sartre adopts the concept of human reality (réalité-humaine) in his book *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1939). Here, Sartre focuses his philosophy on the study of man and his situation in a Heideggerian manner: ‘... a truly positive study of man in situation would have first to have elucidated the notions of man, of the world, of being-in-the-world, and of situation’. We can understand Sartre’s novels and plays from 1930s and 1940s as an existentialist illustration of a human reality. The novel *Nausea*, the collection of short stories *The Wall*, and the play *No Exit* created an impression that Sartrean existentialism is pessimistic, absurd, and anti-humanistic. Sartre’s philosophy can be described as somewhat pessimistic before the lecture ‘*Existentialism is a Humanism*’.
SARTRE: Being and Nothingness
(L'être et le néant, 1943)

Sartre states that a human is undefined because to begin with a human is nothing. A human is nothing until he becomes what he makes of himself. A human is a kind of self-filling nothingness. A human has existential freedom and that is for Sartre the first principle of existentialism. Following Heidegger’s terminology Sartre calls a being whose existence comes before its essence as ‘human reality’ – ‘réalité-humaine’ [Heidegger’s Dasein].
SARTRE: Being and Nothingness
(L'être et le néant, 1943)

Some basic ontological concept in B&N:

- Negation (la négation)
- Nothingness (le néant)
- Non-being (non-être)
- Being-in-itself (être-en-soi) -> Being-for-itself (être-pour-soi) = Absolute event! (événement absolu)
- Facticity (facticité)
- Intentionality and consciousness
- Being-with, ”They” and “The Others”
SARTRE: Being and Nothingness
(L'être et le néant, 1943)

The For-itself, in fact, is nothing but the pure nihilation of the In-itself; it is like a hole of being at the heart of Being.

—— Jean-Paul Sartre ——
SARTRE: Being and Nothingness  
(L'être et le néant, 1943, Eng. 1966)

For Sartre, there is no escape from existential freedom. A human is abandoned to the world, and there is no determinism which would limit human freedom. A human is determined by the concrete situation, but he still has existential freedom. A human cannot find anything to depend on, neither within nor outside of himself. The only thing a human can find out is that he is without any excuses: “Someone will say, ‘I did not ask to be born.’ This is a naïve way of throwing greater emphasis on our facticity… I am responsible for everything… I am abandoned in the world… in the sense that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant.” (p. 710)
“To say that the for-itself has to be what it is… to say that in it existence precedes and conditions essence or inversely according to Hegel, that for it ‘Wesen ist was gewesen ist’ – all this is to say one and same thing: to be aware that man is free. Indeed by the sole fact I am conscious of the causes which inspire my action, these causes are already transcendent objects for my consciousness; they are outside. In vain shall I seek to catch hold of them. I escape them by my very existence. I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free. To the extent that the for-itself [human, RH] wishes to hide its own nothingness from itself and to incorporate the in-itself [thing, RH] as its true mode of being, it is trying to also to hide its freedom from itself.” (p. 567)
“Each human reality is at the same time a direct project to metamorphose its own For-itself into an In-itself-For-itself, a project of the appropriation of the world as a totality of being-in-itself, in the form of a fundamental quality. Every human reality is a passion in that it projects losing itself so as to found being and by the same stroke to constitute the In-itself which escapes contingency by being its own foundation, the Ens causa sui, which religions call God. Thus the passion of man is the reverse of that of Christ, for man loses himself as man in order that God may be born. But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion.” (p. 784)
“Take a grouping of people in the Place Saint-Germain. They are waiting for a bus at a bus stop in front of the church... These people — who may differ greatly in age, sex, class, and social milieu — realise, within the ordinariness of everyday life, the relation of isolation, of reciprocity and of unification (and massification) from outside which is characteristic of, for example, the residents of a big city in so far as they are united though not integrated through work, through struggle or through any other activity in an organised group common to them all. To begin with, it should be noted that we are concerned here with a plurality of isolations: these people do not care about or speak to each other and, in general, they do not look at one another; they exist side by side alongside a bus stop. At this level, it is worth noting that their isolation is not an inert statute; rather, it is actually lived in everyone’s project as its negative structure. In other words, the isolation of the organism, as the impossibility of uniting with Others in an organic totality, is revealed through the isolation which everyone lives as the provisional negation of their reciprocal relations with Others. This man is isolated not only by his body as such, but also by the fact that he turns his back on his neighbor.”
After the war Sartre considers existentialism as optimistic and active. Existentialism is humanism both in the practical and the philosophical sense of the term. If we accept the existential conditions that God does not exist, that human existence comes before its essence, that humanity is abandoned, that a human is condemned to be free, that the destiny of man lies within himself, that man has no other hope than his own action, and that there is no pre-established morality, the result is that a human simply is and human life is possible. A human is undefined because to begin with a human is nothing. A human is nothing until he becomes what he makes of himself. A human is a kind of self-filling nothingness. A human has existential freedom and that is for Sartre the first principle of existentialism. Sartre calls a being whose existence comes before its essence as ’human reality’ [réalité-humaine].
SARTRE: Existentialism is humanism

(L‘Existentialisme est un humanisme, 1946)

- Because existence precedes essence, one is morally responsible for what one is and what one does for others. One is not responsible for only oneself but instead for all humans. Our responsibility concern mankind as a whole. No God or society can take away this existential responsibility. Every time one makes a choice, one is responsible for oneself and for all the people because one is creating a certain image of a man. When one commits oneself to something, one acts at the same time as a kind of legislator who decides for the whole mankind. This human reality causes such existential feelings as anguish, abandonment and despair. If one tries to deny this freedom and responsibility, one is guilty of self-deception which causes bad faith.
How do I know which actions are right and which are wrong? Sartre’s answer is: “You are free, therefore choose—that is to say, invent. No rule of general morality can show you what you ought to do: no signs are vouchsafed in this world”. Values do not exist before humans create them. There is no foundation for values apart from human freedom and action. Sartre promotes the ethics of action and self-commitment. Although there is no separate kingdom of values, existentialism does recognize the dignity of man. A human is not an object or a thing.
SARTRE: Existentialism is humanism

"when you choose for yourself, you choose for all mankind"

Jean-Paul Sartre *1905 - 1980*
Existential humanism considers man as being always outside of himself, because man is all the time projecting and losing himself beyond himself. Man is always pursuing transcendent aims (aims that transcend his present being) and he is always in the state of self-surpassing. Sartre thinks that this relation of transcendence is constitutive for subjectivity. Existentialism is humanism because it reminds people that there is no other legislator apart from humans and that in situations of abandonment humans must look for themselves beyond their present selves. A human is abandoned in the world, and he has to make choices in concrete situations with others being-there in flesh and blood. A human is his own master, but he is responsible for others, and no one can free him from this existential freedom and responsibility. Sartre demands to respect your own and others existential freedom.
“To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

NELSON MANDELA
What is the point of living? What should I do with my life? What morality should I choose? What ethical stance should I take? These are existential questions that every adult person deliberates at some point in their life. Sociologists Anthony Giddens and Patrick Baert call those moments as existential moments. Many seek some adult education program at the time of existential moments. Sartre's illustration of human reality [Dasein] corresponds to a person's inner feeling in those moments, but Sartre's does not provide either consolation or hints for resolution. Sartre was fully aware of these deficiencies in his existentialism and in his writing in late 1940th he addressed those problems. I am referring to his text *Notebooks for an Ethics, What is Literature* (1947) and *Materialism and Revolution* (1947).
Viktor E. Frankl 1905 – 1997

M.D. (1930), Ph.D. (1949), Dr.h.c.mult.

- Founder of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis (LTEA)
- Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry at the University of Vienna Medical School.
- 1940-42 director of the Neurological Department of the Rothschild Hospital
- During World War II he spent 3 years in various concentration camps, including Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Dachau.
- 1946-70 he was director of the Vienna Neurological Polyclinic.
- Visiting Professor at Harvard and at universities in Pittsburgh, San Diego and Dallas.
- Received 29 honorary doctorates from universities in all parts of the world
- The American Psychiatric Association bestowed upon him the Oskar Pfister Award.
Man’s Search for meaning - ...trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen - Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager (1946)

Viktor E. Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for survival. Between 1942 and 1945 Frankl was held in four different camps, including Auschwitz, while his parents, brother, and pregnant wife perished. Based on his own experience and the experiences of those he treated in his practice.

At the time of Frankl's death in 1997, Man's Search for Meaning had sold more than 10 million copies in twenty-four languages.
Viktor E. Frankl

- *Psychotherapy and Existentialism. Selected papers on Logotherapy*. (1967)
Frankl called logotherapy as “education toward responsibility.” That means the responsibility for living one’s life authentically, in other words, meaningfully (Frankl 1986, p. 14). Logotherapy can be understood as method to heal somebody who has mental illness. However, this definition is correct but too narrow, because it loses the most essential idea of the logotherapy. Logotherapy is a lifelong process to grow, to learn, and to find meaning of life to be a human being.

Logotherapy is different from psychoanalysis, because the methods of logotherapy are less retrospective and less introspective. It focuses on the future of a human’s life instead of past – it searches for the meaning of life. The meaning of life and being a human being are about “to serve a cause or love a person” (Frankl 2006, p. 14).
“Let me explain why I have employed the term ‘Logotherapy’ as the name for my theory. Logos is a Greek word which denotes ‘meaning.’ Logotherapy, or, as it has been called by some authors, ‘The Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy,’ focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such a meaning. According to logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a will to meaning in contrast to the pleasure principle (or, as we could also term it, the will to pleasure) on which Freudian psychoanalysis is centred, as well as in contrast to the will to power on which Adlerian psychology, using the term ‘striving for superiority,’ is focused.” (p. 104)
The meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment. To put the question in general terms would be comparable to the question posed to a chess champion: "Tell me, Master, what is the best move in the world?" There simply is no such thing as the best or even a good move apart from a particular situation in a game and the particular personality of one's opponent. The same holds for human existence. One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.
Logotherapy and religion

- All human lives are precious and unique. Frankl speaks a lot about the spiritual dimension of human being. He sees that it is the highest dimension of human being. Although, he thinks that religion is everybody’s private thing and that the logotherapy does not make any difference between different religious. You can be Muslim, Christian, Jew (as Frankl was), or atheist and still you have this highest spiritual dimension.

- “Logotherapy, as a secular theory and medical practise, must restrict itself to factual statements, leaving to the patient the decision as to understand his own being-responsible: Whether along the lines of religious beliefs or agnostic convictions. Logotherapy must remain available for everybody….in cases of atheistic patients and usable in the hands of atheistic doctors.” (Frankl 2000, pp. 23–24.)
Frankl’s concept of human

- Human being has three dimensions:
  - physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions.

- "within reference of logotherapy, spiritual does not have primarily religious connotation but refers to the specifically human dimensions."
  (Man serch for meaning. 104)

- Spirituality means human’s ability to do and express highest things in human life, like beauty, art, truth, and goodness. Spirituality can also include religion but not necessary.

- Frankl developed Dimensionalontology, which "enables us to grasp the simultaneity of man’s wholeness and unity on one hand ans, on the other the difference between bodily, psychic and, mental processeses."
  (Frankl 1978, 131.)

- He thought, that the dimensiona onotology might give some answers to the problem of cartesian dualism and to the problem of freedom of will.
Dimensionalontology
Viktor E. Frankl’s logotherapy

- Logotherapy is based on an explicit philosophy of life.
- Logotherapy is based on three fundamental assumptions which form a chain of interconnected links:

  1. Freedom of Will

     Freedom of will makes us human beings. According to the logotherapy, humans are not fully subject to conditions but are basically free to decide and capable of taking their stance toward internal and external conditions.

  2. Will to meaning

     The will to meaning must be understood distinctively from the will to power by Nietzsche and the will to pleasure by Freud. The will to meaning can be seen as the primary motivation of humans but not as a negative force.

  3. Meaning of life

     Life has meaning under all circumstances, even the most miserable ones. Thus, all human lives are precious and unique.
Our main motivation for living is our will to find meaning in life. According to Frankl (2000, p. 133): “We can discover this meaning in life in three different ways: (1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering” and that “everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.”

The meaning of life has nothing to do about your age, conditions, health, or abilities. It is important to realize that logotherapy does not declare or offer some general meanings of life. Rather, the question is to help people to achieve the openness and flexibility that will enable them to shape their day-to-day lives in a meaningful manner.
Frankl and Sartre

The individual is responsible for his/her attitude to all the circumstances of his/her life, and in this way, it is the individuals unique freedom and responsibility to create meaning in every situation. Like Sartre, Frankl dismisses the notion of a pre-ordained meaning or purpose in life:

'Man is not fully conditioned and determined but rather determines himself whether he gives in to conditions or stands up to them. Man is ultimately self-determining. He always decides what his existence will be, what he will become in the next moment' (Frankl, 2000: 119).
Frankl and Sartre

- Frankl addresses that the most valued idea what Sartrean/Heideggerian existentialism has thought us is that human being is not a thing among other things but something quite else: “But a human being is no thing. This no-thingess, rather than nothingness, is the lesson to learn from existentialism” (Frankl 1988, p. 6).

- ’. . .the 'to what' of all responsibleness must necessarily be prior to the responsibleness itself. What I feel that I ought to do, or ought to be, could never be effective if it were nothing but an invention of mine-- rather than a discovery. Jean-Paul Sartre believes that man can choose and design himself by creating his own standards. However, to ascribe to the self such a creative power . . . is it not even comparable to the fakir trick? The fakir claims to throw a rope into the air, into the empty space, and claims a boy will climb up the rope. It is not different with Sartre when he tries to make us believe that man "projects" himself . . . into nothingness." (2000 p. 58)
Existential vacuum

Ever more patients complain of what they call an "inner void,“ and that is the reason why I have termed this condition the "existential vacuum. In contradistinction to the peak-experience so aptly described by Maslow, one could conceive of the existential vacuum in terms of an "abyss-experience.“ (Frankl. 2000 p. 83)

After having shown the beneficial impact of meaning orientation, I turn to the detrimental influence of that feeling of which so many patients complain today, namely, the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives. They lack the awareness of a meaning worth living for. They are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called the “existential vacuum.” (Frankl. 2014)
Noogenic Neuroses

Frankl uses existential frustration’ to refer to “(1) ‘existence’ itself, i.e., the specifically human mode of being; (2) the ‘meaning’ of existence; and (3) the striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence” (93).

‘Existential frustration’ can also result in ‘noogenic neuroses’ which contrasts ‘psychogenic neuroses’. “Noogenic neuroses have their origin not in the psychological but rather in the ‘noological’ (from the Greek ‘noos’ meaning mind) dimension of the human existence” denoting “anything pertaining to the ‘spiritual’ core of man’s personality”. Frankl stress that ‘spiritual’ “does not have a primarily religious connotation but refers to the specifically human dimension” (93) which arises out of human’s aspiration for a meaningful existence as a spiritual issue by treating the frustration for such an existence. Noogenic neuroses emerges from conflicts between various values rather than the conflicts between drives and instincts as propounded by Freud and Adler. (Rohan Savarimuthu)
Noogenic neuroses do not emerge from conflicts between drives and instincts but rather from conflicts between various values; in other words, from moral conflicts, or, to speak in a more general way, from spiritual problems. Among such problems, existential frustration often plays a large role.

It is obvious that in noogenic cases the appropriate and adequate therapy is not psychotherapy in general but rather logotherapy; a therapy, that is, which dares to enter the spiritual dimension of human existence. In fact, logos in Greek means not only “meaning” but also “spirit.”

Spiritual issues such as man's aspiration for a meaningful existence as well as the frustration of this aspiration, are both dealt with by logotherapy in spiritual terms. They are taken sincerely and earnestly instead of being traced back to unconscious roots and sources, thus being dealt with merely in instinctual terms.

Frankl 2014