

Karl T. Jaspers and Viktor E. Frankl: Compared Thoughts of Two Psychiatrist

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Abstract – In reflecting on existence Jaspers and Frankl, each in their own way think, explain, and analyze the concept of existence. While Jaspers says that existence can be explained in particular in limit situations and existential communication, Frankl says that the existence can be interpreted during the life giving on the importance of what is existentially. Based on the read scriptures we are concluding that Jaspers influenced Frankl's thought. In their minds we find similar ideas, which the authors named in a different way, sometimes with slight differences, but the differences are obvious as when it comes to understanding and finding meaning, etc. Both speak of spiritual dimension, difficult and limit situations of life, existence, of responsibilities, psychotherapy, meaning of life, etc. Jaspers and Frankl were botch psychiatrists, and it can be shown that they base their won ideas on a long practice, although they have different approaches. Jaspers in his approach emphasizes existential dimension, while Frankl explicitly emphasizes the importance of spiritual dimension in human life. The correspondence between these two authors are also points on reciprocal understanding their views and ideas. While Frankl acts and thinks in view of practical application, Jaspers is interested primarily in philosophical consistency of his conception.

Keywords: clarification of existence, existential analysis, meaning, logotherapy, psychotherapy, spirit

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Introduction

The topic addressed in this article presents both psychological and philosophical concepts. Both Karl Theodor Jaspers and Viktor Emil Frankl have in fact left a legacy of deep thought which can currently also be valid in many respects and some scientific work [1-3] have already compared specific topics which

bring them together. Primarily in the case of the writings by Frankl there are diverse similarities with the concepts comprised in the thoughts presented by Jaspers, which accounts for the idea behind our research.

Karl. T. Jaspers (1883-1969), was initially a psychiatrist and subsequently a philosophy professor in Heidelberg and in Basel, in his work he claims that man is capable of making decisions about himself. Man is a postulate, but he is able to shape his own life, since, facing the extreme situations with his eyes wide open, he passes continuously from a possible existence to a real existence. A man

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is in fact much more than he can know about himself.

Viktor E. Frankl (1905-1997), a logotherapist and an existential analyst, the founder of the third school of psychotherapy in Vienna, writes on his having found the meaning of life in helping the others to find the meaning of their life. Through his inexhaustible work he is trying to find the way to help man who, yearning for the meaning and pushed by the will to find a meaning, is looking for an answer to fundamental questions in his life to be able to dedicate it to something or someone.

We commence by saying that due to the fact that Jaspers and Frankl were mutually aware of each other's opinions, Frankl had been influenced by Jaspers. He confirmed it personally in his first letter to Jaspers. Moreover, he had been influenced also by other philosophers with whom he shares several aspects of his thoughts (most of them being existentialists).

We will especially consider the following: explanation of existence and existential analysis, the perception of meaning according to Jaspers and Frankl, the spiritual aspect and the spirit, the limit situations and the tragic triad, the concept of psychotherapy. Towards the end of this article, before presenting the correspondence between Frankl and Jaspers, we will attempt to highlight, in a systematic way, both the common points and the divergences present in the thought of the two authors. Through presentation of their correspondence, we will also present a comment on a letter by Frankl and on a letter by Jaspers, in order to provide a more comprehensive insight into their content, against the backdrop of all the topics addressed in this article.

In order to be able to compare Jaspers' thought and Frankl's thought, we primarily focused on the readings of original texts by the two authors and we also considered the secondary sources, especially the book by Anette Suzanne Fintz entitled *Die Kunst der Beratung, Jaspers's Philosophie in Sinn-orientierter Beratung*. In some cases the common points and the divergences between Jaspers and Frankl are evident, yet in others a major effort is required to reveal and compare them.

Acquaintance Between Viktor E. Frankl and Karl T. Jaspers

In addition to the letters by Frankl and Jaspers, the fact that Frankl and his wife visited Jaspers in Basel in spring of 1961 has also been confirmed. Hence, Frankl reminded in a paragraph „*When I paid him a visit in Basel, Karl Jaspers stated: "Mr Frankl, I know all your books, yet the one on concentration camps (and he showed it to me in his library) is one of the few great books of mankind"*[4]. Consequently, Jaspers was acquainted with the books by Frankl which in turn were influenced by Jaspers' thought, as had been stated by Frankl in his letter.

The events that occurred in the life of both Jaspers and Frankl had a huge impact on their thoughts. Both had worked in psychiatric clinics from their youth, where they faced the reality which reached the depths of human experience – pain, guilt, death, etc. Both strived to *explain and elaborate on* this reality through concepts of the current existential philosophy. Furthermore, Frankl, being Jewish, was taken to concentration camps together with his wife and it is then that he experienced what is *homo patiens* more than ever before. On the other hand, Jaspers was married to a Jewish woman and, being an associate at Heidelberg University, after having witnessed the suspension of his Jewish col-

leagues who were forbidden to teach at university, moved to Basel in 1937, only to return to Germany in 1945. It would also be interesting to further elaborate on the concept of collective guilt in this two men who, after having suffered during the Second World War, explicitly wrote on collective guilt. Nevertheless, in this article we will not address this issue.

It is certain that both Jaspers and Frankl have left a huge legacy to human thought and have exerted an immense influence on scientists who have been acquainted with their thinking. We have focused only on several aspects of their thought and have attempted to elaborate on the fundamental points.

Legacy of Philosophical Thought in Frankl's Writing

Which philosophical thought had the greatest impact on Frankl cannot explicitly be deduced from his writing. Nevertheless, philosophers such as Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers and Martin Buber, as well as the Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger and the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel had the greatest influence on Frankl [5]. We can also state with certainty that existentialists Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers are the philosophers whose existentialist concepts definitely do permeate Frankl's books.

Frankl himself wrote: „*Those who are truly great, those who inspire me, even though they were entitled to criticise me, were forgiving, were able to see beyond the inadequacy of my efforts and discern positive aspects behind them. That was the case not only with Martin Heidegger, but also with Ludwig Binswanger, Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel*“ [6]. Irrespective of the fact that Frankl founded and had been striving to establish logotherapy and existential analysis on ontological and

anthropological grounds, he personally did not undertake the task to provide man with a philosophical orientation, as he opted for a spiritual treatment based on scientific findings and the thought of the contemporary existential philosophy. What he really cares about is the welfare of man.

Clarification of Existence (Jaspers) and Existential Analysis (Frankl)

If one is aiming to follow the thought of Pareyson [7] and other authorities in the world of existential philosophy, one can state that the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard at the conceptual level had a significant influence on existential philosophy of Jaspers. Jaspers is interested in the issue of the essence of man and is aware of the fact that it is not possible to provide an explicit answer to this question. In his *General Psychopathology* he declared that „*a fundamental concept which could lead us to understand an individual is not known, nor is there a theory which would entirely objectify their reality*“ [8]. For this reason Jaspers writes that it is possible to provide only one clarification of existence. Man is a possible existence which manifests itself by acting in the world. The clarification of existence is provided through a thought which clarifies existence and becomes increasingly closer to its true self in extreme situations and in existential communication.

Concerning the concept of *existence* which is found in Frankl's thought, we can state that he took this concept from Heidegger, albeit not in the Heideggerian sense (the category of human „*being there*“, the fear, the cure, the planning, the thrownness). Frankl uses this term as an adverb, writing not what existence is, but what is existential, i.e. identifying its fundamental features and defining existential analysis. Striving to define what existential is,

Frankl stated that the spiritual, the freedom and responsibility are fundamental features of human existence. The spiritual aspect of man, the freedom and the responsibility help man to explain his existence throughout during his lifetime. The term existential analysis is aiming to define the manner in which man reacting to the tasks allocated to him by life itself is able to live this very life in a meaningful manner. It does not undertake the task to make substantial changes in a person's life, but it is striving to help man to live his life responsibly „to take it in his own hands“ during his everyday life. The anthropological concept of Frankl's thought is characterized by the „will to find the meaning“ of man.

A common point between Jaspers and Frankl is primarily in the persuasion that existence cannot be defined. Jaspers claims that existence can only be *clarified* [9], while Frankl stated that existence can be *explained* [10] throughout lifetime. According to both of them, man is always more than what he is actually going through in his life. Moreover, the difference between clarification of existence and existential analysis has to be pointed out, since the former is a clarification of existence, while the latter is the „clarification of the meaning“ [1]. While Frankl is interested in providing an answer to the question on *for what and for whom (Wozu)* man lives, Jaspers is interested in the question through what and how (*Wodurch*) man lives [1]. Nevertheless, both of them believe the way towards the existence of man, achievement of existence and a possibility to find the meaning is through decisive action (*Entschlossenheit*). Man is not a passive being, but an active one. For Jaspers the meaning of life is primarily through decisive action. He does not believe the meaning of life is in one thing or in one purpose which needs to be accomplished, but it is rather in

integral action: man discovers the meaning through decisions and actions [11]. Consequently, according to Jaspers, the meaning cannot be a thing outside man.

Divergent Concepts of Meaning in the Thought of Jaspers and Frankl

Upon reading of books by Frankl, one often encounters the assertion that man is living and needs a meaning to his life. The meaning needs to be found by man himself and it is presented to him as already existent and present. On the other hand, in Jaspers' writing, man is fulfilled and finds a meaning by living and clarifying his existence. Man, deciding and acting, finds a meaning. This is the point which distinguishes Jaspers and Frankl [1]. According to Frankl every situation has a meaning, irrespective of its recognition, yet it is definitely found in a beyond-sense or meaning beyond the meaning. Through a spiritual dimension, man is capable of providing an answer to this meaning. The meaning can be found, nor constructed, stated Frankl.

Both Frankl and Jaspers are convinced that the issue of meaning is not an issue to which you can provide scientific answers, following the logic or based on experiments. Existential questions cannot be considered from a scientific point of view. The reason helps man to orientate himself in the world and also to grasp the situation. According to Jaspers, finding a meaning in a situation is a kind of clarification of existence and it is not possible to interpret it from an impartial point of view. Man who grasps the existence perceives life as a duty for which he is personally responsible. The perception of meaning as something of value is in general permanent, Jaspers believes it is *an image of the world (Gebause)* [12]. This *image of the world* could only prevent man from realisation of

a real existence during the limit situations. Jaspers does not deny existence of transcendence of which, according to Frankl, there is a beyond-sense, a meaning beyond meaning, yet he does not believe in the idea that transcendence could be defined through scientific concepts.

The reality becomes meaningful from the decisions reached by man. *“Being decisive”* implies dedication to a selected meaning, which is not evidenced by chance, but rather through a choice made during the present life. Hence, meaning is connected with the issue of decision, rather than with the answers to questions posed by life. According to Jaspers, man is a being who decides and it is through decisions he makes that he finds the meaning in everyday situations of his life.

Spiritual Dimension (Frankl) and the Spirit (Jaspers)

According to Frankl, it is primarily through spiritual dimension that man is capable of being open towards the world and towards others and hence transcend the psychophysical determinism; it is something specifically human. Striving to define the spiritual dimension, Frankl elaborates on the concepts connected with the spirit of Heidegger (*Eigentlichkeit des Menschen; ontisch-ontologisch*), of Scheler (*Prinzip des Geistes*) and of Plessner (*exzentrische Positionalität des Menschen*). The spiritual dimension is the dimension with which man is always oriented towards something. Consequently, the spiritual dimension is something personal and dynamic. Through it man is always different from non-human beings who do not have the capacity to exploit all the possibilities in their lives. In addition to the stated capacity, man also has the capacity of self-detachment (humour and heroism are referred to human capacity of self-

detachment) [13] and self-transcendence, two fundamental features of logotherapy.

Aiming to explain the Jaspersian concept of the spirit, we will commence from his division of reality which is quadruple. He stated that matter, life, soul and spirit are heterogeneous forms of objectivity of reality [14]. By their nature (matter, life, soul and spirit) are not objects, but they are rather worlds within the world, each of them achieving an internal coherence. The tendency aiming to eliminate the rifts (between them), as well as to consider one of these realities as authentic, compared with which the others are unreal or nothing else but its product and combination, is founded by reality itself. Matter is still-life which can be comprehended quantitatively. Life is a totality which transforms continuously, is born and subsequently dies. Soul, as an experience gone through by „being“ is the inner being or conscience. Spirit is thought and the self-conscious objective project (by itself spirit comprises only of ideas, its reality is objectivated in communication which is expressed through language, actions and facts). Among them the spirit is the supreme capacity of man who assumes matter, life and souls as antecedent.

“The spirit is being there and movement in time and in spatial individuals, it is a star for itself, and hence, even if real, is free and historical” [14]. To close within itself is contrary to its very nature; the spirit has the type of freedom which is achieved through self-conscience in the knowledge and in participation in ideas and it is a premise and a condition required for existential freedom. In its “being” it depends of another “being”, in its *peculiarity* it remains original [14]. The spirit, as we have already noted, is a premise and condition required for existential freedom. In other words, man remains free primarily through spirit; *the pos-*

sible existence is achieved through the spirit. To go towards the other, to open up are inherent features of the spirit, which does not want to be closed within itself. Both Jaspers and Frankl see in the spiritual dimension of man the capacity to remain free irrespective of influences; both are convinced that thanks to it an ill man has the possibility to distance himself from his very self and assume a stance towards his illness; according to them, the spirit can never fall ill.

The peculiarity of Jaspersian concept is that the spirit is always “*moving*” and only in this way it can be visible and comprehensible. The *possible existence* (man as *being there*) is achieved by actions in the world and the spirit is realized in this manner, as well. If the spirit represents the supreme capacity of man, the supreme task of the spirit is to move towards the limit situations (death, pain, guilt, the struggle) with eyes wide open.

In Frankl’s thought the spiritual dimension can be realized specifically when man assumes attitude values living the *tragic triad*, or when man is either experiencing guilt, or pain or approaching death.

On the other hand, Jaspers speaks of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of spirit starting from his reality, explaining the possibility of a tripartition of the spirit (*Dreigliederung des Geistes*) providing that the spirit finds its own fulfilment in “*the future which remains always the future (indefinite), the present (fulfillment) or in an implemented process (infinitude). On the road towards the indefinite, the spirit prevails in a single scientific research over binding structure, hence in the finalized action and in aspiration to power. It reaches its fulfilment in a possible aesthetic conclusion, in the creation and in enjoyment of works of art, in beautiful moments and in each fullness of the present. It reaches infinitude in the completed process as a way*

which, accomplished in the reality of every instant, is not acquainted with calm” [14].

Considering Jaspersian tripartition of the spirit, we can draw a parallel with Frankl’s thought on the spiritual dimension. Also for Jaspers, as well as for Frankl, man with spiritual dimension can find a value (Frankl) or satisfaction (Jaspers) in what he has done in his life (past – *infinitude*), in what he is doing in the present (values of production and experience) or in being oriented towards the projected future based on a specific meaning (Frankl) or in a finalized action or aspirations to power (Jaspers). The specific feature of the spirit is the fact that it is not linked either with time or with place.

Moreover, according to Jaspers, the participation in *ideas of the spirit (Ideen des Geistes)* and the communication with *existence in its singularity (Existenz als Einzelner)* are the two steps which are fundamental in the research of the sciences of the spirit [14]. The second step (the first step would be to represent adequately the ideas in their own objectivity. We will focus solely on the second step, since this is of particular relevance for our article), significant for the science of the spirit („*Sciences of the spirit are the historical movement of the spirit, which is never concluded, in the historical conscience of oneself*“) [14] which consists in the listening, in the world governed by ideas, the existence in its singularity is the let oneself be captivated by the word. It is always a specific duty, never universal: its implementation is one of the most fascinating things.

Currently man, while striving to comprehend, is not in the least focused on listening. “*Hence, it occurs that the language of the person speaking is immediately translated into categories of someone who listens and this is misinterpreted, being entrusted to contexts which originally did not belong to it or which were not the idea behind it. Resorting to*

the history of philosophy implies to commence listening to the language and be searching for the poverty which allows the word spoken by another person to reach its destination without the previously described misinterpretations, which would make the dialogue obvious and the monologue of the listener with oneself dominant" [14]. Consequently, the preparedness to listen to another person requires intellectual poverty which facilitates the comprehension of another person with empathy, avoiding the mistake of imposing them our perspectives which may solely impoverish a genuine deep communication. Being able to listen to another person in its uniqueness, as we have previously seen, is, according to Jaspers, one of the most fascinating things [14].

In fact, the essence of the science of the spirit in its deepest sense, which during the genuine scientific research, puts at stake the entire personality, lies primarily in the will which pushes the existence to communicate with the existences nearby. The science of the spirit opens up the space to the existence which is present in its unrecognizability, during the vastest extension of its research and tension towards the greatest possible plenitude [14]. It is never possible to comprehend the existence in its uniqueness. The other "being there" remains an unconditional openness. It is not possible to objectify another, to observe them as an object. Frankl shares this opinion.

Limit Situations (*Grenzsituationen*) – the Tragic Triad (*Tragisches Trias*)

In his writings, concerning history, Jaspers stated that pain is present since the rebirth of man. Only the man who has the courage not to avoid the misfortune and in that moment discover who he really is, has the ability to find the enthusiasm for changes in his own life. Someone who is not introverted, who

would not be destroyed or does not choose to wait for the misfortune to disappear only to subsequently start living again, as if nothing had happened, is able to live their freedom the real sense of the word [15]. Concerning this issue, Jaspers wrote also that one cannot expect much from the man who is not willing to surrender to pain. The pain is supposed to be a plea for people to live their lives responsibly.

Frankl wrote: "*Homo patiens ranks before homo sapiens. Another imperative is contrasted with sapere aude and that is: patti aude, have the yearning to suffer! This courage, the courage to suffer: it all depends upon it. Pain needs to be accepted, saying yes to the destiny, take a stance towards it. This is the only way to approach and reach the truth, not through escape*" [16]. This test reveals the fact that Frankl is very close to Jaspers' thinking for whom the possible existence becomes the real existence providing one accepts to face limit situations. Frankl uses the expression *courage to suffer*, while Jaspers speaks of the need to face difficult situations such as death, pain, guilt, struggle, etc. *with one's eyes open*. The existence is awakened by death, Jaspers would say.

It is obvious that Jaspers and Frankl are very close when reflecting on limit situations or on the tragic triad. In order to better understand the common points and the points of divergence between these authors we will become more deeply immersed into the matter.

Both Frankl and Jaspers see limit situations (hereinafter the concept of limit situations always implies also the tragic triad by Frankl) as challenges which face man with the need to develop his existential resources. Both confirm also that these situations are an integral part of fundamental structure of humanity. Nevertheless, Frankl, as opposed

to Jaspers, does not distinguish between the awareness of limit situations and their experience. Frankl is primarily oriented towards therapeutic practice. Both distinguish the fact that death and pain are the situations happening to man without his “contribution”; however, guilt occurs following a “contribution” provided by man, although it always remains an integral part of human existence which cannot be avoided [1,14,17].

There is no sense to pain itself and, should anyone think there is, they would be a masochist. No pain can provide man with meaning, but the attitude towards it (Frankl) can give a meaning to pain. The fact that suffering is a part of human existence and solely by accepting limit situations does *possible existence* become *real existence* [17] has for Jaspers a meaning and he himself defined it in this manner. Nevertheless, for Jaspers, it is only the “*penultimate sense*” of human suffering. The ultimate meaning of suffering cannot be found or comprehended, and neither can the concept of transcendence, which always remains non-objectifiable [1]. On the other hand, Frankl affirms that the ultimate meaning of suffering and human pain can be found beyond-sense.

There are two fundamental points which differentiate death from pain. Firstly, the fact that death cannot be experienced it can only be suffered [14]; secondly, death always assumes an identical form [1]. Both pain and death, according to Jaspers and Frankl, do not have any meaning by themselves. The finiteness of human existence remains for both authors the plea for a life full of responsibility, for a life full of personal decisions made by the very same man who designs his own life. The fear of death persists, according to Jaspers, throughout the entire life. Possible conceptions of life after death are for Jas-

pers linked with subjective delusions. Death is not abolished by existence (the existence does not find its scope in death, it is only its expression that ends [14]); courage is fundamental to approach death, yet courage is not free from anguish. For existential analysis death is an incentive to live one’s life responsibly. Moreover, Jaspers, stated that human existence is clarified (*Existenzerhellung*) upon encounter with death “*with eyes open*” and in this one could find a meaning. The fear of death is the fear of *nothingness* (*Angst vor dem Nichts*). This fear underlies all the other fears and belongs to “*being there*”. According to Jaspers, the objective is not in overcoming this fear while encountering limit situations, but in living a life being fully conscious of death [1] and of this fear itself.

The difference between Frankl and Jaspers concerning the idea of limit situations and tragic triad consists of, on the one hand in a different use of terminology, while on the other hand, in the radicalism of comprehension of the ultimate meaning of the limit situations. What Frankl refers to as “*tragic optimism*” [16], Jaspers considers as one of the many delusions which forbid man to experience limit situations in their full harshness. Frankl accepts the impossibility to escape the limit situations, yet he immediately puts himself in place of the man who is suffering and asking for help. Jaspers rebukes man who wants to provide simple answers to the limit situations and is looking for an immediate solution. Instead, he sees the strength and the ability of man in addressing the challenge he is presented with while encountering death and also in the decision to find affirmation in his own existence (death is not the end of existence, it is only its demonstration that comes to a close [14]). It is only through facing and acceptance that the realization of

possible existence will occur within *real existence* [14]. Hence, there is the fundamental difference between existentialist views by Frankl, who is always oriented towards general use in therapeutic practice and the Jaspersian conception of clarification of existence (*Existenz-erhellung*), which is actualized in the thought which is striving to explain individual existence [1].

Psychotherapy – Differences between Jaspers and Frankl

In order to comprehend the concept of logotherapy and existential analysis, it is of fundamental importance to consider the spiritual dimension of man, according to Frankl. A man, comprising of soul, body and spirit can be considered at a psychophysical level according to the rules applying at this level. However, the spiritual dimension, or the *noetic dimension* (*noetische Dimension*), which is a real part of man, cannot be analyzed in the same way as the psychophysical dimension. Through noetic dimension man is capable of “*distancing himself from himself*”, even in cases of psychophysical illness and he is capable of actualizing values of attitudes towards illness. In that sense he is not responsible for his illness, but he is responsible for the attitude that he adopted towards it. What Frankl considers as noetic dimension (*noetische Dimension*), Jaspers in his work *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (*General psychopathology*), on which Frankl used to study as a student, refers to it as *verstehbare Persönlichkeit* (*conscience of personality*) [18]. Hence, according to Jaspers, during an illness the *verstehbare Persönlichkeit* remains intact even when it cannot express itself. Nevertheless, at this level it is possible to interfere, that is the physician is able to reveal to the patient that it is possible to have an attitude towards their illness (*Stellungnahme des Kranken*) [18].

A man who has his own values of attitude actualizes them as a free living and responsible human being, albeit carrying a meaning towards which he is oriented to. At this point there is a passage from method to philosophical and methodological reflection of logotherapy [1]. A man who at the existential level opts yet again for actualisation of values puts to use in a certain sense the clarification of existence which corresponds solely in a certain sense to the clarification of existence since, according to Jaspers, the clarification of existence is not within the authority of psychotherapy. The only possibility to explain the existence would be solely through existential communication which does not apply any method (Jaspers). Frankl is more oriented towards practice, in other words how to apply existential-anthropological thought in everyday life. On the other hand, Jaspers remains a philosopher who avoids any attempts to define human existence which for him always remains possible existence, which cannot be objectified. Carrying out the clarification of existence through existential communication is, according to Frankl, an “*artistic extreme*” [19] which rarely occurs in practice. Nevertheless, Frankl was aiming to combine philosophical knowledge and therapeutic practice [20].

The objective of Frankl’s anthropology is to establish psychotherapy, oriented towards a meaning, on theoretical concepts. In fact, logotherapy and existential analysis of Frankl are justified by both philosophical and psychotherapeutic eclecticism. Frankl wrote: “*On the other hand, a way of acting in the area of psychotherapy which is not eclectic would be inconceivable. Psychotherapy can in a certain sense be compared with an equation with two variables $\psi=x+y$. In every psychotherapy two incalculable variable moments need to be considered, they are subtracted from*

any calculus: patient individuality and the personality of the therapist" [21]. This quotation shows the striving of Frankl to avoid the attempt to "objectify" the person. Due to the fact that psychotherapy is based on personal encounter [22], those who meet are not two objects, two monads, but they are human beings, one of whom is confronting the other with "logos", that is with the meaning of existence [17].

If one wants to help a man, one needs a methodological approach. The clarification of existence without any concepts would not be comprehensible for people (Frankl). According to Frankl and Jaspers, psychotherapy counselling should be guided by the request: help the man, considered as a living being prone to self-reflection, to take the responsibility and live the freedom towards himself, towards the others and towards the world. Concerning this aspect one can say that both Jaspers and Frankl take care of man during his everyday life.

Common Points and Divergences in the Thought of Jaspers and Frankl

In his book *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* [23] stated that man is not only what is stated in sociology, psychology and anthropology. He is neither only what has been defined by science. Nevertheless, man is always more than is known about him. Man is about becoming; he is not pure "being there" remaining where he is, but he is a possibility in the freedom in which he can still make decisions about himself through his actions [23]. Frankl shares these thoughts in his book *Ärztliche Seelsorge* [24] where he criticises sociologism and psychologism, stating that, in addition to these thoughts which are in favour of determinism of man, there is also freedom of man. Frankl

makes this criticism based on the thoughts by Karl T. Jaspers [2]. These concepts are subsequently elaborated upon by Frankl in his book entitled *Homo patiens* [16].

As one can see, by analyzing comprehensively the texts written by Jaspers and Frankl, one can see the similarities between their diverse concepts and aiming to better clarify the common points and the divergences in the thought of Frankl and Jaspers, we have attempted hereinafter to present them in a systematic manner (striving to explain the common points and the divergences in the thought of V.E. Frankl and K.T. Jaspers we primarily refer to our readings of original texts by Jaspers [14,25] and by Frankl [10,17,21,26], as well as by the text by A. Fintz as we have noticed that the author has a comprehensive understanding of the concepts presented by both Jaspers and Frankl [1].

Common Points in the Thought by Jaspers and Frankl

Defining the existential features of man (responsibility, freedom and spirituality of man) Frankl expresses ideas which are very close to the concepts stated by Jaspers. There are differences only in the way of explaining the spiritual dimension or the spirit of man. Nevertheless, the difference is not decisive and since Frankl considers the spiritual dimension as the principal existential character of man.

Providing a definition of existential features (freedom, responsibility and spirituality of man), Frankl approaches the concept of possible existence by Jaspers.

The achievement of man as unconditioned in his deepest being is fundamental

both for Jaspers and Frankl who believe that the spiritual in man cannot succumb to illness.

The concept of *tragic triad* corresponds to a passage in a Jaspersian text where the concept of the limit situations is explained.

The clarification of existence and existential analysis are two very similar concepts. Nevertheless, Jaspers remains faithful to possible existence in his clarification of existence.

To see life as something that is looking for an answer by man, is asking for the involvement of man in self-construction through decisions.

Love is the key of existence. Frankl and Jaspers consider love as a phenomenon which cannot be discussed and the foundation of life. Love is the power and the organ which helps to see possibilities to accomplish both in man and in his situations.

Divergences in the Thought of Jaspers and Frankl

Jaspers and Frankl do not have the same concept of meaning. An objective meaning, according to Jaspers, cannot be understood nor found. Meaning can be found through decisive action (*Entschlossenheit*) where man is considered as a self-constructive identity (we would not to exclude the affirmation by Jaspers that man is also a precondition) [14].

Striving to clarify the essential features, Frankl diverges from Jaspersian thought, according to which he avoids any attempt to define human existence. Possible existence always remains an aperture which cannot be objectified.

The *tragic triad* (death, pain and guilt) is for Frankl an essential feature of *homo patiens*.

Jaspers, on the other hand, does not restrict himself to these three aspects of reality. He explicitly adds to them also the struggle, yet he implicitly refers also to other difficult situations.

The term of *existential analysis* (*Existenzzerhellung*) does not imply the analysis of existence. Perhaps Frankl is making a juxtaposition or is distancing himself from psychoanalysis (*Psychoanalyse – Freud*) and from anthropological analysis (*Dasinsanalyse – Binswanger*). While the term *clarification of existence* (*Existenzzerhellung*) by Jaspers is self-explanatory.

Existential features by Frankl are opposed to the idea by Jaspers to connect existence with fixed concepts.

Methodological explanation of clarification of existence is refused by Jaspers. Moreover, Frankl is striving to develop an anthropological approach oriented towards helping man.

Correspondence Between Frankl and Jaspers

As far as is known, Frankl wrote two letters to Jaspers and Jaspers wrote one letter to Frankl (1953-1961) (the text of the letters can be found in Fintz [1]; Fintz wrote to have received the copies of the letters due to the kindness of Matthias Bormuth [27]). Since these letters are the only material which testifies the acquaintance between the two personalities who have left a significant imprint, both during their lives and afterwards, on the society in which they lived and we believe it is important to present them in our work. We would like to take a systematic look at the letters to make several functional comments to our analysis.

Viktor E. Frankl to Karl Jaspers

General Medical Society for Psychotherapy, Vienna IX, Mariannegasse 10 (Polyclinic)

Vienna, 5th February 1953

Dear Professor,

I have the honor and the joy to inform you, since I have been assigned this task on behalf of the Executive Board of our Society, that the Ordinary Shareholders' Meeting during the session held on 3rd February 1953 per acclamationem accepted the proposal put forward by our President to appoint you as our honorary member.

It is not difficult to find the explicit motif to this decision of ours: we are all fully aware of the recognition of the extraordinary significance of your scientific activity for the establishment of psychopathology, as well as of the significant role of your voice which stands courageous, firm and critical against generalizations in psychology and the transcending of the boundaries by a specific school of psychotherapy.

Irrespective of the fact that during the last several years I have allowed myself to send you several times one by one of my books and articles, I believe you do not remember it; consequently, and running the risk of supposing that you are well aware of my work, but you do not appreciate it – I dare to hereby assure you that my simple opus is substantially indebted to your work and I have always strived to inform you of my indebtedness to you, as well as to point out my acknowledgement of your work. I am hinting this only because I would like to confess that I have deliberately ventured to include my personal gratitude to you in this formal document of our Executive Board.

At this point I would only like to ask you, dear Professor, to inform us whether you accept the appointment of honorary member proposed by us.

Yours faithfully

President

Viktor Frankl

Docent

Head of Polyclinic for Neurology

Karl Jaspers to Viktor E. Frankl

Dear Sir!

I would like to thank you on your friendly letter from 5th February. I am honored by the decision reached by you and your Society to nominate me as honorary member. In this moment I can clearly remember a decision made several decades ago by professor Stransky [(Erwin Stransky: Psychiatrist and neurologist from Vienna (1877-1962)], co-founder of Austrian society for the hygiene of the psyche (1920). In both cases I am delighted at the interest in my work in Vienna.

You reminded me of repeated invitations. As a matter of fact I have to confirm that due to a substantial workload I have read only a tiny fragment of your writings and consequently I am not able to provide a significant opinion on this issue. Nevertheless, once in Heidelberg I read, with great involvement and attention, your paper on personal experiences in a concentration camp (Jaspers refers to the book "Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager"). Now as an honorary member – and naturally I will gladly accept it – I am in a condition which does not pose any difficulties for me. And in fact, and it is comprehensible that the acceptance of the honorary membership does not imply a radical adhesion to your stances in psychotherapy. You have recognized the fact that I am not an adversary of psychotherapy. A large number of psychoanalysts have reproached me on this issue, as a result of not having taken the effort to read in my work on psychopathology a long chapter addressing the topic of clinical practice. I can express my utter satisfaction at such huge significance attributed to it. In fact, I believe that the issue of psychotherapy simultaneously represents a problem which appears almost unsolvable. In my opinion, what is currently missing is the clarity on the fact that a psychotherapist is involuntarily placed on the position of a spiritual director, a parish priest or even a prophet and currently assumes functions which can never be absolved solely through psychological no-

tions. Reading your work, I found opinions similar to mine a vast number of times. If I – with all the reserves of a kind – could express myself clearly, I would say that it appears to me it can be compared with analysis that has been neglected in an extraordinarily correct manner and, upon a more accurate analysis, it appears that you have a deep insight into psychotherapy and are well-aware of its appeal. To express myself in other words: the extraordinary attitude that philosophical vision requires in similar circumstances, or a Socratic attitude, appears to me to be implausible. Please consider my remarks only as a possibility. I may be mistaken. Nevertheless, in this moment, following your request, I believe I should express my opinion. Hence, meanwhile, I express my sincerest wishes that you will manage to find a path in psychotherapy which, within certain limits, proceeds with honest and healthy effectiveness against the backdrop of the times in juxtaposition with the tendency of psychotherapy as a surrogate, which I actually believe to be a disastrous procedure besides many others.

Best wishes and kind regards

Karl Jaspers

Viktor E. Frankl to Karl Jaspers

Head of Polyclinic of Neurology

Vienna, 4th March 1961

Dear Professor,

Once again, also on behalf of my wife, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to you and your wife for the friendly welcome I received irrespective of the spontaneity of our visit. I would primarily like to thank you on the gift of conversation we enjoyed in – although improvised and above all necessarily fragmented.

Pointing out yet again my personal appreciation of your work and sending kind regards to your wife, I am cordially devoted to you

V. Frankl

The Letter by V.E. Frankl to K.T. Jaspers
(We refer only to the first letter by Frankl to Jaspers, since it is considered of particular interest for our article)

What Frankl wrote in his first letter to Jaspers can be summarized in the following points: he offered an invitation to Jaspers to become an honorary member of *General Medical Society for Psychotherapy of Vienna (Allgemeine Ärztliche Gesellschaft für Psychotherapie Wien)*; he thought highly of Jaspers' contribution to science in the area of psychopathology with his work entitled *General Psychopathology (Allgemeine Psychopathologie – 1913)*; account of Jaspersian criticism of psychoanalysis; gratitude of Frankl towards Jaspers since he had been inspired by several of his thoughts; Frankl asks Jaspers if he remembers his books that he had sent him.

The Letter by K.T. Jaspers to V.E. Frankl
(13th February 1953)

Jaspers immediately replied to the letter by Frankl and accepted the appointment of honorary member of *General Medical Society for Psychotherapy of Vienna (Allgemeine Ärztliche Gesellschaft für Psychotherapie Wien)*. Nevertheless, Jaspers stated that his acceptance of this invitation did not imply the general acceptance and sharing of the stances of the *Society*. Furthermore, Jaspers pointed out that he had read the book *A Psychologist Experiences the Concentration Camps (Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager)* and had found it to be of great interest. Concerning other books by Frankl, Jaspers wrote that, not having read them yet, he is not entitled to provide a valid opinion (on the other hand in 1961, when Frankl visited Jaspers, Jaspers told him he was acquainted with all his books. On the other hand, concerning the issue of logotherapy, Jaspers showed his satisfaction upon seeing

that Frankl understood that he was not opposed to psychotherapy as he was believed to be and had been labeled so by many psychoanalysts among which primarily Alexander Mitscherlich [2]. Nevertheless, the issue of psychotherapy is for Jaspers almost an unsurmountable obstacle since, according to him, the psychotherapist assumes a role previously assumed by priests, vicars and even prophets. Jaspers expressed his confusion by the concept of psychotherapy by Frankl. According to him, at times it appeared to him that Frankl was on the right path, yet subsequently it appeared to him that he had been influenced by “modern magic” of psychotherapy. The philosophical approach (characteristic for Jaspers), in this sense (psychotherapy) requires, according to Jaspers, a certain aloofness, as well as concerning the Socratic approach. It is exactly that which to him appears to be absent from Frankl’s writings (in those he had read). Jaspers wrote that perhaps he may be wrong, yet upon Frankl’s request, he expressed his opinion. In the end of the letter he expressed his wishes that Frankl may find in psychotherapy the appropriate way to show his appropriate and healthy effectiveness before the current trend in psychotherapy (Jaspers was referring to psychoanalysis) which had been taking a surrogate position in society.

Jaspers distinguished Frankl’s personality from his work and his contribution to the area of psychotherapy. While he greatly appreciated the way of life adopted by Frankl (primarily his behavior in concentration camps), he does not share his ideas on psychotherapy, as we have seen from Jaspers’ letter. The attempt to help man to clarify his own existence could fail upon application of fixed methods. Jaspers does not accept the closed *Weltanschauung*.

Frankl pointed out the importance of philosophy and anthropology within psychotherapy. The comparison between Jaspers and Frankl has highlighted the similarities between the anthropological Jaspersian conception and the conception by Frankl. Nevertheless, as has been previously noted, there is a certain tension between the two authors which is grasped primarily in the intentionality of their concepts: while Frankl acts and thinks in view of practical application, Jaspers is interested primarily in philosophical consistency of his conception [1].

Life an Unconditional Openness (unbedingte Offenheit)

Both Jaspers and Frankl use a presupposition that man is a free living being. In this sense man decides on his own life. Man is “*a being who decides each time on what he is, a being who always decides*” [10]. To decide on one’s own life, irrespective of the fact that there are environmental, psychical and physical conditions, is something which is typical primarily of man. He is the only living being who can decide and freely choose *for whom or for what* to live. Being free, man is able to transcend himself. We are aware that Jaspers and Frankl were not the only ones affirming this viewpoint. A vast array of psychologists and psychotherapists expressed the same attitude, only perhaps using different wording. We would like to quote F. Perls who stated: “*A man transcends himself only through his very nature and not through ambition or artificial targets*” [28].

Man, through his own decisions and the regularity of little actions, not only acquires dexterity and skillfulness, but can transform his entire personality. Everyday activities are all important, since, deliberately or not, they have a formative effect [14]. Nevertheless, not everyone lives their own freedom. Ac-

According to Jaspers and Frankl there are two ways with which man can negate his own liberty: the first consists in not living in an active way his own liberty letting himself go and being governed by life; the second possibility to negate one's own liberty consists in suicide [1]. On the other hand, by living his life actively, man is capable of living it as unconditional openness.

Man is a responsible living being. He can decide on his own life, albeit not in an absolute sense. Primarily by facing the limit situations, or the tragic triad, man can wake up again (Jaspers) and continue living his life in a more responsible manner and in depth. Frankl, in addition to this, added that man, searching to provide answers to the meaning presented to him by life itself, is also responsible towards this meaning. Quoting the attitude expressed by Jaspers, he pointed out that the meaning to which man is responding is always linked with a specific person and with a life situation he is actually going through.

The originality of logotherapy consists in the affirmation that spiritual dimension of man is a real part of a human person and hence man with this dimension is ontologically open towards something or someone. The identical dimension helps man to transcend himself and guides him towards self-distancing. It cannot succumb to illness. Also Jaspers in his *General psychopathology (Allgemeine Psychopathologie)* wrote that fundamental features of man comprise of freedom, reflection and the spirit [18] and that the spirit cannot be affected by illness [18], or an ill man can assume an attitude before illness. Hence, irrespective of the stroke of the *cruel fortune* [29], man in a spiritual dimension, remains free to carry out values of attitude with which he could give meaning to his life, live it with unconditional openness which cannot be en-

closed into schemes and objects. Life of man can only be clarified (Jaspers) or explained (Frankl).

According to Jaspers, man, a possible existence, can never reach the end of its realization since there is always yet another possibility to actualize, a task to accomplish, a choice to make and hence transcend his current "*being there*" and acting in this manner man implements the process of self-formation [30].

Conclusion

In this work we have analyzed the common points and the divergences between Jaspers and Frankl and we believe it is appropriate to reassert that the prominent common point consists in affirming that human existence can only be clarified (Jaspers), or explained (Frankl), living it freely and responsibly. The point of divergence, we believe it needs to be highlighted in this work, concerns the meaning attributed to "meaning" by both authors. According to Jaspers, as opposed to Frankl, it is not possible to find a meaning outside oneself, that is, there is no beyond sense which could help man in living with calmness; moreover, the limit situations need to be faced with *eyes open*, without self-illusions of a beyond sense, but deciding and acting for one's own life and hence creating a meaning by ourselves.

On the other hand, Frankl, with his statement that man must not ask anything from life, but he needs to provide solutions to tasks allocated to him by life, has caused a *Copernican revolution* in the concept of life itself. Jaspers has always showed his suspicions concerning the possibility of establishment of a psychotherapy which could remain faithful to man as possible existence, since it cannot be objectified or schematized. However, Frankl,

aware of uniqueness of every man, irrespective of the fact that he is not striving to classify people and remains primarily at the level of practice, is, in a certain way, forced to establish a methodology of psychotherapeutic approach and hence find a way which would provide assistance to a man yearning to find a meaning.

Several further aspects to be scrutinized during research and of interest for another subsequent research are: reevaluation of spiritual dimension, or of the spirit as a possible answer to postmodern nihilism; the transcendental dimension in the thought of Jaspers and Frankl; existential communication and psychotherapeutic approach.

Finally, against the backdrop of contemporary world, during a complex period and

one which is hard to define, especially in Europe, where we often talk about *society of risk*, *liquid society*, *period of sad passions*, *society of instant gratification*, *society in decline*, *society of subjectivism and radical individualism*, we can with certainty state that primarily such man has the need to live the existential encounter with another man (existential communication) and especially find a meaning to live for.

Acknowledgements

None

Conflict of interest

None declared

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Karl T. Jaspers i Viktor E. Frankl: Usporedna mišljenja dvojice psihijatar

Sažetak – Promišljajući o egzistenciji Jaspers i Frankl svaki na svoj način iznose i objašnjavaju, analiziraju pojam egzistencije. Dok Jaspers govori da egzistencija može biti pojašnjena napose u graničnim situacijama i egzistencijalnoj komunikaciji, Frankl ističe kako se egzistencija može tumačiti tijekom života dajući pri tome važnost što je egzistencijalno. Na temelju pročitanih spisa zaključujemo kako je Jaspers utjecao na Franklovo promišljanje. U njihovim mislima pronalazimo slične ideje, koje su autori na drugačiji način imenovali, ponekada s malim razlikama, iako su razlike očite kao kada je to u pitanju shvaćanje i pronalaženje smisla, itd. I Obojica govore o duhovnoj dimenziji, teškim i graničnim životnim situacijama, egzistenciji, odgovornosti, psihoterapiji, smislu, itd. I Jaspers i Frankl su bili psihijatri te se može primijetiti kako vlastite ideje utemeljuju u dugogodišnjoj praksi, iako imaju različite pristupe. Jaspers u svom pristupu naglašava egzistencijalnu dimenziju, dok Frankl izričito naglašava važnost duhovne dimenzije u čovjekovom životu. Korespondencija između ovih dvaju autora nam također ukazuje o recipročnom poznavanju njihovih stavova i ideja. Dok Frankl djeluje i promišlja u vidu praktične primjene, Jaspers je pak prije svega usmjeren k filozofskoj dosljednosti njegovih stavova i pojmova.

Ključne riječi: egzistencija, egzistencijalna analiza, smisao, logoterapija, psihoterapija, duhovnost

