

VICTOR FRANKL'S SPIRITUAL INTENTIONALITY: INTENTIONALITY AND EXISTENTIALITY

The topic of my paper is Viktor Frankl's understanding of such enigmatic phenomenon as spirituality. Viktor Frankl provides a detailed exposition of this phenomenon in his work *Spirituality, Freedom, Responsibility*. Frankl's reflections are extremely important because the spirituality is distorted by some ideological attitudes according to which it is a certain quality of subject, individual or collective. In the latter case an entire nation can be declared the bearer of certain highest – spiritual – values distinguishing it from other nations. In both cases we have the *wrong form* of spirituality as the available state of subject, as its inalienable *property*.

Since the category of the subject is a pivot of *theory of knowledge* it is not surprising that in Frankl's work the subject is called in question. Indeed, a theory of knowledge can be understood as an analysis of the relationship between subject and its object. However, Frankl disputes this question itself.

The fundamental question of the theory of knowledge is posed incorrectly from the outset. For it is meaningless to ask how the subject penetrates the object, since this question itself is the result of an illegitimate translation into spatial categories and thus an ontisation of the true state of affairs.' (Frankl, 1990, p. 94)

Thus, Frankl argues that theory of knowledge is a result of *ontisation*, i.e., the interpretation of the process of knowledge exclusively in objective terms, as a relationship between two things one of which is subject as a *thinking thing* (Cartesian *res cogitans*) and another is object as a *thinkable thing*. However, the classical theory of knowledge is incapable to make bridge between these two things answering the follows question: how the subject is able go out from its solipsistic solitude and to absorb the object? Consequently, the answer to this question should be sought not in gnoseology but in *ontology of knowledge*.

In other words, we should not, as is customary, immediately postulate a gaping chasm between the subject and the object, which is created by the theory of knowledge with its incorrect spatial representations. Only in this case will we have at our disposal an approach to the true ontology of knowledge, only then will the gap between the cognising spiritual being and the cognised other being not open up" (Frankl, 1990, p. 94).

In other words, the ontology of knowledge must demonstrate the *co-presence* of cognizant and cognisable. However, Frankl immediately argues that getting rid of the false problems of gnoseology confronts us with a *mystery* of this co-presence that remains beyond of thinking.

In essence, the ontology of knowledge cannot reveal or assert anything other than that spiritual "somehow" coexists with another being. Ontological analysis can only access this "somehow", but not how exactly, not the essence of coexistence' (Frankl, 1990, p. 95).

This is where the term 'intentionality' should appear:

"So what, finally, is this co-presence of the spiritual being? It is the intentionality of this spiritual being! The spiritual being, however, is intentional in its essence, and one can thus say: the spiritual being is the spiritual existing, it is conscious being, it coexists with another being, conscious of another being (Frankl, 1990, p. 95).

In the most general sense, the intentionality means that consciousness is direction towards any object. The formula of intentionality: *consciousness is always consciousness of something*. In other words, consciousness is not anything like Cartesian *immaterial substance* which go out of itself to catch the object in the external world. Since the consciousness is always consciousness of something it means that there is not any *consciousness as such*, or *consciousness in itself*. What we have here is not a gnoseological relationship between the subject of consciousness and its object, but an *ontological wholeness* of consciousness of the object and the object of consciousness. That ontological wholeness can be defined as an *event*. Therefore, Frankl says:

This co-presence of a spiritual being with another being... we will call co-being' (Frankl, 1990, p. 95).

However, Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, considered intentionality as something mysterious. Thus, in his work *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Husserl writes:

So, “consciousness of something” is something that is self-evident, and yet, at the same time, something that is highly incomprehensible. The first attempts at reflexion lead us into a labyrinth of false paths, and this easily gives rise to scepticism, which tends to deny the existence of this whole sphere of such inconvenient problems (Husserl, 1928, p. 180).

Since any attempt at reflexive analysis of intentionality leads us, as Husserl says, into a labyrinth of false paths the intentionality can be considered as an *absolute limit of reflexion*. Indeed, if the ontological wholeness of consciousness and its object is an event, any attempt to elucidate the intentionality through reflexion would be equivalent to going beyond the horizon of event. Frankl sees very clearly this ontological limitation of reflexivity:

Indeed, the spirit turns out to be non-reflective of itself, since it is blinded by any self-observation that attempts to grasp it in its genesis, in its source’ (Frankl, 1990, p. 99)

Since reflexion is incapable to grasp our existence at its origin it means that we are ontologically separated from our beginning in the world. On the other hand, the ontological fact of this separating means that *we are always already in the world*. We do not come into the world in such a way that the moment of our arriving could have been fixed by ourselves. The first sign of our consciousness is *self-consciousness in the world*. So, the intentionality passes on our *being in the world*. Therefore, Frankl writes:

Complete self-reflection, however, is not only impossible, but also unnecessary, because it is not the task of the spirit to observe and reflect on itself. The essence of a person includes their orientation outward, toward something or someone, toward a cause or a person, toward an idea or a personality! And only insofar as we are intentional are we existential... (Frankl, 1990, p. 100)

Thus, more primordial meaning of the intentionality as a direction of consciousness towards an object is the *transcendence* as an *act of revealing the world*. Human as an existence is very openness of the world. On the other hand, human being exists only in the openness that is called the *world*. At the same time, the intentionality as an absolute limit of reflexion opens the perspective of understanding a *conscious* as an ontological but not only psychological phenomenon. The impossibility of full reflexion means the impossibility of thinking to *coincide with itself*, absorbing its own beginning. That is exactly what Maurice Merleau-Ponty meant when he says in his classical work *Phenomenology of Perception*:

There is no such thing as thinking that encompasses our thought

This inability of thinking to coincide with its origin, forming in the result an identity between thinking and the thinkable, means that very moment of that non-coincidence opens in thinking a space of *Other* that cannot be reduced to any identity. In this way Other is something (or someone) unique, resisting being subsumed under any a priori typology. Therefore, the question “what is Other?” can be answered as follows: *Other is something (or someone) that has a face*. At the same time the face is something elusive: it is irreducible *pre-phenomenon*. Therefore, a personality is not any object that can be perceived by our senses. The face is rather an *epiphany*, i.e. the manifestation in the world of something that cannot be in accordance with the world. So, the intentionality that is consciousness as a *consciousness of something* passes on *conscious* that is *consciousness of Other*. At the same time, as has already been said, Other is not something that exists in the world, that can be perceived in the world as an object. Therefore, the conscious as a consciousness of Other is *obligation*, i.e. a relationship to that *does not exist* but *should exist*. As Frankl says:

‘[...] consciousness is open to what exists, while conscience is open not to what exists, but rather to what does not yet exist, but ought to exist.’ (Frankl, 1990, p. 97)

However, this obligation has nothing to do with soulless rigorism, judging a human from the height of some apriori moral norm. If, as Marina Tsvetaeva said: “to love means to see a person as God intended him to be”, then the love is a soul of such obligation. In turn, love is an event, i.e., something that seems impossible if we proceed from the presumption of the world as the simple composition of facts. Therefore, Frankl says:

‘Since co-existence is the co-presence of one person to another person as such, in his absolute otherness (otherness in relation to all other people), and this otherness is perceived with love by such co-presence (and only such), it can be said that love is necessarily a personal, individual way of existence.’ (Frankl, 1990, p. 96)