



Viktor Frankl's Search for Meaning: An Emblematic 20th-Century Life (Making Sense of History)

By Timothy Pytell

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First published in 1946, Viktor Frankl's memoir *Man's Search for Meaning* remains one of the most influential books of the last century, selling over ten million copies worldwide and having been embraced by successive generations of readers captivated by its author's philosophical journey in the wake of the Holocaust. This long-overdue reappraisal examines Frankl's life and intellectual evolution anew, from his early immersion in Freudian and Adlerian theory to his development of the "third Viennese school" amid the National Socialist domination of professional psychotherapy. It teases out the fascinating contradictions and ambiguities surrounding his years in Nazi Europe, including the experimental medical procedures he oversaw in occupied Austria and a stopover at the Auschwitz concentration camp far briefer than has commonly been assumed. Throughout, author Timothy Pytell gives a penetrating but fair-minded account of a man whose paradoxical embodiment of asceticism, celebrity, tradition, and self-reinvention drew together the complex strands of twentieth-century intellectual life.

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Review

"The book has extensive notes and a major bibliography that includes interviews, periodicals, and unpublished documents. Frankl's logotherapy-from logos, meaning-emphasizes creativity, love, and our attitude toward 'unalterable fate.' Some critics view logotherapy as superficial, offering consolation more than challenge. Intellectually demanding, this is a scholarly, commendable biography and intellectual history. Lay readers will be challenged; psychologists and historians will be grateful." • **Library Journal (starred review)**

"Pytell's book fills an important gap in the literature on one of the most famous and, until now, least controversial psychotherapists of the twentieth century. Unlike earlier works on Frankl, this book avoids hagiography and places Frankl in the full political, social, historical, and intellectual contexts of his times. It is the first work to synthesize Frankl's life and work in his time and place." • **Geoffrey Cocks**, Albion College

About the Author

Timothy Pytell is Chair of the History department at California State University, San Bernardino. He published an abridged version of this biography, titled *Viktor Frankl: Das Ende eines Mythos*, in German in 2005.

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