

the main strategies for writing in ways that simultaneously conceal and reveal meanings below the surface; and a related section on “Esotericism and Its Challenges” that addresses the inevitable danger of hermeticism or obscurity that accompanies any “verdeckte Schreibweise.”

The chapters on the individual writers draw out the themes and approaches of the first two chapters with skill, but those first chapters are the ones that make this book a monumental study, one that students of the subject from now on cannot do without.

Vincent Kling  
La Salle University

Timothy Pytell, *Viktor Frankl's Search for Meaning: An Emblematic 20th-Century Life*. New York: Berghahn, 2015. 208 pp.

*Viktor Frankl's Search for Meaning* represents a revised version of Timothy Pytell's 2005 biography, *Viktor Frankl: Das Ende eines Mythos*, which itself was a revised version of Pytell's doctoral dissertation, completed in 1997 at New York University. This English edition includes two new chapters and, according to Pytell, a response to expert criticisms of his 2005 biography, in particular those of Alexander Batthyány, president of the Viktor Frankl Institute in Vienna. Pytell's work foregrounds Frankl's significance both as the founder of the third Viennese school of psychotherapy and more widely in the enduring global impact of his Holocaust memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946). Pytell claims from the outset that he is less interested in the veracity or reception of Frankl's logotherapy than in Frankl's life and experience and how these shaped his development of logotherapy, a claim upon which I shall base my critique below.

Chapter 1 opens with little biographical framing of Frankl's life and times, offering instead a summation of Frankl's early interest in but eventual disillusionment with Freudian psychoanalysis, after which he became a follower of Adlerian psychoanalysis. Chapter 2 explores the schism between the Freudian and Adlerian schools, extrapolating from the latter an ostensible connection to current thoughts in the “Red Vienna” of the 1920s in which Frankl came of age, thus offering a little more socio-historical context than did chapter 1. Pytell here locates Frankl's turn toward a “third path” in his dismissal by Adler and the increasingly “pragmatic philosophy” he was developing in the late

1920s. Chapters 3 and 4 expand this line of argument by framing Frankl's work in youth counseling and suicide prevention in the turbulent 1930s while setting the stage for the controversial charges of unethical medical practices and questionable relationships to ostensible Nazi scientists and ideologues that formed the basis of some of Batthyány's criticisms of Pytell's earlier work. These charges are elaborated in chapter 5. Chapter 6 explores Frankl's ordeal after being deported to various concentration camps, setting the stage for Pytell's convincing analysis of Frankl's post-Holocaust writings as a means of coping with trauma and loss and of finding new meaning in life. Pytell also attempts at this point to open a discussion into Holocaust memory and literature, which becomes something of a secondary line of discussion toward the end of the book, to which I shall return shortly.

Chapter 7, one of the additions to Pytell's earlier work, offers a succinct critique of Frankl's intellectual development after the Holocaust, in relation to his existentialist forebears, while chapter 8 embeds and analyzes Frankl's prominent yet ambiguous impact in the Second Austrian Republic. These are far and away the most coherent and effective chapters. Chapter 9, another new addition, examines Frankl's work and impact in the United States. Regrettably, there is no discrete conclusion, only a sudden summation of Frankl's life at the end of the chapter, in which Pytell states: "His life was fascinating and inspiring, but also profoundly tragic—an emblematic twentieth-century tragedy" (177). Why this long and ultimately very successful life was tragic, when Pytell dedicated so many pages to its redemptory qualities and the hope it inspired in millions and how this ostensible tragedy is "emblematic" for the twentieth century, could have been elaborated better. In lieu of a conclusion, Pytell offers a brief postscript citing the need to engage critically with Holocaust literature. This works more as a conclusion to the secondary (in my opinion underdeveloped) theme of critically appraising Frankl's memoirs than as a conclusion to either the intellectual discussions running throughout the work or to the (equally underdeveloped) narrative of Frankl's personal life, leaving the reader rather dissatisfied.

I was convinced by Pytell's complex yet lucid discussion of Frankl's ideas and the careful and consistent manner in which he embeds these into the intellectual traditions of the twentieth century. I believe his work holds great merit for intellectual historians, and I think it would have profited from being

framed solely in those terms. I was not so convinced, however, by either the consistency of the narration of Frankl's personal life or by the engagement with the context of his time and place and the vast literature appertaining to these. For brevity's sake I offer only a couple of brief examples. Chapter 1 opens: "Viktor Frankl was an assimilated Jew"; Pytell claims Frankl was "hyper-assimilated" because "like many Austrian Jews, he strove to be included in mainstream culture" (15). Such statements, which abound in the work, rankle in the face of the vast wealth of literature on Central-European and Viennese Jewish culture that has proliferated in the two decades since Pytell began his research on Viktor Frankl. Not surprisingly, the footnotes reveal that this is a result of the most recent literature cited dating from the 1980s (his misreading of Lisa Silverman's brilliant work notwithstanding). This outdated discourse about Vienna's kaleidoscopic Jewish culture is exacerbated by numerous inaccuracies and misrepresentations, such as the claims (to name only a couple) that, following the *Anschluss*, most Jews "refused to leave" Vienna (81) or that those who remained were largely "prominent Jews" (101). Erroneous renditions of German nomenclature and quotations abound, whether owing to the author or the editor is unclear, yet enhancing the sense that this work could have engaged better with the Central European context.

This work, in my opinion, would have benefited from focusing solely on the intellectual content with which Pytell is clearly deeply familiar and forms the onus of his interest. I do not believe that he should have engaged more with the vast literature on Jewish-Austrian history emerging in the last decades; on the contrary, the work would have benefited greatly from omitting discussions of Central-European Jewish culture and of Holocaust literature altogether. The criticisms of Pytell's earlier work cited above were in essence, if not always in content, much the same as the objections I have raised here. I repeat emphatically that this work is a great case study in the intellectual history of the twentieth century and the impact of the Holocaust therein, but I see it in its current form holding only limited insights for scholars of Jewish-Viennese or -Austrian culture, lives, and experiences or of Holocaust literature.

Tim Corbett

*Center for Jewish History, New York*