A Phenomenological Analysis of Meaningful Existence

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DECLARATION 1

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Abstract

Although meaning in life has been investigated widely through disciplines including philosophy and psychology, it has not been rigorously pursued phenomenologically. In taking a phenomenological approach, my thesis is an attempt to illuminate the experiential character of meaning in life. To engage in such an inquiry, I situate my analysis within Martin Heidegger's existential framework, and I establish a basic concept of meaning in life through the work of Viktor Frankl. I follow Frankl in emphasizing the uniqueness of meaning in the lives of unique individuals. This uniqueness implies that meaning in life is a diverse and pluralistic phenomenon. If meaning is diverse such that what one experiences as meaningful varies from one individual to another, in virtue of what shared characteristics are those distinctive experiences each an instance of meaning in life? The answer to this question, I suggest, lies in the existential structures of meaningful experience. To illuminate the structures of meaningful experience, I oscillate between descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology. The former enables me to bring particular experiences of meaning into view, and the latter enables me to investigate the existential structures of those particular experiences. My analysis focuses on passion and love as two modes of meaningful experience. After describing particular instances of the meaning in life that is experienced through passion and love, I proceed to an existential analysis of those experiences, attempting to illuminate their structures. In my structural analysis, I set out to articulate the existential constitution of meaning in life. This existential constitution, I suggest, brings unity to the pluralistic nature of meaning in life. I refer to this unifying structure as existential meaning, and I argue that this structure is shared across the broad range of experiences of meaning in life.

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Introduction

The Question of Meaning

Whether one's life is meaningful or not, and whether existence could be said to be meaningful at all, are questions that many individuals grapple with throughout their lives. These questions aren't confined to academia, to any particular region of the world, or to a specific demographic of human beings. To question the meaning of life generally, or of one's life specifically, is, in Viktor Frankl's view, "the surest sign of being truly human."[1]

In this thesis, I will neither investigate nor attempt to provide an answer to the question, "What is the meaning *of* life?" This question often refers to something like an encompassing cosmic meaning or an overarching and objective purpose of life, which might be conceived of as independent of any particular human life.[2] My project is more humbly oriented toward the exploration of "meaning *in* life," where this refers to the meaning in the life of an individual.

"Meaning" in the context of "meaning in life" has been described, defined, and explored variously in philosophy and psychology. Although I will not adopt any particular preestablished descriptions, definitions, or theories of meaning in life, I will provide a brief overview of several contemporary views of meaning in life so that we might become acquainted with the existing territory.

[1] Frankl, Viktor E. *The Feeling of Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy*. Edited by Andrew Tallon and Alexander Batthyany. Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 2010, p. 49

[2] I am neither rejecting that such a thing might exist, nor am I affirming its existence. By bracketing this question, I am merely setting it aside without judgment.

Philosophical endeavors are often concerned with developing "theoretical accounts of what would confer meaning on a human person's life."[3] These approaches do not, for the most part, look at meaning as such, but rather attempt to say what the world must be like, or what a person must do, in order for meaning to obtain in the lives of human beings.

According to the *Oxford Handbook of Meaning in Life*, the "standard view" in contemporary philosophy is "that meaning-talk is about the actions of individual persons that are desirable or choice-worthy for their own sake, characteristically ones involving the good, the true, and the beautiful, and excluding actions such as rolling a stone forever…" (I.e., Sisyphus).[4] The standard view maintains that transcendence (participating in something of value beyond oneself) and connection (to other people/the natural world) are integral aspects of meaning in life.[5]

Beyond analytic discussions regarding the referent of "meaning-talk," some common philosophical theories of meaning in life include supernaturalism, naturalism, and nihilism.[6] Supernaturalism contends that God and/or a soul is necessary if meaning in life is to obtain. Naturalism, which can be divided into "objectivist" and "subjectivist" views of meaning in life, maintains that life can be meaningful in a world without God and/or a soul. A subjectivist theory might argue that meaning in life is dependent upon the fulfillment of individual interests, desires, and values. In contrast, an objectivist account would maintain that a subjective state isn't

[3] Metz, Thaddeus. "The Meaning of Life." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2007. Accessed October 1, 2023. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/life-meaning/.

[4] Metz, Thaddeus. "The Concept of Life's Meaning." Chapter. In *The Oxford Handbook of Meaning in Life*. Edited by Iddo Landau. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, p. 40

[5] Metz, "The Concept of Life's Meaning," p. 29

[6] Metz, "The Meaning of Life."; Seachris, Joshua. n.d. "Meaning of Life: Contemporary Analytic Perspectives." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed October 1, 2023. https://iep.utm.edu/mean-ana/#SH3a.

sufficient, proceeding to then argue for something like an independently existing and objective value structure which is a necessary component to meaning in life. Nihilistic theories argue that the world is such that meaning in life simply cannot obtain and that, as a result, existence is devoid of meaning.[7]

In contrast to philosophical endeavors, psychologists investigate "the impact of various things on people's experience or sense of meaning, as well as correlations between the experience of meaning and other things."[8] I.e., one's sense of meaning and the correlation with friendship, or one's experience of meaning and how that experience relates to one's value structure or long-term goals. There is a growing consensus in psychology that meaning in life is made up of at least three distinguishable ingredients. Namely, significance, coherence, and purpose.[9] "Coherence means a sense of comprehensibility and one's life making sense. Purpose means a sense of core goals, aims, and direction in life. Significance is about a sense of life's inherent value and having a life worth living."[10]

A meta-analysis of the relevant psychological literature concluded that "what makes life meaningful" (and thus what might allow one to develop a sense of purpose, significance, and coherence) includes one's social connections/relationships (a sense of interdependence), religion/worldview (those who were more religious/spiritual reported higher levels of meaning in life), the self (self-knowledge and authenticity), mental time travel (projecting oneself

[7] Metz, "The Meaning of Life"; Seachris, "Meaning of Life: Contemporary Analytic Perspectives."
[8] Kauppinen, Antti. "The Experience of Meaning." Chapter. In *The Oxford Handbook of Meaning in Life*. Edited by Iddo Landau. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, p. 344
[9] King, Laura A., and Joshua A. Hicks. "The Science of Meaning in Life." *Annual Review of Psychology* 72, no. 1 (January 4, 2021): 561–84. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-072420-122921.
[10] Martela, Frank, and Michael F. Steger. "The Three Meanings of Meaning in Life: Distinguishing Coherence, Purpose, and Significance." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 11, no. 5 (January 27, 2016): 531–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623.

imaginatively to the past or future), and acknowledgement of one's mortality (awareness and acceptance that one will die).[11]

These philosophical and psychological accounts of meaning in life provide analytical, definitional, and empirical articulations of meaning in life, and while each respective endeavor is capable of illuminating meaning in life in a unique way, I will be taking a different approach.

Research Approach

I am interested in exploring experiences of meaning in life with a focus on illuminating the *structures* of meaningful experience. As vague as this may sound, we can gain a bit of clarity by way of a series of preliminary questions which indicate the general direction that my project will take: Where and when does meaningfulness manifest in experience? What are those experiences like? What is shared across various experiences of meaning in life? What is distinct? In virtue of what unifying factors can divergent experiences of meaning in life be considered "meaningful" despite their distinctive characteristics?

Because I am interested in meaningful experience and its structures, I will adopt a twofold phenomenological approach as the method for my investigation. First, I will look at concrete-specific experiences of meaning in life, and I will attempt to provide detailed descriptions of those experiences. As such, I will begin by using descriptive phenomenology so that those meaningful experiences, in their concreteness, can be brought into view. Having described those experiences, I will turn to Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic approach to phenomenology in an attempt to discern the *existential structures* of those experiences. This is an

[11] King, Laura A., and Joshua A. Hicks, "The Science of Meaning in Life."

attempt to illuminate the structures which are shared across the broad range of meaningful experiences.

As we will see in later chapters, experiences of meaning in life seem to be diverse and pluralistic. As such, articulating the constitutive structure of meaningful experience is significant insofar as it brings unity to plurality. I will distinguish "meaning in life" from its structural constitution by referring to the latter as "*existential meaning*." Meaning in life, then, refers to the concrete-particular instances of meaning in the life of an individual, and existential meaning refers to the structures which constitute the broad range of meaningful experiences.[12]

We might think of particular instances of meaning in life in terms of their lived content, which can vary from individual to individual. For example, person A might experience meaning in life through the cultivation of an art form such as oil painting. Person B might experience meaning in life through the pursuit of an athletic endeavor such as cross-country running. The lived content of these respective endeavors seems to diverge in most respects. In addition to the divergence of lived content, these endeavors are not universally experienced as meaningful. That is, the artist may not derive any meaning in life from cross-country running, and the athlete may not derive any meaning in life through engagement with oil painting. In virtue of what unifying factors, then, is each instance an instance of meaning in life? The answer to this question, I will suggest, lies in the existential structures which constitute the plurality of distinct instances.

Roadmap

I begin my project in chapter one by providing an overview of phenomenology and its historical development before proceeding to a more detailed description of Heidegger's unique

[12] The motivation for this particular distinction will be unraveled at the beginning of chapter four.

approach. I will emphasize the way in which, for Heidegger, phenomenology is a process of unconcealing phenomena through the use of discursive language. Put differently, language illuminates the phenomena, thereby lifting the phenomena into view so that they can be seen. I will end the chapter with a preliminary articulation of the way in which I am using the term "meaning."

In chapter two, I will begin to "set the scene" by explicating the existential framework from within which I will be analyzing meaningfulness. Because I am largely following Heidegger's existential-phenomenology, this chapter is comprised of a general articulation and overview of Heidegger's existential analytic. I will describe the basic structure of Heidegger's existential framework, and I will define some of the key terms and concepts that will be used throughout this thesis, including being-in-the-world, attunement, understanding, and authenticity.

It is important to note that while I am adopting the existential framework that Heidegger articulated in *Being and Time* and elsewhere, my project differs from his in important ways. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger was asking about the "meaning of Being."[13] His existential analysis was an attempt to elucidate and articulate the a priori structures of existence. He termed this type of endeavor "fundamental ontology."[14] In his analysis, he was concerned with existence qua existence. In contrast to Heidegger, this is *not* a work of fundamental ontology. I am not concerned with existence qua existence, but with a certain kind of existence—*meaningful*

[13] Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1962, p. 2
Heidegger's phrase "meaning of Being" is not synonymous with asking about the "meaning of life." Unfortunately, many have misunderstood Heidegger's project as an attempt to say something about the meaning of life. For example, the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that "in the twentieth century, in the Continental tradition, Heidegger held that the meaning of life is to live authentically or (alternatively) to be a guardian of the earth" (O'Brien). This is a misreading of Heidegger's project.
[14] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 34

existence. I am attempting to explore, from within Heidegger's existential analytic, the structures that constitute meaningful experience. This isn't to go against Heidegger's project, but rather to see what could be accomplished if one takes Heidegger's analytic seriously. Phrased differently, if human existence is fundamentally as Heidegger has described it, what can we learn from applying his existential framework to unexplored areas of experience?[15]

Proceeding from an elaboration of Heidegger's existential framework, chapter three will consist of an introduction to Viktor Frankl's work on meaning in life. This chapter will help develop what is meant by the expression "meaning in life," thereby further developing the groundwork for my phenomenological analysis of meaningful experience. During the course of this chapter, I will refer back to Heidegger's existential framework, attempting to show how Frankl's concepts might be understood from within that framework.

Chapter four will begin my phenomenological analysis of meaningful experience. In this chapter, I investigate passion and love as two modes of meaningful experience. I begin with an analysis of the term "passion," and I continue by providing a description of a particular instance of passion. I then proceed to an existential analysis of that instance, attempting to discern the structures of which it is constituted. This method is repeated with love as a mode of meaningful experience at the fore.

In chapter five, I take a closer look at three of the existential structures that were identified in chapter four, emphasizing their interconnection and significance in relation to passion and love as modes of meaningful experience. In my concluding chapter, I summarize the

[15] This approach contrasts with opinions that view Heidegger's project as a closed system. Such opinions claim that one cannot apply Heidegger's analysis for purposes beyond the system that Heidegger has articulated. I hope to implicitly show during the course of this thesis that such views are wrongheaded, and that applying Heidegger's framework to unexplored areas of experience has the potential to yield illuminating results.

findings of my analysis and formulate the summary as a response to the question, “What is meaningful existence?” I continue my closing remarks by discussing possible implications of my analysis, and I end by providing suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1 – On Method and a Preliminary Understanding of Meaning

1.1 On Method

Phenomenology is a rather obscure term that is subject to ambiguity. For this reason, it seems pertinent to describe the formal inception of phenomenology as a philosophical method followed by an explication regarding the way in which Edmund Husserl, the formal founder of phenomenology, conceived of the phenomenological method. Following this, I will contrast Martin Heidegger's phenomenological approach with that of Husserl before explicating the way in which I will be using phenomenology throughout my analysis of meaning. I will end the chapter with a preliminary indication of the term "meaning" as it is to be understood within the context of this project.

Phenomenology formally emerged during the first years of the 20th century when Edmund Husserl, inspired by Franz Brentano, published his *Logical Investigations*, wherein he established a phenomenological theory of intentionality and knowledge.[1] He used this work as a foundation for a later book, *Ideas I*, published in 1913, in which he claimed that pure phenomenology should develop into a science of essences (namely, the essence of consciousness).[2] By this, Husserl intended a methodological treatment of conscious experience (and the structures of experience) through an examination of experience as experienced from the first-person perspective. The novelty of Husserl's phenomenological approach gave rise to a myriad of phenomenological thinkers who each diverged from Husserl's original project in various ways. One such divergent thinker was Husserl's student and assistant, Martin Heidegger,

[1] Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigations*, (Routledge, 2015).
[2] Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, (Translated by Fred Kersten. Kluwer, 1998), p. 33.

who articulated an approach to phenomenology that stood in direct contrast with that of his teacher.

Through the development of certain methodological techniques, Husserl attempted to "produce a phenomenology purified of cultural, historical, and existential concerns."[3] For example, the "epoche" implores us to "bracket" the "natural attitude" that accompanies us unwittingly in our everyday existence.[4] To "bracket" simply entails suspending judgment, and the "natural attitude" refers to the habitual ways in which we understand, experience, interpret, and accept the world around us. To use Husserl's words in describing the epoche:

> The whole world as placed within the nature-setting and presented in experience as real, taken completely 'free from all theory,' just as it is in reality experienced, and made clearly manifest in and through the linkings of our experiences, has now no validity for us, it must be set in brackets, untested indeed but also uncontested. Similarly all theories and sciences, positivistic or otherwise, which relate to this world, however good they may be, succumb to the same fate.[5]

The epoche is followed by a second "moment," which is termed the "reduction." Taken together, they comprise the "phenomenological reduction."[6]

The reduction is an accepting recognition of that which has been bracketed. "Accepting recognition" indicates an explicit awareness of the way in which we normally and habitually

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[3] Giovanni Stanghellini, Matthew R. Broome, Andres V. Fernandez, Paola Fusar-Poli, Andrea Raballo and Rune Rosfort, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology* (Oxford University Press, 2019), https://doi.org/ 10.1093/oxfordhb/ 9780198803157.001.0001, p. 238.
[4] "Phenomenological Reduction, the" | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
[5] Quoted in Solomon, Robert C. 2001. *Phenomenology and Existentialism*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 117
[6] *Phenomenological Reduction, the* | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

understand and accept the world followed by an acceptance that this habituated mode of experiencing the world might be otherwise. "If the epoche is the name for whatever method we use to free ourselves from the captivity of the unquestioned acceptance of the everyday world, then the reduction is the recognition of that acceptance *as* an acceptance."[7] In other words, the accepting recognition is an awareness that this habitual "natural attitude" is not some absolute structure that is forced upon us. Rather it is something accepted by us, but which might be otherwise. Or, to use the words of Husserl's assistant, Eugen Fink: "The epoche reduces 'bracketed' human immanence by explicit inquiry back behind the acceptednesses in self-apperception that hold regarding humanness, that is, regarding one's belonging to the world…"[8] Independent of how one might phrase the phenomenological reduction, "it boils down to the same thing, we must somehow come to see ourselves as no longer of *this* world, where 'this world' means to capture *all* that we currently accept."[9] The emphasis on the term "this" in "this world" is telling of what is meant. We might, in ordinary experience, take for granted a scientific theory which dictates our interpretation of a given experience. For example, when looking at the starry night sky, we may interpret our perceptual experience as photons traveling through space, which interact with our retina to produce the image, and we might think of a bright distant planet in terms of its chemical composition. In contrast, an ancient culture might interpret their perceptual experience of the starry sky in a completely different manner. To such a culture, a star might be experienced as a god-like figure or as an omen which is interpreted as an indication of some future event. Each example has its own "world" of interpretation, which is reflective of the manner in which we experience and interpret life and world. The embeddedness of any such

[7] "Phenomenological Reduction, the" | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
[8] Fink, Eugen, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* 1995. Indiana University Press, p. 40.
[9] "Phenomenological Reduction, the" | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

interpretation is that which Husserl is asking us to bracket, and that embedded interpretation in experience comprises "this" world as opposed to "that" world. To say that we must think of ourselves as no longer of *this* world, then, is a directive to detach ourselves from all modes of interpreting which are so firmly embedded in our experience that we hardly notice the way in which they shape and structure our experience.

However noble the attempt to analyze experience free of such concerns and biases might be, several prominent phenomenologists have called into question the extent to which such techniques can be applied in practice. For example, in the preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty notes that "the most important lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction."[10] In other words, we might be able to bracket certain habituated interpretive biases, but it is impossible to bracket all interpretive strategies. If all interpretive strategies were bracketed, we would be unable to make sense of the experience in question. We can understand Merleau-Ponty's criticism as one of critical acceptance. I.e., while such techniques contain *some* legitimate utility, they are not capable of completely mitigating the everyday orientation from which we normally understand and interpret our experience. Heidegger's criticism of Husserl's approach, on the other hand, is one of explicit rejection.

Although Heidegger recognized his indebtedness to Husserl, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology can be viewed as a blatant rejection of the early Husserl's insistence that phenomenology should proceed by bracketing cultural, existential, and historical concerns. For Heidegger, any such bracketing will obscure and conceal experience as opposed to illuminating and unconcealing experience and its structures. Furthermore, the notion that we must begin to

[10] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2013, Introduction, p. XIV

see ourselves as no longer of this world is to misunderstand the kind of being that we are. Or, put more directly, such a statement distorts both the being of the world and the human being. If Husserl's phenomenology can be construed as an attempt to analyze and describe experience in a quasi-detached manner, free from the orientation of everyday experience, Heidegger's hermeneutical project can, at least in part, be contrasted with Husserl as the attempt to make sense of the orientation of everyday experience. Instead of bracketing the everyday way in which we normally experience, understand, interpret, and accept the world, Heidegger seeks to illuminate and understand it. "Heidegger argues that for the most part we find ourselves engaged with a meaningful, pre-theoretical, non-objective, familiar environing world… [and that] we are always already immersed in that which is meaningful."[11] Heidegger insists that we are the kind of beings which make sense of experience and that we cannot help but make sense of experience in some way or other, and he wants to illuminate the structures of experience which make possible our existence as beings which are always already immersed in an intelligible world.

Considering this, Heidegger's hermeneutical project in *Being and Time* (henceforth referred to as BT) can be viewed as an argument against the idea that one can, in practice, successfully bracket out all such concerns. This is because, for Heidegger, human experience is necessitated by interpretation and understanding.[12] An attempt to bracket out the everyday modes of making sense, interpreting, and understanding experience, then, is not only an impossible feat, but it is explicitly incoherent to Heidegger's existential analytic in BT. Methodological criticisms are only one aspect of Heidegger's comprehensive rejection of Husserl's project, however.

[11] Farin, Ingo. "Hermeneutics (Hermeneutik)." In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, p. 375-79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.101.
[12] See *Being and Time*, Chapters 3-6

A further criticism that Heidegger makes explicit is Husserl's Cartesian inheritance. That is, Heidegger views Husserl's project as too accepting of the philosophical tradition that Descartes has constructed. This Cartesian acceptance leads to a distorted foundation for phenomenological research because the phenomenological point of departure, under the influence of the Cartesian tradition, is defined "not out of the matters themselves but instead out of a traditional prejudgment of it."[13] In other words, the research which aimed at "getting back to the things themselves" is, from the beginning, distorted through traditional constraints. Such constraints include the presumption that subject/object and consciousness/reality are legitimate distinctions. Under constructed constraints, Husserl refuses to allow the phenomena to inform the foundations of his research project. "…Therefore, phenomenology is *unphenomenological!—that is to say,* purportedly phenomenological!"[14] This Cartesian influence is readily identified in the following passage taken from *Ideas II*: "For if we eliminate all minds from the world, there is no longer a nature. But if we eliminate nature, the 'true' objectively intersubjective existence, there is always still something left: mind as individual mind."[15] Heidegger reads this passage as indicative of Husserl's "primal separation of being."[16] Or, put differently, it exposes the separation that Husserl assumes—a separation between mind and body, extension and mentality, subject and object, internal consciousness and external reality. Such a "primal separation" reveals Husserl's orientation to the Cartesian tradition and subsequently distorts the phenomenological project from the beginning.

[13] Heidegger, Martin. 2009. *History of the Concept of Time*. Indiana University Press, p. 128.
[14] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 128
[15] Quoted in Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 122
[16] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 123

It is worth noting that these criticisms, as Heidegger himself admitted, pertain to Husserl's early work. "It is characteristic of Husserl that his questioning is still fully in flux, so that we must in the final analysis be cautious in our critique."[17] This criticism, then, should not be mistaken for a comprehensive analysis of Husserl's entire corpus of work. Instead, it is meant to situate Heidegger's divergence from Husserl in the early history of phenomenology. Putting aside concerns of contrast regarding Husserl and Heidegger, there is one last and very important characterization of phenomenology, given by Heidegger, that I want to articulate before moving on.

In BT and in the lecture course titled *History of the Concept of Time*, which took place at the University of Marburg in 1925 (two years prior to the publication of BT), Heidegger offers a difficult but illuminating interpretation of phenomenology which leans on the ancient Greek use of the terms "phenomenon" and "logos." As Heidegger shows in his lecture course, "phenomenon" derives from the Greek expression "φαινόμενον," which itself refers to "φαίνεσθαι," the middle voice of which means "to show itself." "The middle voice φαίνεσθαι is a form of φαίνω: to bring something to light, to make it visible in itself, to put it in a bright light."[18] Looking to BT, we find similar characterizations of phenomenon: "Thus we must *keep in mind* that the expression 'phenomenon' signifies *that which shows itself in itself*, the manifest."[19]

Logos, Heidegger explains in the lecture course, was understood by the Greeks as a kind of "discoursing."[20] The discoursing, however, was not a mere utterance of words or assertions,

[17] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 121
[18] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 81
[19] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 51
[20] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 84
For an alternative articulation of logos as understood by the Greeks, see *From the Beginning to Plato*, chapter 3 by

but rather it was understood as a form of discursive communication which is a "pointing out and letting something be seen… something vocal which shows something… a making visible and perceptible" that which is talked about.[21] In BT, logos is described as that which "lets something be seen" where the 'something' is "what the discourse is about."[22]

Bringing together the signification of phenomenon and logos, we have the method of phenomenology as a "letting the manifest in itself be seen from itself."[23] And also, in BT, "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself."[24] For the sake of dispelling some of the obscurities in Heidegger's phrasing, one might understand the above characterizations as follows: Logos points to the phenomena in such a way that the phenomena become unconcealed. Logos allows the phenomenon to come into view by lifting it out of experience such that it can be seen as it is in itself in an originary experience. Or, put differently, logos provides the illumination which brings to light the phenomena. It is in this sense that Heidegger asserts that "phenomenology is precisely the work of laying open and letting be seen, understood as the methodologically directed dismantling of concealments."[25]

In my phenomenological analysis of meaning, I will oscillate between descriptive and existential-hermeneutic phenomenology. That is, I will describe a concrete-particular experience of meaningfulness before proceeding to a deeper analysis of the existential structures of that

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Catherine Osborne, and *Knowledge and Unity in Heraclitus* by P.K. Curd.
Both of these works convey the logos of Heraclitus as something like a unifying rationale that underlies all things, which contrasts with Heidegger's interpretation.

[21] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 84
[22] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 56
[23] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 85
[24] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 58
[25] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 86

experience. In so doing, I will be attempting to lift the phenomenon (meaningfulness) into view in such a way that it is brought to light in its manifestness.

1.2 A Preliminary Articulation of Meaning

To avoid misunderstandings regarding the term "meaning," it is necessary to preface this section with the following negative qualification: The meaning I am referring to—the type of meaning which is the focus of my investigation—is not synonymous with the kind of "meaning" one is referring to when one asks about the "meaning," definition, or sense of a concept. Furthermore, the way in which I am using the term differs from what Heidegger is referring to when he asks about "the meaning of Being."[26] Reformulated, Heidegger is asking something like "what is it for things *to be* (at all)."[27] In other words, he is after something more like the "sense" of Being. "Meaning of Being," in the original, is "Sinn von Sein."[28] Sinn can be translated as "sense" but can also be rendered as "meaning." The way in which I am using the term meaning, then, should not be confused or conflated with either Heidegger's usage or with linguistic, semantical, or conceptual manners of meaning.[29]

The meaning of life, or as it is spoken of more often in contemporary culture—meaning *in* life—is as mysterious and difficult to grasp as it is significant. Its significance shows itself in the value which is placed on living a "meaningful" life. More than this, however, the value of a meaningful existence shows itself most lucidly when an existence is deprived of meaning. Such deprivation, if prolonged, can lead to a state of intense dispirit, characterized by an unmotivated,

[26] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 19
[27] Schear, Joseph K. "Being (Sein): In Being and Time." In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 87-93. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.022, 87.
[28] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 2
[29] This shouldn't be construed as denying any relation between these diverse concepts of "meaning." For example, that coherence (making sense of one's life) is a core aspect of meaning in life shows a relation between linguistic meaning and meaning in life, according to some researchers including cognitive scientist John Vervaeke.

aimless, depressive, and despairing way of being—sometimes culminating in a fleeing from meaninglessness through suicide.[30] Psychiatrist and founder of logotherapy, Viktor Frankl, termed this mode of meaninglessness the "existential vacuum."[31] This sense of existential meaninglessness has become prolific enough in modern life that we are said to be going through a "meaning crisis."[32] But what is it, exactly, that one is attempting to articulate when the term "meaning" is invoked?

The question of meaningfulness is much like the question of time as addressed by Saint Augustine in Confessions XI: "What is time then? If nobody asks me, I know; but if I were desirous to explain it to one that should ask me, plainly I know not."[33] Like Augustine's lamentation on time, meaningfulness is something familiar yet hidden. It is familiar in that we recognize it when we experience it, and it is hidden in that it escapes precise definition. It is neither a material object that one might locate by "looking," nor is it an object of the intellect that one might summon as if it were a fact that is ready to be rehearsed. Rather, it seems to be an existential and experiential phenomenon, and it is intimately connected with the phenomenon of purpose. During meaningful experiences, one feels (authentically) at home in the world, one feels a sense of purpose and responsibleness, and one cultivates a kind of resourcefulness and resiliency which motivates and brings vitality to existence and an enthusiasm for life. To quote Viktor Frankl, "a strong meaning orientation is a health-promoting and life-prolonging, if not a

[30] Costanza, Alessandra, Massimo Prelati, and Maurizio Pompili. "The Meaning in Life in Suicidal Patients: The Presence and the Search for Constructs. A Systematic Review." 2019. *Medicina* 55 (8): p. 465. https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina55080465.

[31] Frankl, Viktor E. *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*. New York: Plume, 2014, p. 44.

Viktor Frankl's work on meaning in life will be discussed at length in chapter 3.

[32] Vervaeke, John. 2022. "The Return of Meaning". Institute of Art and Ideas. February 4, 2022. https://iai.tv/articles/the-return-of-meaning-auid-2043.

[33] Augustine. *Confessions, Volume II: Books 9-13.* Translated by William Watts. Loeb Classical Library 27. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912, p. 239.

life-preserving, agent."[34] As an experience, it seems to be something that is part of a larger "movement" of existence, which is to say, simply, that as one lives out their existence, there are experiences in which one brushes against the grace of meaningfulness. As part of the movement of existence, meaningfulness is not something we attain "once and for all," but is, rather, something that requires renewal.

If meaning is experienced, then an experiencing being is implicated in discussions of meaning. Furthermore—and phenomenologically speaking—an experiencing being is always experiencing from within a world. In other words, when we look at experience in general, we find that the experiencing being is always embedded within a world. Meaning, then, seems to be a phenomenon which is necessarily inseparable from an experiencing being and the experiencing being is embedded in a world. Because meaningfulness is unique and contextual, the meaning(s) in life which are to be investigated are "unique meanings of individual situations."[35] Particular experiences of meaning will be my point of departure, then, and from these, I will attempt to discern the structures of meaningful experience. I will refer to particular experiences of meaning as instances of "meaning in life," and I will refer to the structural aspects of those particular instances as "existential meaning." This distinction will become clear in chapter four.

It may be necessary, at this time, to emphasize that this articulation of meaning, as laid down in this section, is nothing more than a preliminary articulation of the phenomenon that is to be investigated. This preliminary indication lacks supporting evidence and phenomenological analysis. Before the phenomenological analysis can occur, however, I must first articulate the

[34] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p. 30
[35] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p. 37

existential framework in which this analysis is embedded. In the next chapter, I will begin to develop this framework through an elucidation of Heidegger's existential analytic.

Chapter 2 – Establishing a Heideggerian Existential Framework

Insofar as my analysis of meaning will draw heavily on a number of concepts found in the existential framework that Heidegger has explicated in BT and elsewhere,[1] it is necessary to describe some of the fundamental aspects of Heidegger's existential framework—including their significance in relation to my later analysis of meaning.[2]

2.1 Dasein and Being-in-the-world

BT is an ontological treatise which takes its departure in the "*existential analytic of Dasein.*"[3] Or, more simply, Heidegger is taking the human being as the point of departure for his phenomenological analysis which is in search of the a priori structures of existence.[4] In this context, a priori structures indicate that which "is already there in experience as the condition of its possibility."[5] Existential a priori structures, then, can be understood as the ontological structures of human beings which are always already there and without which existence would not be as it is.[6] "Dasein" indicates a fundamental a priori existential structure of the human being as the kind of entity that is "being-there" (being-there is the literal translation of Da-sein).[7]

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[1] See also, *The History of the Concept of Time*, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, and *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* by Martin Heidegger.

[2] While this may already be implied, it is worth stating explicitly: I can neither provide a complete articulation of Heidegger's basic existential framework within the confines of this project, nor can I treat any of the relevant aspects exhaustively. To do so would require a volume in and of itself. As such, I will only explicate the aspects of Heidegger's existential framework which are directly relevant to my analysis of meaning.

[3] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 34

[4] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 32-33

[5] King, Magda. *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*. Albany, NY, 2001. p. 45

[6] It is in this sense that Heidegger criticized Husserl for not going far enough. I.e., that Husserl didn't get to "things themselves" because that which is most fundamental for Heidegger are the structures which constitute the conditions of possibility for having any experience whatsoever.

[7] Escudero, Jesús Adrián. "Existential (Existenzial) and Existentiell (Existenziell)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 300–301. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.079. p. 300

Being-there is a fundamental characterization of the human being because the human being is firstly an entity that finds itself "there," being-in-the-world amongst other entities.

The "being-in" character of being-in-the-world, however, isn't to be taken in the same sense as when one says that the "clothes are in the closet." In stating that the clothes are in the closet, one is, effectively, saying that there is a presently occurring set of entities (the clothes) and they are *in* some container-type thing called the closet. "By this 'in' we mean the relationship of Being which two entities extended 'in' space have to each other with regard to their location in that space."[8] In contrast, the "being-in," which is an existential structure of human being, is not something which can ever be "inside" or "outside" of the world in the way that the clothes can be in the closet or outside the closet.

> Being-in is not a 'property' which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could with it. It is not the case that [Dasein] 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, 'a relationship-of-Being' towards the 'world'—a world with which he provides himself occasionally.[9]

Because the human being is never "inside" or "outside" the world, but always already finds itself being-there amongst entities, it has no need to transcend an internal sphere of subjectivity in order to encounter the world or other entities that would otherwise somehow be "out there," external to the human being. The human being is, instead, "bound up…with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world."[10] In being-there, then, we find ourselves always already existing in this or that situation, engaged with some entity or set of entities, with

[8] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 79
[9] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 84
[10] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 82

the further implication that our situation is inseparable from the world. This notion of human being, "unlike traditional conceptions of the subject, does not carve us off from the world but emphasizes the fact that we are situated in the world. We find ourselves in it, rather than gazing upon it from some mysterious external standpoint."[11] The inseparability of the human being and the world points to the holistic structure of being-in-the-world: "The compound expression 'Being-in-the-world' indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a *unitary* phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole."[12] In other words, being-in-the-world refers to the co-constitution of human being and world which is necessarily (and a priori) unitary and holistic. To conceive of world and human being as if they were two separate entities is to split "the phenomenon asunder" after which "there is no prospect of putting it together again from the fragments."[13] When I use the term "being-in-the-world," then, I am pointing to this unitary structure of human being, world, and intraworld entities (including other human beings) that we encounter and are concerned with in our daily lives. More specifically, I wish to indicate the necessary and unceasing interdependence of human existence and world so that when, for example, I describe meaningfulness as something bound up with both human being and world, I can convey this intimate relationship by using the term "being-in-the-world."

Phenomenologically speaking, Heidegger is pointing out a genuine phenomenon in describing being-in-the-world as an a priori existential structure which characterizes the kind of being that we are. If we look to our experience, we really do find ourselves being-there in this way. At no point in our existence did we have to set out in search of the world, prior to which we

[11] Ratcliffe, Matthew. *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. p. 43
[12] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 78
[13] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 170

were somehow isolated and worldless beings. Neither have we been in a situation where we had to force ourselves out of an inner container of subjectivity to meet the world and the entities that we find ourselves involved with. Being-in-the-world is a condition of possibility for being the very beings that we are—without which we would not be. We are never without a world, and we are always-already involved and concerned with various things in our very being-there.

In our concernful being-there, things *matter* to us; our existence *matters* to us. This, for Heidegger, is phenomenological evidence that we are the kind of entity whose being "is an *issue.*"[14] To say that one's being is an issue is to say, simply, that what one does, what one pursues, and what one is, *matters* to one. For Heidegger, we are always-already engaged in a multitude of concerns which includes everything from the most mundane tasks (washing the dishes, walking the dog, driving to work) to more personal and meaningful projects (cultivating one's passion for art, raising children, writing a thesis). "In everything Dasein does, who it is is up for grabs. That is, in acting one way rather than another, Dasein takes a stand on who it is."[15] We understand ourselves in relation to the stand we take on our being. For example, I understand myself as a student. As such, I engage in research, I participate in academic discussions, I read, I write papers, etc. As a student, these are the things that concern me. These things matter to me. We are not confined to a single way of being, however. One might be a student, son or daughter, friend, pet owner, husband or wife, guitar player, chess player, grocery store clerk or office administrator, etc.—all of which presuppose a set of concerns and a way in which things matter to one. To be engaged in a multiplicity of concernful dealings is, for Heidegger, an a priori

[14] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 67

[15] Blattner, William. "Care (Sorge)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 137–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.033. p. 138

existential structure of human being which he terms "care."[16] "Care is a condition of possibility for apprehending the world as a significant whole, as an arena of possible projects, goals, and purposes."[17] In other words, making sense of ourselves, the world, and our projects; engaging with the world and the various things and people we find in the world, all presuppose a sense in which things matter to us. That things matter to us in some way is part of the a priori structure of our being-in-the-world. How it is possible for things to matter to one in this way is further investigated by Heidegger. The two aspects of Heidegger's investigation into the care structure which are integral to my analysis of meaning are attunement (befindlichkeit) and understanding (verstehen).[18]

2.2 Attunement and Mood

Heidegger introduces attunement[19] in section 29 of BT, immediately stating that attunement is most familiar to us in our everyday experience of moods.[20] Moods, for Heidegger, are a ubiquitous feature of human existence in that we always have a mood.[21] Moods disclose our situation to us, even if in a vague or implicit manner. For example, in having a mood, we

[16] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 225
[17] Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, p. 46-47
[18] Heidegger's Care structure is used to refer to the "formally existential totality of Dasein's ontological structural whole" (BT, p. 237). This structural whole is also, sometimes, referred to as "disclosedness." Discourse (rede) constitutes the third equiprimordial phenomena of disclosedness, alongside attunement and understanding (BT, p. 171-172). Due to the limitations of my project, I will not elaborate on the phenomenon of discourse.
[19] In the translation that I am referencing, which is the Macquarrie and Robinson translation, befindlichkeit is translated as "state-of-mind." I opt for the Joan Stambaugh translation of befindlichkeit as "attunement." State-of-mind carries connotations which Heidegger is desperately trying to shrug off (mind/body and internal/external dichotomies, for example). Attunement follows the original meaning more closely, as it conveys the idea that someone is *somewhere* oriented to something in some way or other. When quoting from BT, I will replace "state-of-mind" with "attunement" in brackets.
[20] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 173
As Katherine Withy points out in her contribution to *Heidegger on Affect,* it would be a mistake to interpret this as meaning that moods are the *only* manifestation of attunement (p. 154). Withy makes a strong case for other *ways* or *styles* of being which fit the structure of attunement but would not be regarded as a "mood."
[21] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 173

find ourselves as existing in this or that situation, engaged with some entity or set of entities, with the further implication that our situation is embedded in the world. Thus, we find Heidegger stating that "*the mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself toward something.*"[22] To say that moods disclose our being-in-the-world is to say that moods reveal to us: 1) Ourselves as existing beings, 2) The world, and 3) Whatever it is in the world with which we are concerned. To say that moods "make it possible first of all to direct oneself toward something" is to say that moods, as a mode of attunement, provide the a priori conditions for any specific directedness or activity that we might engage in. In other words, without attunement, which provides the original disclosure of, and openness to, the world and existence as such, we would be incapable of comporting ourselves in any specific manner.[23] This is because "it is moods that allow things to matter."[24] Following his earlier rejection of the internal/external dichotomy, Heidegger says that moods are not "an *inner condition* which then reaches forth in an enigmatical way and puts its mark on things and persons…It comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such being."[25] To see how this might be so, in addition to seeing how moods might disclose something about the world, we can look at Heidegger's example of fear.

Fear, Heidegger says, has three constitutive moments. "(1) that in the face of which we fear, (2) fearing, and (3) that about which we fear."[26] That in the face of which we fear is something threatening which, "is in every case something we encounter within-the-world."[27] To take a crude example, we might imagine encountering a large bear during a leisurely walk in the

[22] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176
[23] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176
[24] Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, p. 47
[25] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176
[26] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 179
[27] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 179

woods. Such an encounter would induce a mood of fearing (the fearing itself). That about which we are fearful is our bodily well-being. This fearing mood is not a subjectivist coloring; it discloses something real about the world while simultaneously disclosing the "there" of my existence and the fact that my existence is an issue for me. Thus, the mood arises in a unitary manner—out of "being-in-the-world, as a way of such being"—as neither an exclusively "internal" nor "external" phenomenon.[28]

Experiences of fear, in the sense just described, are intentional. Fear has an intentional entity in the face of which one is fearful. Furthermore, in a fearing mood, I am fearful about a determinate possibility (my being mauled in the above example). As will see, a mood of this kind differs from the more "far-reaching" kind that Heidegger refers to as *grundstimmung* (grounding-mood or fundamental attunement).[29] Heidegger articulated several fundamental attunements throughout his career, including wonder, boredom, and, in BT, *anxiety.*

When one is attuned by anxiety, one feels "uncanny."[30] Uncanniness refers to "an unsettled feeling produced by a breakdown in familiarity."[31] Anxiety deprives the everyday world of significance; one experiences a breakdown in one's concernful dealings such that things cease to matter in the usual sense. In contemporary literature, this sort of description sounds more akin to severe depression[32] than what we usually refer to as anxiety, and Ratcliffe helpfully

[28] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176
[29] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 226-227; Slaby, Jan. "Disposedness (Befindlichkeit)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 242–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.061. p. 243
[29] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 233
[30] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 233
[31] Withy, Katherine. "Uncanniness (Unheimlichkeit)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 789–91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.213. p. 789
[32] Heidegger would have vehemently rejected this comparison. Anxiety has methodological significance for Heidegger, which is distinct from the sort of "lived" way in which we think about depression and anxiety. I will elaborate on this methodological aspect of anxiety in chapter five.

cites autobiographical accounts of those who have suffered from depression which describes this lack of significance from a first-person perspective:

> It became impossible to reach anything. Like, how do I get up and walk to that chair if the essential thing that we mean by chair, something that lets us sit down and rest or upholds us as we read a book, something that shares our life in that way, has lost the quality of being able to do that? […] You know that you have lost life itself. You've lost a habitable earth. You've lost the invitation to live that the universe extends to us at every moment. You've lost something that people don't even know is. That's why it's so hard to explain.[33]

This lack of significance illuminates the breakdown in the way things normally matter to us such that the world seems strangely unfamiliar, and one feels disconnected and "out of place."[34] Heidegger claims that this breakdown of significance effectively displaces one from the everyday world in which we are usually immersed. Moreover, anxiety discloses the "possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there."[35] This is to say that the possibility of my death is revealed to me. Because my death is *mine* and mine alone, and because anxiety effectively extracts one from the everyday world, "anxiety individualizes."[36]

To say that anxiety individualizes is to say that one no longer understands oneself in relation to the everyday world.[37] Rather, one begins to understand oneself as an autonomous

[33] Qtd. In Ratcliffe, Matthew "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling." Chapter In *Feelings of Being Alive*, edited by Jorg Fingerhut & Sabine Marienberg, De Gruyter. 2012. doi:10.1515/9783110246599. p. 13-14
[34] One can also find descriptions that fit this breakdown of familiarity in Jean-Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea*.
[35] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 294
[36] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 235
[37] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 235; Mulhall, Stephen. *The Routledge Guidebook to Heidegger's Being and Time*. London: Routledge. 2013. p. 112

being with possibilities for being which are one's own.[38] To understand oneself in this way is to recognize that one has the capacity and freedom to choose *this* way of existence rather than *that* way; it is to recognize that one's ability-to-be is in fact one's own. "An ability-to-be is the capacity to inhabit a particular range of possibilities…. each Dasein has its own ability to be."[39] Consequently, anxiety discloses the possibility that one can determine one's own being as opposed to having it determined by outside influences.[40] How does anxiety differ from fear such that it can be considered a "far-reaching" fundamental attunement whereas fear is a more limiting mood with both intentional content (e.g., bear) and a definite possibility that one is fearing (being mauled)?

Anxiety takes on a similar structure as fear insofar as there is an "in-the-face-of-which" and an "about-which" of anxiety.[41] In anxiety, however, "that in the face of which one has anxiety is not an entity within-the-world."[42] Rather, anxiety is anxious in the face of one's own being-in-the-world.[43] That "about-which" one is anxious is also one's own being-in-the-world.[44] This is to say that it is not a definite possibility of one's existence that is at issue (such as being mauled by a bear). Rather, one's existence as a whole is at issue. Furthermore, anxiety does not have a singular intentional referent which is the source of its anxiety. This attuning structure is

[38] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 235
[39] Large, William. "Ability-to-Be (Seinkönnen)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 7–8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.003. p. 7
[40] The extent to which one can determine their own being, however, is not infinite. One is "thrown" into the world with a set of characteristics which one cannot change. For example, the era in which one is born, one's family, one's genetics, one's height, one's natural affinities, etc. are facts one cannot change. Within the confines of one's "thrownness," however, one has the capacity for choosing their existence. One might choose to study art as a possibility of their being as opposed to the business degree that society might be urging them toward, for example. See chapter 203 of *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon* for more detailed information on "thrownness."
[41] Withy, Katherine. "Anxiety (Angst) and Fear (Furcht)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 37–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.010. p. 38
[42] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 231
[43] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 230
[44] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 232

fundamental and far-reaching in the sense that, in anxiety, one's sense of reality has changed. It isn't just that a particular object has ceased to matter, it is that the entire world is deprived of significance such that whatever it is that one directs oneself toward is experienced in this way. Similarly, one isn't anxious about a singular or determinate possibility, one is anxious about one's entire existence, including both one's past and futural possibilities.[45]

While Heidegger does some work to conceptually distinguish fundamental attunements (such as anxiety) from moods with intentional content (such as fear), he fails in consistently maintaining this distinction. For example, in BT, the section on fear is titled "fear as a mode of [attunement]"[46] and anxiety is referred to as a "basic [attunement]."[47] Recall, Heidegger says that attunement is "the most familiar" as "mood."[48] As such, attunement and mood are not synonymous. Mood is a *mode* of attunement. From this, one is tempted to take fear exclusively and consistently as a mode of attunement (mood) and anxiety as an attunement proper. Nevertheless, Heidegger does not maintain such a clear distinction, for in other passages he explicitly refers to fear as an attunement.[49] In abandoning a strict delineation between mood and attunement, Heidegger runs together "specific intentional states" and "the presupposed [attunements] that make these possible."[50] This results in an obfuscation of two conceptually distinct kinds of phenomena which play distinctive phenomenological roles.[51] After briefly sketching some of the basic characteristics of "grundstimmung" (grounding-mood/fundamental attunement), I will continue by making explicit the distinction between mood and attunement

[45] Heidegger didn't use this verbiage, but we might say that in this existential anxiety, one is anxious not only about who/what they are but what they might be/become.
[46] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 179
[47] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 228
[48] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 173
[49] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 180
[50] Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, p. 49
[51] Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, p. 49

such that the terms are firmly set for the remainder of my project. While this distinction may be, in part, a departure from Heidegger who did not consistently distinguish these phenomena from one another, doing so will bring clarity to my analysis.

2.3 Distinguishing Attunement and Mood

As Heidegger explains in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, fundamental attunements "are something which in advance determine our being with one another. It seems as though an attunement is in each case already there, so to speak, like an atmosphere in which we first immerse ourselves in each case and which then attunes us through and through. It does not merely seem so, it is so…"[52] It is *through* fundamental attunements that the world is disclosed and experienced (they are atmospheric); they structure one's experience and open the possible ways in which one can experience the world and they determine the possible ways in which one might encounter and engage with other people and entities in the world. Fundamental attunements "lie at the ground of our current openness to entities, opening the world and opening Dasein to itself."[53] Rather than calling these far-reaching and atmospheric phenomena "fundamental attunements," I will hereafter refer to them simply as "attunements." Attunements are to be distinguished from phenomena such as moods/emotions/affects.

In helping to distinguish attunement from mood, Ratcliffe introduces an original term that is meant to retain the way in which Heidegger's notion of attunement indicates "a background sense of belonging to the world" while also creating space between Ratcliffe's original concept

[52] Heidegger, Martin. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2012. p. 100

[53] Withy, Katherine. "Mood (Stimmung)." In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 500–503. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.137. p. 503

and Heidegger's notion of attunement such that Ratcliffe can expand on it in an original way.[54] The term Ratcliffe introduces which acts as a replacement for attunement is *existential feeling*.

> Existential feelings are variants of a non-localized, felt sense of reality and belonging, something that all intentionally directed experiences and thoughts presuppose. When I have an emotional experience of *p*, perceive *q*, or think about *r*, I already *find myself in a world*, situated in a realm where it is possible to direct oneself towards entities, events, and situations in these and other ways.[55]

While I will not adopt the term "existential feeling," Ratcliffe's conceptualization of it fits neatly with the sense of attunement that I wish to convey.[56] Taking this and the description of "grundstimmung" given above, we can formalize attunement as a phenomenon with the following characteristics: 1) Attunements are atmospheric in that they pervade one's experience to such an extent that one experiences the world *through* one's attuning structure. 2) Attunement "determines the ways in which things can matter to us" and, consequently, attunement determines the ways in which we encounter the world.[57] Insofar as attunement determines our concernful dealings, the possible ways in which we might involve ourselves in the world are similarly determined through attunement because that with which we are involved (or concerned) is dependent on what matters to us. Attunement constrains and orients the ways in which the

[54] Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, p. 52
[55] Ratcliffe, Matthew. "Existential Feelings." In *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, edited by Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer, 250–61. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. p. 251
[56] Although I will not takeover Ratcliffe's term, I will adopt aspects of his characterization of existential feeling. My reasons for not taking over Ratcliffe's term are as follows: 1) The emphasis on *feeling* reduces the sense in which attunement is an orienting structure. 2) While Ratcliffe rightly criticizes Heidegger for running together pre-intentional attunements with intentional moods, Ratcliffe himself runs together distinctive phenomena. Namely, he runs together attunement and understanding into the singular concept of "existential feeling." Because of the important role that understanding plays in Heidegger's analytic in relation to attunement, including their distinctive significance for *temporality*, I will treat understanding as a conceptually distinctive phenomenon.
[57] Ratcliffe, "Phenomenology of Existential Feelings, 10

human being relates to the world as a whole. As such, attunement is pre-intentional; it grounds intentional activity. 3) Attunements are ways of finding oneself in the world (and among other people/entities).[58] 4) Attunements not only disclose the world by structuring our experience of it, but they also disclose important existential matters of oneself to oneself.[59] Although attunements are disclosive, they are also concealing. I.e., as attunement discloses the world, thereby orienting one to it in such a way that some things stand out as significant and significant in a particular sense, other aspects of the world become concealed.[60] 5) They are neither internal nor external, neither subjective nor objective.[61] 6) Attunement is an a priori existential structure; we are always-already attuned in some way or other.

Attunement can be contrasted with phenomena denoted by terms such as "mood," "emotion," or "affect." A mood, such as fear, has an entity (the bear in our example) that is the intentional referent of the mood. Such moods do not constitute a background sense of being-in-the-world. For example, when one escapes the bear and is safely in one's home, one is no longer in a fearful mood. In a sense, when one escapes the bear, one also escapes the mood.[62] Contrasted with anxiety, there is not a singular referent that one might escape in order to escape this attunement. One's experience as a whole is determined through an anxious attunement such

[58] This maintains the original sense of "befindlichkeit" as a way of finding oneself situated in the world.
[59] For example, we saw that anxiety discloses one's capacity for freedom through the way in which it individualizes.
[60] The world is never disclosed in its entirety. One could not be oriented such that *everything* was salient and significant. As such there is a simultaneous concealing with unconcealing, which is fundamental to Heidegger's notion of truth as aletheia. See Heidegger's *On the Essence of Truth*.
[61] If one wishes to adopt a term for this, one might choose "transjective" to indicate phenomena which transcend the traditional subject/object dichotomy. The history of this term is difficult to track but can be found in Christie Walter Rinehart's *Love and Compassion*, Kaustuv Roy's *Limits of the Secular*, and John Vervaeke's lecture series "Awakening from the meaning crisis." In the 20th century, Viktor Frankl employed a similar term, "trans-subjective," in his book titled *Will to Meaning*. The term was meant indicate something which transcends both the subject and object while implicating both as being in a relation where the relation is required for the trans-subjective phenomena to manifest or be experienced. Frankl points to Rudolph Allers as the source of that term. Transjective, then, might be rooted in the earlier "trans-subjective."
[62] Granting that escaping the mood might require adequate time to calm down after the intense interaction.

that it isn't solely object x that is deprived of significance. Rather, one experiences the world through the attuning structure in a pervasive manner such that everything has been deprived of significance. Moods, emotions, and affects, then, can be formalized in contrast with attunement as follows: Moods, emotions, and affects are isolated phenomena (in a minimal sense) with an explicit intentional referent. They are minimally isolated in the sense that they do not constitute a background sense of existence and thus do not holistically structure one's experience. Instead, they constitute a region (however big or small) of one's worldly involvement. That they are intentional is to say that they have a directed focus or explicit intentional referent. Mood presupposes attunement insofar as attunement structures one's experience and first makes it possible for one to engage in directed activity.

For all this conceptual distinguishing, we must acknowledge that matters are more complicated in experience. For example, although attunement essentially grounds and structures intentional activity including mood, emotion, and even thought, due to the way in which it discloses and structures *what matters* and *how it matters*, intentional involvement might itself influence attunement. For example, one might be angry with someone they regard as a friend. Perhaps this friend betrayed them in an unforgiveable way. What might begin as a minimally isolated emotion could influence one's attunement such that they begin to experience the world more comprehensively through an attunement of disappointment and resentment. Something similar has been noted by Ratcliffe regarding thought: "The form and content of thoughts might be constrained by [attunement], but this does not prohibit their subsequently affecting [attunement]."[63] For example, when someone is suffering from severe depression, their

[63] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 25
I have replaced Ratcliffe's "existential feeling" with "attunement" in brackets.

attunement constrains their thoughts and beliefs such that they might not "believe that they could ever recover."[64] Continuing, Ratcliffe claims that "this is because depression involves the removal of significant possibilities from experience. Hence one is no longer able to entertain the possibility of things ever being significantly different from how they are now. Recovery, involving just such a difference, thus seems impossible – one cannot even think it."[65] A particular thought or series of thoughts, however, might well influence one's attuning structure. Ratcliffe gives the example of "receiving distressing news" which could alter one's attunement.[66] In summary, while attunement (taken as a pre-intentional background structure), is to be distinguished from mood/emotion/affect (taken as an intentional and minimally isolated phenomena), we mustn't forget that these are interconnected phenomena with bi-directional influence. Nevertheless, it is helpful to treat them as unique concepts in our analysis because they play importantly distinctive phenomenological roles.

Attunement, however, is not an isolated phenomenon. Understanding is equiprimordial with attunement such that attunement "always has its understanding" and understanding is always attuned.[67]

2.4 Understanding and Possibility

We have, up until now, been talking of attunement as if it were already attuned-understanding, for "although attunement reveals elementally and far-reachingly, it yet fails to illuminate fully the meaning of what it reveals."[68] For example, when we talked about the

[64] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 25
[65] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 25
[66] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 24
[67] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 182
[68] King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 59

disclosedness of anxiety as revealing one's possibilities for being (one's ability-to-be), we were implicitly granting the attunement its understanding. Similarly, in our example of mood (as a mode of attunement), the possibility of one's demise was understood in the fearful encounter with the bear. Understanding was implied insofar as understanding discloses the meaning of those contexts and situations with which we are attuned and, perhaps most importantly, understanding discloses "possibilities *as* possibilities."[69] Possibilities, for Heidegger, signify possible ways of being.[70] We are always-already projecting onto possible ways of being, often in a mundane manner.[71] The significance of the disclosure of possibilities through understanding is in the transcendence which it affords. Understanding discloses to me more than just the way I have been or the way I currently am, it discloses how I could be through the way in which it allows me to project myself onto possible ways of existing.[72] This notion of projection and transcendence, Magda King explains, is baked into the way that "Heidegger characterizes understanding as an *Entwurf*. *Entwerfen* means to throw forth…*to project.*"[73] This idea of throwing oneself toward possible ways of being—of transcending oneself—is the essential characteristic of understanding.[74]

While Ratcliffe emphasizes the importance of possibility in his articulation of existential feeling, which is an adaptation of attunement, he neglects to reference the phenomenon of understanding as described by Heidegger, thereby conflating attunement and understanding.[75]

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[69] King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 59

[70] Faulconer, James E. "Possibility (Möglichkeit)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 595–97. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.161. p. 595

[71] Earlier when we talked about concernful dealings, we presupposed projecting onto possible ways of being through understanding. I.e., in my concerns as a student.

[72] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 184-185

[73] King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time,* p. 59

[74] We will see in the next chapter that transcendence is central to Viktor Frankl's notion of meaning in life.

[75] While this might not be a problem in every case, it is problematic if one intends to make use of Heidegger's notion of temporality. Attunement and understanding each disclose a unique aspect of temporality. To conflate

Ratcliffe says that "existential feeling is centrally about having a sense of possibility"[76]; they "constitute the general *space* of possibilities that shapes ongoing experience and activity."[77] For both Ratcliffe and Heidegger, possibilities are real aspects of our experience, though we are often unaware of the important role that they play in experience. Their significance is more readily revealed in situations where our experience is deprived of possibilities. For example, in cases of severe depression, one's possibility landscape has been altered such that there is an experienced absence of possibilities. In other words, the absence of significant possibilities is itself experienced. This absence is implied in the following patient report:

> It's almost like I am there but I can't touch anything or I can't connect. Everything requires massive effort and I'm not really able to do anything. Like if I notice something needs cleaning or moving, it's like it's out of reach, or the act of doing that thing isn't in my world at that time… I can see so much detail but I cannot be part of it. I suppose feeling disconnected is the best way to describe it.[78]

As Ratcliffe goes on to explain, the patient is describing a world which lacks "certain kinds of possibility such as tangibility, practical significance and enticement to act."[79] The patient experiences the world *through* their attunement, and as a result, there is a "radical shift in the sense of reality and belonging" for someone that is attuned through depression.[80] An aspect of

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them, then, would obscure the way in which temporality is disclosed. Because I will make use of Heidegger's temporality in later chapters, I have opted to follow Heidegger in conceptually distinguishing attunement from understanding.

[76] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 6

[77] Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, p. 121-122

[78] Qtd in Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 14

[79] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 14

[80] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 14

this shift is due to a change in the "*kinds* of possibility" that structures one's experience.[81] *Kinds* can be contrasted with *instances*.

We can refer back to our articulation of fear to derive an example of an instance of possibility. I.e., the bear was encountered as threatening. The bear in this specific threatening situation is the instance, whereas the possibility of encountering something as threatening whatsoever is the kind. If one was attuned in such a way that they did not care whether they lived or died, their experience would lack the possibility of encountering anything as threatening.[82] Threatening as a *kind* of possibility would be absent from experience. As another example, imagine someone that has several close friends. One of these friends commits an unforgiveable act of betrayal and the friendship is effectively destroyed. The person who was betrayed will experience a shift in their experienced possibilities such that their world no longer includes possibilities of communion, cooperation, or friendship with the betrayer. This constitutes a shift in the *instances* of possibility regarding communion, cooperation, and friendship. Now, to take a more exaggerated example, imagine someone who, over the course of their life, has been betrayed in a serious manner by nearly everyone that they had formed a close relationship with such that they have become attuned by resentment. This resentment might manifest itself in such a way that one no longer trusts other people. One may even come to experience other people as possibly threatening. For such a person, they haven't merely lost an instance (or set of instances)

[81] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 8

[82] This is a crude example. It is crude because one might recognize threats toward something other than one's own bodily demise. I.e., one may experience a threat to their reputation, friends, or family. Therefore, if one didn't care whether they lived or died, and thus lacked the possibility to experience a threat with reference to their bodily demise, they may nevertheless maintain the possibility of experiencing other kinds of threats. To cease experiencing the possibility of anything threatening, one would have to be attuned in such a way to experience the world in a manner of complete indifference. Nevertheless, the crude example, I think, helps point to the way in which the background structure of possibility can constrain the way in which one experiences the world and the possibilities that one is open to.

of possible communion or friendship, they have lost the possibility of communion or friendship as a *kind* of possibility. In other words, the possibility of friendship and communion is absent from their experience. Ratcliffe helpfully contrasts instances with kinds as follows:

> In one scenario, the person loses many instances of experienced possibility. She retains the capacity to encounter things as offering *p,* even though many things that used to incorporate *p* now lack it. An alternative scenario is where the loss…somehow precipitates an existential change, where she not only loses token possibilities of type *p* but loses type *p* altogether; her world no longer includes the possibility of anything offering *p.*[83]

If one retains the capacity to encounter things as offering the possibility in question, even though some things that used to offer that possibility no longer do, one has experienced a change in the available instances of possibility. In contrast, if one loses the capacity to encounter anything whatsoever as offering the possibly in question, one has experienced a change in the kinds of possibilities that one is open to. A change in the *kind* of possibilities that one experiences is, effectively, a change in attuned-understanding. In other words, it is a change in the pre-intentional background which structures experience.[84] Bringing together attunement and understanding, then, we have the phenomenon of attuned-understanding, which, in addition to the disclosive features of attunement outlined above, discloses and structures the existential possibilities (possible ways of being) that one experiences. Although the human being "always

[83] Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling," p. 15

[84] The foregoing examples help to show how attuned-understanding serves as a pre-intentional background condition which makes intentionality possible. I.e., if one is attuned in such a way that the possibility of communion is absent from experience, then one's intentional activity is constrained such that they will be unlikely to participate in a communal activity. Or, perhaps more explicitly, for one who is severely depressed, the possibility of encountering anything as practically significant is absent. As a result, one's intentional activity is constrained to the point where one experiences a kind of existential inertia.

understands itself…in terms of a possibility of itself," not all possibilities are uniquely one's own.[85] Some possibilities are undifferentiated such that they are anyone's possibilities, or possibilities that I have not chosen and which don't constitute my unique ability-to-be. In other words, the possibilities that are disclosed to me, which I project my existence onto, can be either *authentic* or *inauthentic*.

Authenticity, in the original, is "eigentlichkeit" and inauthenticity is "uneigentlichkeit."[86] "*Eigen* means one's 'own' and existence is *eigentlich* if it is owned or has taken hold of itself."[87] Applying a privative character to this term, then, would mean something like "un-owned," and if applied to existence, it might indicate an existence which hasn't taken hold of itself. Following this, then, we might understand an authentic existence as one which has grasped itself or chosen its existence. Authentic existence invites one to take over their ability-to-be (the range of possible ways of being which are open to an individual). This invitation to take over one's existence implies a kind of responsibility for what one is and what one might be. Inauthentic existence can be understood as that which has not grasped itself as a unique existence. Instead, inauthenticity understands itself according to public opinion and interpretation, allowing outside factors to determine that with which it is concerned and how it is involved in those concerns. Inauthentic existence is a *fallen* mode of being.[88] "In falling, we are so wrapped up in everyday things and concerns that it becomes impossible to disentangle our own existence from a publicly circulating interpretation of such everyday dealings."[89] Falling into a mode of being which is

[85] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 33
[86] Käufer, Stephan. "Authenticity (Eigentlichkeit)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 71–77. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.018. p. 71
[87] Kaufer, "Authenticity (Eigentlichkeit)," p. 71
[88] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 220
[89] Käufer, Stephan. "Falling (Verfallen)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 313–16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.084. p. 313

directed by public interpretation effectively directs and constrains one's possibilities while simultaneously covering over one's capacity for authentic existence; one falls toward the world and away from oneself.

The foregoing existential framework will serve as the basis for my analysis of meaning. I will end this chapter by briefly summarizing the relationship between meaning and the existential framework just described. It was already mentioned that meaning in life was something experienced by a human being-in-the-world. This implies that meaning is neither internal nor external; neither subjective nor objective. For this reason, meaning cannot be properly analyzed by looking at the human being in isolation from the world, or by looking at the world in isolation from the human being. They must be taken together, as being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is where meaning is disclosed and experienced. Attunement is implicated in experiencing meaning insofar as beings-in-the-world, we are always-already attuned. Insofar as attunement discloses the world as significant, including the way in which it is experienced as being significant, the question arises as to what attunements, specifically, constitute the disclosure of existence as meaningful. Because attunement always has its understanding, and because understanding discloses possibilities, those understanding-attunements would, additionally, disclose possibilities for meaning in life, thereby constituting a transcendence toward meaningful existence. An authentic existence, which is characterized by taking hold of one's own existence in a self-understanding and responsible manner, is necessary for leading a meaningful life. In contrast, if one exists inauthentically in a fallen mode of being, one has

effectively resigned their existence to the determination of others, which covers over one's unique possibilities for being, including one's possibilities for meaning in life.[90]

This summary is but a preliminary indication intended to show how meaning might be understood in the context of the foregoing existential framework. This understanding will be further developed as I elucidate Viktor Frankl's ideas on meaning in life in the next chapter. Once Frankl's contributions to meaning in life have been articulated and properly embedded within the foregoing existential framework, I will proceed with a phenomenological analysis of meaning, thereby elaborating on that which was only hinted at in this summary.

[90] As we will see in the next chapter, Frankl argues that meaning in life is unique to each individual. As such, if one's authentic possibilities are covered over, one's unique possibilities for meaning in life are likewise covered over.

Chapter 3 – Viktor Frankl and Meaning in Life

Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) was a psychiatrist, philosopher, and neurologist that developed a novel school of psychotherapy that he termed "logotherapy."[1] Logotherapy, for Frankl, signified "healing through meaning."[2] Frankl was keenly aware that a meaning crisis was developing during the 20th century, as evidenced by an influx of suicide and depression.[3] Frankl believed that the prevailing psychotherapeutic theories of Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler were inadequate for addressing the meaning crisis, and so he developed logotherapy to better help those who were suffering from a sense of meaninglessness in life.[4]

Although Frankl acknowledged Freud and Adler as foundational to psychotherapy, he greatly opposed their reductionistic approach. That is, Frankl thought that it was a mistake to reduce the concept of the human being to a set of drives or desires. At risk of oversimplifying the problem, Frankl saw in Freud the reduction of the human being to the "pleasure principle" and he saw in Adler the reduction of the human being to a search for status and power.[5] Frankl believed that if one reduces the human being to a set of drives or instincts, one reduces the human being to something "sub-human." Frankl describes reductionism as the approach "which disregards and ignores the humanness of phenomena…by reducing them to subhuman phenomena. In fact, one could define reductionism as *sub-humanism*."[6] Frankl saw the utility of

[1] Viktor Frankl Institute of America. "The Life of Viktor Frankl | Viktor Frankl Institute of America" n.d. Accessed April 3, 2023. https://viktorfranklamerica.com/viktor-frankl-bio/.
[2] Frankl, Viktor E. *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*. New York, New York: Plume. 2014. p. XVIII
[3] Viktor E. Frankl. *Psychotherapy and Existentialism: Selected Papers on Logotherapy*. Edited by James C. Crumbaugh. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968. p. 113
[4] It should be noted, however, that Frankl did not intend for logotherapy to replace or displace the theories of Adler and Freud. Rather, logotherapy was meant to supplement and complement these psychotherapeutic approaches (*The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, p. 7).
[5] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p. IX
[6] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p. 6

reductionism for pragmatic purposes, such as when treating a patient with a neurological condition. His anti-reductionism, then, was aimed at the type of reductionism which claims that the human being is "nothing-but" a set of animal instincts, biological drives, an amalgam of particles, etc.[7] Frankl, acknowledged that animal instincts and biological drives were indeed part of what it is to be human. He denied, however, that human beings were "nothing-but" these instincts and drives. Furthermore, Frankl emphasized the importance of the phenomenological approach when attempting to analyze and describe irreducible human phenomena, such as a meaning in life, because the phenomenological approach preserves "the humanness of human phenomena."[8] Because the prevailing psychotherapeutic theories of his era were generally reductionistic, and because Frankl saw meaning in life as a genuinely human phenomena which resisted reduction to any lower-level analysis, he was motivated to develop logotherapy.

As a form of psychotherapy, the logotherapist engages in dialogue with the patient. The patient might be suffering from a sense of meaninglessness in life, and they might feel that their life lacks purpose. Consequently, they may be suffering from depression. The logotherapist is tasked with alleviating this existential distress by revealing the possibilities for meaning and purpose that exist in the life of the patient. Frankl is clear, however, that the "logotherapist never prescribes meaning."[9] That is, the logotherapist neither tells the patient what he or she should find meaningful, nor do they speak vaguely or generally about the meaning *of* life.[10] Rather, the logotherapist attempts to *show* how meaning has been experienced in the lives of others through

[7] Frankl, Viktor E. *The Feeling of Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy*. Edited by Andrew Tallon and Alexander Batthyany. Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 2010. p. 50
[8] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 73
[9] Frankl, Viktor E. *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*. Edited by Clara Winston and Richard Winston. New York: Vintage Books, 2019. p. 298
[10] As we will see later in this chapter, meaning in life is unique to the individual. As such, the logotherapist cannot prescribe meaning in a general manner.

the use descriptive phenomenology, thereby revealing to the patient a multitude of possibilities for experiencing meaning.[11] Furthermore, through a kind of Socratic questioning, the logotherapist might help the patient to see a meaning in their life which was previously hidden. For example, an older gentleman, who was a doctor, consulted Frankl because he was suffering from "severe depression caused by the death of his wife."[12] Frankl asked the man, "What would have happened if you had died first and your wife would have had to survive you?" The man replied, "This would have been terrible for her—how she would have suffered!" Frankl pointed out that by surviving his wife, he had spared her the intense suffering she might have experienced had he died first. "The old man suddenly saw his plight in a new light, re-evaluating his suffering in the meaningful terms of a sacrifice for the sake of his wife."[13] The theoretical aspect of logotherapy, which informs the aforementioned practical applications, is, according to Frankl, constituted by "three pillars."[14] The three pillars are *freedom of will*, *the will to meaning*, and *meaning in life*. We will take each pillar in seriatim, tying each back to the existential framework of Heidegger.[15]

3.1 Freedom of Will

[11] Such possibilities include creative, experiential, and attitudinal meanings and values, which will be further discussed in the section of this chapter titled *Meaning in Life*.
[12] Frankl, *Feelings of Meaninglessness,* p. 118
[13] Frankl, *Feelings of Meaninglessness,* p. 118
[14] Frankl, *Feelings of Meaninglessness,* p. 71
[15] In bringing together the works of Frankl and Heidegger, one might suspect a conflict of interest at play. Stated clearly, Frankl was a Jewish prisoner and holocaust survivor, and Heidegger joined the Nazi party and was elected Rector of Freiburg University in 1933 during the Nazi occupation. Despite this seeming conflict, Frankl and Heidegger cultivated a friendship after the war. In *Recollections: An Autobiography*, Frankl reflects on his relationship with Heidegger as follows: "Among my most cherished experiences are my discussions with Martin Heidegger when he visited us in Vienna. He wrote in my guest book: 'To remember a visit on a beautiful and informative morning.' On a photo taken at a typical Viennese wine garden, he wrote a sentence that was meant to point out the kinship between our philosophies: '*Das Vergangene geht, das Gewesene kommt'* [What has passed is gone, that which has-been arises]" (p. 113). This seeming conflict, then, was in fact not a conflict for either Frankl or Heidegger.

In describing the human being, Frankl follows Heidegger in referring to the human being as a "being in the world"[16] and the freedom of will, for Frankl, is the first pillar which constitutes the humanness of the human being. Frankl begins his discussion of the kind of freedom that human beings are capable of with a simple phenomenological description.[17] The description comes by way of contrasting two experiential states: Frankl begins by pointing to an altered state which results from consuming a drug or alcohol. During a drunken fit, for example, one's actions unfold in a thoughtless, unaware, and sometimes unintentional manner; one feels as if they have no control over their behavior. Frankl asks us to contrast this with our sober experience, during which we have more awareness and control over our actions. He points to the glaring distinction between these two states and suggests that the experiential difference demonstrates the kind of freedom of which the human being is capable. In other words, the kind of freedom that we experience in our daily lives—such as the capacity to choose this set of clothes over that, choosing to read this book instead of that, deciding whether to cultivate a friendship with the person you just met, choosing to go to university, choosing which university, etc.—is the kind of freedom which Frankl ascribes to the human being. It is finite, limited, and in a sense, a mundane kind of freedom.[18]

"After all, the freedom of will means the freedom of human will, and human will is the will of a finite being. Man's freedom is no freedom from conditions but rather freedom to take a stand on whatever conditions might confront him."[19] In other words, we are constrained by the structure of our existence, but within that structure we are capable of a finite freedom. For

[16] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p. XIII
[17] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism,* p. 2-3
[18] Frankl doesn't offer any detailed arguments for the "freedom of will." He isn't interested in "proving" free will, but rather he is making use of the phenomenological sense of freedom that we experience in our everyday lives.
[19] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p. 4

example, I was born into a specific family in the 21st century, with a particular set of physical and biological characteristics and with certain genetic predispositions—none of which I chose. Additionally, I have biological instincts and drives, such as the need to eat and drink. I don't choose to be hungry; it is something which occurs whether I want it or not. Within the confines of this structure, however, I am free to make decisions. For example, while I did not choose the family that I was born into, I can decide to embrace my family and cultivate a healthy relationship with them. While I do not decide when hunger arises, I can choose what to eat when hunger does arise. In sum, while I cannot change the facts of my existence, I can choose, within limitations, what to do with the existence that I was *thrown* into.

For Heidegger, human beings are *thrown* into the world such that we find ourselves existing here and now, as the kind of being that we are, though we "did not choose *either* to be *or* to be what [we are]."[20] Furthermore, while we are limited by the facts of our existence, we are always "constantly 'more' than" what we factually are.[21] To say that we are more than what we factually are is to say that we are capable of transcendence. For Heidegger, this transcendence is apparent in the disclosure of possibilities through understanding (as described in the previous chapter). For Frankl, "the essentially self-transcendent quality of human existence renders man *a being reaching out beyond himself*."[22] Within the confines of one's thrown and factual existence, then, human beings have the capacity to choose the way in which they exist, and they are always more than what they are through their capacity for transcendence. Freedom of will implies responsibility not only for what one is and what one becomes, but, for Frankl, our capacity to

[20] Withy, Katherine. "Thrownness (Geworfenheit)." In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 753–56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.204. p. 753
[21] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 185
[22] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning, p. XVII*

experience meaning in life is bound up with our capacity for authenticity which is manifested through the finite freedom of which we are capable.

3.2 Will to Meaning

The second pillar of Frankl's logotherapy is the will to meaning. Frankl understands the human being as a being whose being is an issue for it due to the "tension between being and meaning."[23] This tension, Frankl argues, is fundamental and "ineradicable" to human existence.[24] In other words, whether one is aware of it or not, the human being is always already in search of meaning in life, according to Frankl. Frankl contrasts this with Freud's pleasure principle and Adler's power principle, arguing that both principles are derivative of the will to meaning.[25] Power, for Frankl, is a means to an end. More specifically, one might need a reasonable amount of power (perhaps in terms of money) to pursue what one finds meaningful in life. For example, I must have the means to live relatively comfortably in order to pursue the meaningful project that is this thesis. Without a home, food, and internet service, I would be incapable of pursuing this project. Pleasure or happiness, Frankl contends, is an effect of meaning fulfillment and not something that can be pursued in and of itself. "This is due to the fundamental fact that pleasure is a by-product, or side effect, of the fulfillment of our strivings, but is destroyed and spoiled to the extent to which it is made a goal or target. The more a man aims at pleasure by way of a direct intention, the more he misses his aim."[26] Instead of pursuing pleasure or happiness in itself, and instead of pursuing power as an end instead of as a means, Frankl argues that the human being should set its sights on meaning. While I agree that power is best conceived as a

[23] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 10
[24] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 10
[25] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 6
[26] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 5

means to an end, and that pleasure and happiness are not objects that can be the intentional focus of one's activity, I disagree with Frankl in his insistence that meaning should be the target of one's intentional focus. I believe that the same criticisms that Frankl develops toward a direct pursuit of pleasure and happiness can be applied to a direct pursuit of meaning in life.

As we saw above, Frankl contends that happiness and pleasure are "destroyed and spoiled to the extent to which [they are] made a goal or target."[27] What is it that one is aiming at if one attempts to make happiness the target of their activity? There does not seem to be an object of intentional focus in experience that one can identify as "happiness." If one were to orient oneself toward happiness, to what would one orient? Not to a *thing* called happiness, but rather to something from which happiness is derived. Where is happiness to be found in experience? One may experience happiness when sharing a meal with friends or family, when reading in a quiet place, when listening to music, etc. Similarly, one might experience happiness as a result of having achieved victory in a team sporting event, when one has completed their university program, or has achieved or completed some broader project or life task. In each of these cases, happiness is experienced not due to aiming for some abstract thing called "happiness." Rather, happiness is an experience derived from some activity, worldly involvement, or accomplishment. It is the result of one's particular situatedness as a being-in-the-world. As such, happiness is not an object-like thing that can be made the focus of one's intentional activity. Now, let us apply these same questions to meaning in life.

What is it that one is aiming at if one makes meaning in life the target of their activity? We must answer in the same way as we did when we asked this question with reference to

[27] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 5

happiness; there does not seem to be an object in experience that one could properly identify as "meaning." If one were to orient oneself toward meaning, to what would one orient? Not to a *thing* called meaning, but rather to something from which meaning is derived. Where is meaning to be found in experience? Meaning is a natural consequence of certain modes of being-in-the-world, such as when one is attuned by passion, love, or gratitude.[28] For example, for a musician that is passionate about music, she may experience a strong sense of meaning in life when she is cultivating her capacity for playing the piano or when she plays successfully in an orchestral performance. If one wanted to orient oneself toward meaning in life, then, one would not do so by making meaning the target of their activity, for meaning is no-thing—it is not an intentional referent. Instead, one might aim for meaning through the cultivation of one's passion. Just as Frankl claimed that happiness and pleasure are "destroyed and spoiled to the extent to which [they are] made a goal or target," I would extend this to a direct search for meaning in life. Consequently, I will not adopt his conception of the will to meaning insofar as it obscures the way in which meaning in life is pursued and subsequently experienced.

3.3 Meaning in Life

Meaning in life is the third pillar of logotherapy. According to Frankl, "phenomenological analysis can show us [that] man not only finds his life meaningful through his deeds, his works, his creativity, but also through his experiences, his encounters with what is true, good, and beautiful in the world, and last but not least his encounters with others, with fellow human beings and their unique qualities."[29] Furthermore, Frankl contends that even when one is incapable of creative activity and deprived of experiencing anything good, true, and

[28] Passion and love, as modes of meaningful experience will be expanded on in the next chapter.
[29] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 14

beautiful, one nevertheless maintains the capacity for fulfilling a meaning in life through the stand one takes on one's situation.[30] In other words, when one is confronted with a situation in which creative or experiential meanings cannot be fulfilled, one can fulfill a meaning in life by facing one's situation with the right attitude and perspective.[31]

Thus, the three categories of meaning in life, for Frankl, are as follows: 1) Creative values, which refer to the pursuit and fulfillment of meaning through activities that involve creativity, productivity, and accomplishment. This can include engaging in meaningful work, creating art, making scientific discoveries, etc. By contributing to the world in some way, individuals find a sense of purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. 2) Experiential values, which involve deriving meaning from experiences, relationships, and interactions with the world. This can include experiencing something beautiful (such as art or nature) and love for, or friendship with, another person. These experiences provide a sense of connection and enrich one's life. 3) Attitudinal values, which are based on the idea that individuals can find meaning in life by adopting a certain attitude or perspective in response to difficult situations and unavoidable suffering.[32] Within these wide categories of meaning, the possible meanings that one might experience are unique to each human being, and every human being "constitutes something unique."[33]

The uniqueness of both meanings and human beings is central to Frankl's articulation of meaning in life to such an extent that Frankl states, "to ask [about] the meaning of life in general

[30] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 14
[31] This claim is supported by Frankl's experience as a prisoner in multiple concentration camps during WWII, during which he found meanings to fulfill and helped others to do the same. For an extended elaboration on this category of meaning, see Frankl's book *Man's Search for Meaning*.
[32] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 15, 24; Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 43-44
[33] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 42

terms is to put the question falsely because it refers vaguely to 'life' and not concretely to 'each person's own' existence."[34] To ask about meaning properly, then, is to ask about meaning *in* life as opposed to a universal meaning *of* life. Instead of asking about a general meaning, one should ask the question with reference to one's own unique existence. As beings with unique characteristics, life experiences, histories, dispositions, capabilities, etc., we each comprise a unique "range of possibilities" which we referred to in the last chapter using Heidegger's term "ability-to-be."[35] The range of possibilities open to each individual human being include possibilities for meaning in life. Because each human being's possibilities for meaning are unique and must refer to one's individual existence, it would be misleading to call these possibilities for meaning "objective" because they do not exist independently, over and above the human being for which they are a possibility. It would be similarly misleading to refer to these unique possibilities as "subjective," for "meanings are discovered but not invented" by an individual.[36] Rather, meaning is best described as something transjective, indicating that it is neither internal nor external; neither in an isolated subject nor in an independently existing objective world. It is, instead, a possibility of the unitary phenomenon of being-in-the-world.[37] While human beings are capable of unique individuation which provides the grounds for the

[34] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 61-62
[35] Large, William. "Ability-to-Be (Seinkönnen)." In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 7–8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.003. p. 7
[36] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, p. 63
[37] It should be noted that although Frankl uses the term "trans-subjective" in describing meaning (Will to meaning, p. 33), and he refers to the human being as a "being in the world," he remains skeptical with reference to collapsing the subject/object distinction. The subject/object distinction, for Frankl, represents a tension that he deems fundamental and necessary to human existence (p. 33, p. 42). In contrast, for Heidegger, the subject/object distinction is derivative of a more fundamental mode of being (See BT section 13, Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon entry 195). Its derivative nature entails that it is not a fundamental distinction for Heidegger.

possibility of experiencing their unique meanings in life, they are also susceptible to becoming lost in the "masses" wherein one abandons oneself "as a free and responsible being."[38]

In "flee[ing] from responsibility" by immersing oneself in a collective mass, one abandons the unique possibilities of one's own existence, substituting a "conformity to norms" in place of "personal responsibility."[39] To act, think, and judge as the collective acts, thinks, and judges, is to have given oneself away such that one no longer chooses for oneself—one's existence is inauthentic. "For only there, in freedom, in his being—being responsible; only there 'is' man authentically, or only there is man 'authentic.'"[40] Frankl's discussion of conformity, flight from responsibility, and the necessity of responsibility and freedom for authentic existence finds kinship in Heidegger's thought. As was mentioned in the last chapter, inauthenticity, for Heidegger, is characterized by fallenness. In falling, one falls away from one's "authentic potentiality for Being its Self…"[41] Simultaneously, one falls toward the world of public interpretation, thereby becoming lost in the whirling buzz of group thought, action, opinion, and judgment wherein one thinks, acts, and judges as everyone else thinks, acts, and judges.[42] In losing oneself to this publicness, one abandons one's responsibility for who one is and what one will become; one is relieved "of the burden of explicitly *choosing*" for oneself.[43] In contrast, to exist authentically is to take over one's own existence as one's own. In taking over one's own existence, one takes over one's possibilities for being—including possibilities for meaning in life.

[38] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. XXII
[39] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 73
[40] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 73
[41] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 220
[42] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 220
[43] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 312

Integrating Frankl with Heidegger on these points, we might say the following with reference to meaning in life: If meaning is unique to each individual, and if an inauthentic/fallen existence covers over one's unique possibilities, it follows that one's unique possibilities for meaning in life would likewise be covered over through existing in an inauthentic/fallen mode of being. In contrast, authenticity, which consists in recognizing and subsequently taking over one's own existence such that one chooses for oneself, is the mode of being which discloses one's unique possibilities for meaning in life by disclosing the range of possibilities that is open to one in their unique existence.[44] To see the way in which Frankl's articulation of meaning in life presupposes both authenticity and "being-in-the-world," we can look at Frankl's self-named "Copernican Revolution" with reference to his conception of meaning in life.

Frankl introduces his Copernican Revolution by pointing to the way in which human beings are accustomed to asking the question of meaning in life in a vague and general manner.[45] Frankl then indicates that the question of meaning is usually put such that one is asking what meaning the world has to offer to one. This is especially apparent in the case of those who are pushed to suicidal ideation through an overwhelming feeling of meaninglessness. As Frankl recounts:

> I remember my dilemma in a concentration camp when faced with a man and a woman who were close to suicide; both had told me the same thing—that they expected nothing more from life. In that moment the indicated therapy was to try to achieve a kind of Copernican switch by asking both my fellow-prisoners whether the question was really

[44] For all the complexities, however, one can simplify the foregoing articulation by asking oneself the following question: If my existence were determined through outside influence, if I rejected my freedom for choosing and disregarded my responsibility for being, if I acted, thought, and judged *only* according to public interpretation, if I *only* did as "they" do—or as "they" want me to do—am I likely to discover meaning in life?

[45] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 62

> what we expected from life or, rather, was it not what life was expecting from us. I suggested that life was awaiting something from them. In fact, the woman was being awaited by her child abroad and the man by a series of books which he had begun to write and publish but had not yet finished.[46]

The Copernican switch, then, is twofold: 1) One should ask the question of meaning contextually and in reference to one's authentic possibilities for existence (as opposed to asking it generally and subsequently inauthentically). 2) Reversing the way in which the question is asked. I.e., the question is not, "What can the world give to me in terms of meaning?" Rather, to discover and experience meaning, we should be open to the questions which life asks us as beings-in-the-world. We discover possibilities for meaning through our authentic being-in-the-world and being-with-others. To be open in such a way reinforces our earlier emphasis on responsibility. That is, if human beings are questioned by life, one must have the ability to respond—literally *response-ability*. Thus, for Frankl, we each bear the burden of hearing the questions which life poses to us as unique individuals, and we are responsible for answering those questions authentically.

3.4 Finitude and Death

The significance of finitude and death is addressed by both Heidegger and Frankl. For Heidegger, finitude is the "horizon that gives meaning to human existence."[47] Finitude is disclosed through our recognition of death as the "possibility of the impossibility of every mode

[46] Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, p. 210
[47] Elkholy, Sharin N. "Finitude (Endlichkeit)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 317–19. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.085. p. 317

of being..."[48] The possibility of death is the utmost possibility; it "*is not to be outstripped.*"[49] In other words, the possibility of death acts as the horizon of possibilities which structures experience such that we are confronted by a finite range of possibilities for being.[50] Were we confronted, instead, by an infinite range of possibilities, we would be unable to make sense of our being-in-the-world.[51] Unable to make sense of things, we would be unable to comport ourselves toward any of our concernful dealings. In other words, the existential structure of human beings as described by Heidegger would collapse. Furthermore, as was briefly mentioned in the last chapter, when one's possibility for death is disclosed to one, one begins to recognize one's capacity for authentic existence through the recognition that *my* possibility for death is *my own*. This reverberates into one's holistic landscape of possibilities, because if my possibility for death is uniquely mine, then I may begin to recognize that the broader range of possibilities which characterize my existence are also uniquely mine. Death is fundamental to Heidegger's understanding of what it means to be a human being.[52] It is fundamental not only because death is a constitutive existential structure, but also because, "by regarding death as integral to our existence, we begin to appreciate our existence."[53] In other words, when one realizes that one has a finite range of possibilities for being, and that one's possibilities are limited by the possibility

[48] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* p. 308
[49] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 294
[50] Our possibilities are further constrained by thrownness and facticity.
[51] Some cognitive scientists, such as John Vervaeke, refer to the idea of an infinite range of possibilities as "combinatorially explosive." That is, there would be a breakdown in understanding and an impossibility of action were humans confronted with infinite possibilities. See the following paper for more information: *Relevance Realization and the Emerging Framework in Cognitive Science* by John Vervaeke, Timothy Lillicrap, and Blake Richards.
[52] Niederhauser, Johannes Achill. 2021. *Heidegger on Death and Being: An Answer to the Seinsfrage*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, p. XVIII
[53] Niederhauser, *Heidegger on Death and Being*, p. XVIII

of death as the utmost possibility, one gains an appreciation for existence, and one might begin to takeover one's existence as their own in light of the disclosure of death.

Although Frankl takes a more concrete approach to understanding and articulating the significance of death and finitude, he shares with Heidegger the idea that death and finitude are "boundary" conditions of one's existential "possibilities."[54] Such boundaries are necessary in the sense that, were human beings immortal, Frankl contends, it would be meaningless to act, for one would "be justified in delaying everything; there would be no need to do anything right now."[55] A consequence of our mortality is that "the very transitoriness of human existence…constitutes man's responsibleness."[56] Frankl cites the Jewish sage, Hillel, to emphasize his point: "If I do not do this job—who will do it? And if I do not do this job right now—when shall I do it?"[57] Such questions would be rendered meaningless if human beings were immortal and infinite. Meaningfulness and responsibility presuppose finitude in the following sense: If life went on forever, I would lack the inclination to take action and I could shrug off responsibility. If I lacked the *ability to respond* to my unique situation, I would be incapable of acting in accordance with my authentic possibilities for being—including my unique possibilities for meaning in life. Thus, for both Frankl and Heidegger, death and finitude are necessary conditions which structure the kind of being that we are, and they open one to the possibility of authenticity (Heidegger) and meaning in life (Frankl).

To summarize the fundamental aspects of the foregoing chapter: 1) Human beings are capable of choosing the way in which they exist. This freedom to choose is finite. 2) Human

[54] Frankl, *The Doctor and The Soul*, p. 64
[55] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 30
[56] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 30
[57] Qtd. In Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 89

beings have a fundamental yearning to exist meaningfully. 3) Meaning in life is not an object or thing. It is neither objective nor subjective, neither internal nor external. It exists neither in an independent-objective world, nor is it a subjective projection. 4) Meaning in life is a transjective experience of the holistic and unitary phenomenon of being-in-the-world. Possibilities for experiencing meaning in life are unique to each individual. As such, experiences of meaning presuppose the uniqueness of individuals and thus authenticity. Authenticity presupposes responsibility in that to exist authentically, one must take over one's own existence in a self-owned, self-understanding, and responsible manner such that one exists in accordance with their unique range of possibilities. 5) Finitude and death act as the horizon of possibility, thereby constraining the range of possibilities that are available to each human being in addition to opening one to the possibility of authenticity and meaning in life. Without death and finitude to structure human existence, existence as it is experienced would cease to be.

In closing this chapter, it is interesting to note that for as much as Frankl emphasizes the necessity of the phenomenological approach in sufficiently describing and analyzing meaning in life, his work lacks anything resembling a detailed phenomenological analysis of meaning. Frankl provides conceptual and theoretical formalizations of meaning, in addition to empirical observations, but his phenomenological contributions to meaning in life are brief and fragmentary. Similarly, the foregoing chapters of this project have been filled with formalizations. Although these formalizations were necessary preparations for the coming phenomenological analysis, there is now a chasm between those formalizations and the experience of meaning as such. This chasm must be bridged by reducing the distance between the formalizations and the experience of meaning, which is to be achieved by way of phenomenological illumination.

I will begin the next chapter by distinguishing between “meaning in life” and “existential meaning.” After these terms have been firmly established, I will start my phenomenological analysis of meaning by providing a description of passion as a mode of meaningful experience, then proceeding to an analysis of the existential structures of this mode of meaning. The process will be repeated for love as a mode of meaningful experience at the fore.

Chapter 4 – Modes of Meaningful Experience: Passion and Love

While there are numerous modes of meaningful experience that one might explore, I will focus on passion and love. I will begin by describing specific-concrete meaningful experiences before attempting to discern the structures of those experiences. By focusing first on concrete meaningful experiences, I will attempt to show how they are in their particular manifestness. Then, in my structural analysis, I will provide an articulation of the existential structures that constitute those respective modes of meaningful experience. This follows Heidegger's phenomenological approach, which insists that particular-concrete (ontic-existentiell) instances of phenomena serve as the basis for structural analyses (ontological-existential).[1] Put differently, existential structures are derived through an analysis of particular phenomena. This Heideggerian distinction is referred to as the "ontological difference."[2]

4.1 Distinguishing Meaning in Life and Existential Meaning

The ontological difference refers to the distinction between *being* and *beings.* Being is not an entity, though being is always the being of an entity.[3] As complex as that may seem, we can clarify the complexity through the use of some examples that we are already familiar with. When we began to describe the human being in chapter two, we introduced Heidegger's term *Dasein*, which indicates that the human being is the kind of entity that finds itself *being-there*, always-already immersed in this or that situation, engaged in concernful dealings with some entity or set of entities, involved in a series of projects and tasks, with the further implication that

[1] King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 52; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 34
[2] Dahlstrom, Daniel O. "Difference (Unterscheidung)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 227–30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.057. p. 227; Wheeler, Michael. "Martin Heidegger." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2011. Accessed July 10, 2023. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/.
[3] Slaby, Jan. "Ontology (Ontologie)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 551–59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.149. p. 551

all of this is inseparable from the world. We then referred to this co-constitution of world and existence as the unitary phenomenon of being-in-the-world. To characterize the human being as Dasein and as a being-in-the-world is to describe the *being* of such an entity. In other words, being-there and being-in-the-world are ontological-existential structures of the human being, without which existence would not be as it is. In contrast, when we describe a specific human being and their particular involvement in the world, such as my involvement and activity as a student writing a thesis, we are talking about the ontic-existentiell aspect of a particular human being. Because being is always the being of entities, any analysis of being must be "ontically anchored."[4] In other words, entities in their ontic concreteness are the point of departure for discerning the ontological structures of being. Because of the significance which these terms carry, I will briefly clarify their meaning and their referents before embarking on a description of meaningful experience.

The term "existential" refers to the a priori ontological structures which constitute the being of human beings.[5] Following the ontological difference, this term can be contrasted with the "existentiell" aspect of human beings.[6] Existentiell refers to the specific-concrete aspects of human beings. Ontology (as Heidegger uses the term) indicates the being of some entity or entities, while the term existential *always* refers to the being of human beings. Similarly, that which is ontic refers to the specific concretion of some entity or entities, while the term existentiell *always* refers to the particular concretion of a human being. Ontic/existentiell are functioning within the same domain of analysis just as ontological/existential are functioning

[4] Slaby, Jan. "Ontic (Ontisch)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 542–46. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.147. p. 543
[5] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 32-33
[6] Escudero, Jesús Adrián. "Existential (Existenzial) and Existentiell (Existenziell)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 300–301. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.079. p. 300

within the same domain of analysis. The primary difference is that the terms existentiell/existential *always* refer to human beings (whether the ontological/being character in the case of existential or the ontic/concrete manifestations of a particular human in the case of existentiell).[7]

This distinction is integral to my phenomenological analysis of meaning for the following reasons: 1) We must ensure that the existential analysis remains anchored to the phenomena in their concreteness so that we avoid free-floating conceptual constructs which are removed from the phenomena as such. Having this framework in place helps with this. 2) The framework allows us to oscillate between particular manifestations of meaningful experience and the structures of such experiences while avoiding confusion and conflation. 3) The distinction allows for further clarity in discerning the structures of meaningful experiences which might constitute a broad range of distinctive experiences of meaning. In other words, meaningful experiences can be distinct in an ontic-existentiell manner while sharing constitutive existential structures. For example, an artist engaged in creating a painting is a distinctive experience from a musician playing in an orchestra performance. Assuming that both the musician and the artist find their chosen activity meaningful, we are led to the following question: "What makes it such that two distinctive experiences with distinctive activities and settings, are both similarly experienced as meaningful?" I suggest that the answer lies in the ontological-existential structures of meaningful experience. Put differently, the distinctive and unique manifestations of meaning in the lives of

[7] This distinction is necessary for properly interpreting Heidegger's claim that the "essence of Dasein lies in its existence" (*Being and Time,* p. 67). I.e., if one ignores the ontological difference, one might interpret Heidegger as claiming that the human being somehow creates or determines its essence through the way in which it chooses to live. With the ontological difference at the fore, we would, instead, understand Heidegger's claim to mean that the essence of the human being lies in the a priori ontological-existential structures of being. This is the interpretive issue that caused Heidegger to claim that Jean-Paul Sartre had misunderstood his use of the term "existence" (Basic Writings, p. 232).

unique individuals are unified through an illumination of the ontological-existential structures of meaningful experience. This allows for a plurality of possibilities for meaningful experience while maintaining unity in the underlying structure of those distinct experiences. 4) The ontological difference allows us to better understand my use of the term "existential meaning." My analysis of meaning is an attempt to discern the existential structures of meaningful experience. As such, existential meaning refers to the ontological-existential structures of meaningful experience. We can contrast existential meaning with the kind of meaning that Frankl refers to as "meaning in life." We saw that Frankl proposed three categories for meaning in life: creative, experiential, and attitudinal.[8] Further, he claimed that meaning is unique to each unique individual. To put this in terms of the ontological difference, Frankl is referring to ontic-existentiell manifestations of meaning in life. I.e., specific meanings in the lives of specific individuals. I will maintain use of Frankl's term "meaning in life" when I am referring to specific experiences of meaning in life, and I will use the term "existential meaning" to refer to the ontological-existential structures of meaningful experience.[9]

4.2 A Preliminary Articulation of Passion

The term "passion" already contains within its definition something that hints at our notion of attunement. According to Century Dictionary, passion is something one experiences as a "deep feeling" which overtakes one, "commanding the most serious action."[10] The entry continues by explicitly distinguishing passion from affect, suggesting that the "distinctive mark

[8] In Frankl's framework, our forthcoming existentiell description of passion is a "creative" value of meaning and love an "experiential" value of meaning.

[9] In a sense, part of my project could be viewed as providing an articulation of the underlying structure of Viktor Frankl's work on meaning in life, which may contain implications for both the practice of logotherapy and the theory on which logotherapy is grounded. I will briefly elaborate on possible implications in my concluding chapter.

[10] Whitney, William, and Benjamin Smith, eds. *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*. Vol. 5. The Century Company, 1904.

of passion" is its influential intensity.[11] Affect, "though moving," lacks the intensity of passion which motivates, inspires, or directs one toward some involvement or activity.[12] Adding another definitional characteristic to passion, we find that it is often used to denote "devotion to some activity."[13] Recall attunement as a pre-intentional phenomenon that determines the possible ways in which we might involve ourselves in the world by disclosing and structuring that which matters to us in addition to the way in which it matters. As such, it grounds our intentional activity. With this at the fore, we can understand the way in which passion is a "deep feeling" that "overtakes" one, thus "commanding the most serious action" in relation to the way in which attunement structures one's intentional activity. In other words, that which one is passionate about and devoted to becomes salient when one is attuned through passion. One's passion *matters*, and the way in which it matters, for example, might be as something which demands engagement and cultivation.

The passionate experience that will be described and used as a point of reference for discerning the existential structures of passion as a mode of meaningful experience is that of the artist. In attributing passion to the artist, we are not doing so arbitrarily. Salvador Dali, for example, described Leonardo da Vinci as "the greatest master of painting, a soul that knew how to study, to invent, to create with ardor, passion, and energy."[14] Vincent van Gogh, in a letter to his brother, talked of the way that "in the presence of a number of pictures" one could sense "the great energy, feeling, passion, and love with which they [were] painted."[15] Further, as Aaron

[11] Whitney and Smith, *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*
[12] Whitney and Smith, *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*
[13] Merriam-Webster. "Definition of Passion." Merriam-webster.com, 2019. Accessed July 10, 2023. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/passion.
[14] Heath, Christopher, and Jean-Pierre Isbouts. *The Dalí Legacy : How an Eccentric Genius Changed the Art World and Created a Lasting Legacy*. New York, New York: Apollo Publishers, 2021. p. 9
[15] Gogh, Vincent Van. *Letters of Vincent van Gogh.* Edited by Anthony Ludovico. Digireads, 2010. p. 60

Ridley notes in *Music, Value, and the Passions*, passion is absolutely central "to those who are interested in music as it is actually experienced," and he argues that "music is the language of the passions."[16] The arts, then, whether sculpting, painting, writing, dancing, music, etc., are united by the passion with which they grip, inspire, and vitalize the artist.[17]

4.3 A Description of Passion: The Artist

Urged by their passion, the artist is compelled to create. Artistic discipline and creation are no simple tasks, however, and this rigorous work is not undertaken for the sake of mere "pleasure." Great art requires "a passionate engagement that is both serious and playful."[18]

An artist might embark on their creations with forethought, or they might become spontaneously inspired. Such inspiration drives them to their preferred mode of expression as if the inspiring passion were the pilot and the artist the instrument. Once the process of creativity has begun, everything else withdraws as the artist becomes enveloped in their creation.

"The skilled painter wields her brush with instinct, as though it were an extension of her body. She intuits with what pressure each stroke must graze the canvas—turning lines into shapes and shapes into objects which are then transmuted into something much more than lines, shapes, and objects. Moments of stillness, which might seem as though she is thoughtlessly absent, are followed by graceful movements along the canvas. This fluid dance is then overtaken

[16] Ridley, Aaron. *Music, Value, and the Passions*. London: Cornell University Press, 1995. p. 3
[17] The emphasis on passion and the arts should not be taken as an indication that other endeavors are deficient in passion. Passion can be found in a variety of pursuits other than the arts, including athletics, sports, teaching, science, philosophy, etc.
[18] Bell, Jacob. "The Structure of Meaning in Experience: Rediscovering That Which Has Been Lost." Epoché Magazine, September 27, 2021. Accessed July 10, 2023. https://epochemagazine.org/44/the-structure-of-meaning-in-experience-rediscovering-that-which-has-been-lost/.

by rigid and rapid motion. There is an interplay of technique, which seems to arise in her as naturally as the interplay between the Sun and the Moon."[19]

Passionately immersed in her creative project, she continues to toil without concern for the passing of time. The ordinary conception of time, understood as a successive series of now points, or time as told by a clock, has lost its significance for the engaged artist, as the hours and minutes fall away without notice.

"She incurs no thought of self as separate from the world. Instead, she feels a natural place within the world…so intertwined with it that when she moves," she feels as though the world is moving, too.[20] Her creative expression is an amalgamated manifestation of her unique thoughts, ideas, abilities, emotions, and experiences.

The deeply engaged artist is an exemplar of meaningful experience achieved through an attunement of passion. In contemporary terms, the immersive aspect of this experience is sometimes referred to as the "flow state."[21] Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a thorough investigation of the empirical findings regarding the flow state, it should be noted that the experience of flow has been empirically linked to both passion and meaning in life.[22] For example, researchers have found that passionate musicians often experience flow

[19] Bell, "The Structure of Meaning in Experience: Rediscovering That Which Has Been Lost."
[20] Bell, "The Structure of Meaning in Experience: Rediscovering That Which Has Been Lost."
[21] Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. San Francisco: Harper Perennial, 1990; Vervaeke, John, Leo Ferraro, and Arianne Herrera-Bennett, 'Flow as Spontaneous Thought: Insight and Implicit Learning', in Kalina Christoff, and Kieran C. R. Fox (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Spontaneous Thought: Mind-Wandering, Creativity, and Dreaming,* Oxford Library of Psychology, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190464745.013.8
[22] Schippers, Michaéla C., and Niklas Ziegler. "Life Crafting as a Way to Find Purpose and Meaning in Life." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (December 13, 2019). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02778.; Mounouchos, Dionysia. "Flow and Meaning in Life: Some Empirically Informed Practical Lessons." MA Thesis, 2020. https://repository.library.carleton.ca/concern/etds/8w32r652f.; Bonneville-Roussy, Arielle, and Robert J. Vallerand. "Passion at the Heart of Musicians' Well-Being." Psychology of Music, September 19, 2018, 030573561879718. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735618797180.

through their practice and playing of music, and because "passion influences how one engages in the activity one is passionate about, it has been hypothesized and found that flow is a consequence of passion."[23] Passionate activity and experiences of flow lead to an increase in "life satisfaction and a general sense of well-being."[24] Moreover, individuals that engage with their passions are more likely to find their life meaningful, where "meaning refers to the judgment that a person's life has a purpose and is valuable."[25]

We now have a description of passionate experience, in addition to corroborating empirical insight that passionate engagement is experienced as meaningful. We will use the description of the artist as our reference point for our existential analysis of passion as a mode of meaningful experience.

4.4 The Existential Structures of Passion as a Mode of Meaningful Experience

In my structural analysis of passion, I will focus on the following constitutive elements: attunement, understanding, resoluteness, temporality, and authenticity. Specifically, I will be attempting to show where in the artist's experience the aforementioned structures can be "seen." I will attempt to lift the phenomena into view, thereby unconcealing the existential structures which constitute passionate meaning in life.

Temporality, for Heidegger, is not the time of everydayness. Time as a fleeting phenomenon which flows from the future into the present and then into the past indicates a vulgar understanding of time. Heidegger's temporality is a phenomenological conception in which the past, present, and future co-arise. "The future is not later than having been, and

[23] Arielle and Vallerand, "Passion at the Heart of Musicians' Well-Being," p. 3
[24] Arielle and Vallerand, "Passion at the Heart of Musicians' Well-Being," p. 10
[25] Arielle and Vallerand, "Passion at the Heart of Musicians' Well-Being," p. 6

having-been is not earlier than the Present…"[26] This "frees the phenomenologist from thinking of past, present and future as sequentially ordered groupings of distinct events."[27] Existential temporality can be seen in the immersed artist. Not only do the minutes and hours lose significance as the artist toils without regard for the passing of time, but temporality as co-arising is disclosed through the very activity in which she is engaged. Her history is revealed through the way in which she paints with habituated technique. Her past is present, for her disciplined practice has made possible her ability to create. She gathers her past into the present, which is then projected forward with every brushstroke in anticipation of her finished creation. She could not paint as she does without having cultivated her artistic ability through years of practice and training, thus she has retrieved her past. In the present gathering of her past, she has a vision of the future, which is with her now, for this vision is what grants her the possibility of creating something which is not yet actual. What she *has been* is gathered in her *present being* and *projected futurally*. This self-understanding retrieval and gathering of oneself opens "an authentic possibility of being in the moment" due to the way in which the situation is disclosed.[28] The situation disclosed to the artist is properly her own, for the experienced possibilities of such a moment are interwoven with her authentic ability-to-be. In other words, no one can stand in for her or take her place, no one can create her oeuvre. Heidegger refers to such moments of authentic disclosedness with the term "resoluteness."[29] In a private correspondence, Heidegger described resoluteness as "graced moments" in which "we feel ourselves belonging immediately to the direction in which we live."[30] In the same 1919 letter, Heidegger goes as far as saying that

[26] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 401
[27] Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger."
[28] Crowe, Benjamin. "Resoluteness (Entschlossenheit)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 641–47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.176. p. 642
[29] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 343
[30] Qtd. In Crowe, "Resoluteness (Entschlossenheit)," p. 642

such moments are "the tautly strung intensities of *meaningful* life."[31] In sum, when one is passionately engaged, there is a self-understanding retrieval of one's past which is gathered into the present, subsequently disclosing the situation as properly one's own, which is futurally projected. Put simply, this is a movement of transcendence.

Interestingly, Heidegger wasn't silent on the phenomenon of passion. Although his comments on passion are brief, they provide direction in our attempt to situate the phenomenon within the broader existential framework. In *Nietzsche Volume 1 The Will to Power as Art*, Heidegger argues that passions differ from mere affects. Affects, such as anger or infatuation, are characterized by the way in which they spontaneously seize one.[32] While attunements such as passion can spontaneously seize one through something like ignited inspiration, there is an essential distinction. Infatuation and anger, as affects, lack temporal indwelling. That is, infatuation with something new is not an outpouring of that which has grown within one's essential being. Rather, infatuation is an affective and intensive interest which did not exist prior to the moment that it seized one. In contrast, the spontaneity of passion with reference to the trained artist has grown, expanded, and is now pouring over in the form of inspiration.[33] When we are taken hold of by an affect, such as anger or infatuation, we become closed off and blinded; restricted to the sight of our immanent situation.[34] In other words, affects lack adequate

[31] Qtd. In Crowe, "Resoluteness (Entschlossenheit)," p. 642
Italics added.
[32] Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche Vol. 1, The Will to Power as Art*. Translated by David Farrell Krell. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981. p. 47
It should be noted that passions, for Heidegger, refers to something like a "category" of attunements which he contrasts with "affects." While the sort of phenomenon I am describing as "passion" would have certainly fit into Heidegger's schema of "passions," I am nevertheless departing from Heidegger's usage by using the term in a narrower sense. Another attunement which Heidegger discusses under the guise of "passions" is love.
[33] To use an analogy, with passionate spontaneity, it is as though a seed had been planted long ago, which has been nurtured and is now in full bloom.
[34] While infatuation and anger are affects, it is possible for them to evolve into attunement. I.e., infatuation might turn into love (for another person) or passion (for an activity), and anger might grow into hatred.

understanding. In contrast, an attunement such as passion has understanding. Passion "grants vision."[35]

> To passion belongs a reaching out and opening up of oneself… But such reaching out in passion does not simply lift us up and away beyond ourselves. It gathers our essential being to its proper ground, it exposes our ground for the first time in so gathering, so that the passion is that through which and in which we take hold of ourselves…[36]

Attunement, as the primordial opening up of existence, discloses to us that we are existing beings embedded in a world among other entities; it discloses our situatedness. An authentic attunement discloses that situation as properly our own. So, when Heidegger says that passion is characterized by an "opening up of oneself" which "gathers our essential being" and "exposes our ground," we can read this as Heidegger placing passion within the structure of authentic attunements. Because passion "grants sight" and "belongs to a reaching out" we find that passion has its understanding, for it discloses futural possibilities and enables transcendence. The possibilities disclosed through passion as attuned-understanding are authentic possibilities in the sense that, in and through passion, it is our "essential being" which is "gathered" to its "proper ground" through "which we take hold of ourselves." This signifies that passion enables a self-understanding retrieval of what we have been, which is gathered to our proper (authentic) ground, thereby allowing us to take hold of our own existence, resulting in the disclosure of an authentic situation (resoluteness), which subsequently enables us to project ourselves toward our authentic possibilities for being (transcendence toward our proper ability-to-be).

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[35] Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. 1, The Will to Power as Art*, p. 48
Recall understanding as that which discloses possibilities and the significance of the disclosure of possibilities is in the transcendence which it affords.
[36] Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. 1, The Will to Power as Art*, p. 48

As a pre-intentional background structure, passion discloses that which is significant and the way in which it is significant for one that is thus attuned. Passion is an atmospheric-like phenomenon through which the world is disclosed and experienced. The pre-intentional orienting nature of passion extends beyond explicit engagement with one's passion (such as the artist that is immersed in creating a work of art), thereby structuring one's experience in a far reaching and encompassing manner. For example, passion may structure one's experience in such a way that, instead of accepting an invitation from one's friends to accompany them during a Friday night out at the bar, the artist declines—choosing instead to return to their art studio.[37] Attuned by passion, the artist's experience is structured such that art is her orienting concern. Put differently, the significance of the world, disclosed by passion as an attunement, entails a salience landscape that is structured in relation to one's passion. I.e., Friday nights are encountered as significant in relation to painting and not for watching television or going to the bar.

Further examples that demonstrate passion as a pre-intentional structure—as a way of finding oneself in the world—might be an artist that, on visiting a new city, seeks out various galleries/art museums. The artist, stopping at a café for lunch, finds particular features of the café salient that might otherwise be overlooked. I.e., the small and inconspicuous charcoal drawing in the corner, which the other café-goers scarcely notice. While grocery shopping, the artist might find a mundane pile of fruit curiously posed, thus sparking a creative feeling or thought related to their passion for art. More generally, the artist experiences colors and landscapes in a distinctive manner. The passionate literary critic that is sitting on the train as dozens of people funnel into her cabin notices the passenger that is carrying a copy of *Ulysses* with him, while the remaining

[37] This example was derived from a real-life anecdote. The example should not be construed as a claim that passion demands one to neglect other aspects of life. That said, obsession can occur in highly passionate people.

passengers sink into the background of her experience. What one hears is similarly structured through attunement. Sitting in a busy café where dozens of conversations are occurring, a literary artist might overhear someone say the name, "Jane Austen," attempting, then, to figure out where this particular conversation is happening. The political conversation happening directly next to where the literary artist sits might be encountered as mere background noise, if it's noticed at all, but the literary conversation, happening tables away from where one is sitting, is somehow heard over everything else.

As an attuning structure, passion shapes the specific situations that one engages in, including the way in which one engages with those specific situations. It is in this sense that passion is a pre-intentional background that structures one's experience in a far-reaching and encompassing manner. What one experiences as significant/salient (and the way in which something is experienced as being significant), one's experienced possibilities, and one's intentional activity are structured by one's attunement. One experiences the world *through* their attunement.

We can contrast the pre-intentionality of attunement with intentional affective phenomena insofar as passion is not synonymous with any particular feeling, mood, emotion, or affect. The artist might experience a wide range of feelings or emotions that are contingent upon an intentional context, and which occur against the backdrop of her passionate attunement.[38] For example, while passionately engaged in creating a painting, the artist might be happy, sad, frustrated, or indifferent. She might be excited at her progress or frustrated by a mistake. To be excited about her progress or frustrated by a mistake presupposes the existential backdrop

[38] I.e., mood as a *mode* of attunement.

against which such intentional contexts arise. Put differently, to have a specific intentionally directed experience one must already have found oneself in the world. Attunement, as a way of finding oneself in the world, is not contingent upon a particular intentional context but is part of the existential structure which conditions and shapes particular intentional contexts.

Insofar as meaning in life is unique to unique individuals, experiences of meaning in life are embedded in a concrete-particular situation. As such, meaning in life is experienced in particular intentional contexts. Because attunement is part of the existential structure which shapes those intentional contexts, and because passion is the guiding attunement in a plurality of contexts which are experienced as meaningful (indicated both phenomenologically and empirically), I want to suggest that the attunement of passion is a necessary background condition upon which experiences of "creative" meaning in life arise.[39] In other words, passion as an attunement is an a priori existential structure of "creative" meaning in life.[40]

Through passion as attuned-understanding, there is a disclosedness and shining forth of meaningful possibilities. The world as meaningful is unconcealed in this illumination. There is an opening up of oneself and a reaching out in which the world in its meaningfulness is encountered. We can find meaningfulness, then, by allowing our passions to call us back to ourselves; a gathering "of our essential being in its proper ground…in which we take hold of ourselves" and catch sight of our authentic possibilities. Passionate immersion as a being-toward one's authentic ability-to-be unconceals meaning in the sense that, in its very activity, one feels

[39] Recall "creative" meaning in life, as a category for Viktor Frank, which refers to a variety of possibilities for meaning characterized by creativity, accomplishment, purposeful work, contributions to the world, etc. More specifically, art, science, philosophy, writing, athletics, etc. would be subsumed under this category.
[40] This helps us understand why art is experienced as meaningful for some individuals but not others. I.e., the structure which shapes one's experience such that they derive great meaning from art will include a passionate attunement. For those who do not derive meaning from art, this attunement will be absent.

(authentically) at home in the world, one experiences a sense of purpose and responsibleness, and one cultivates a kind of resourcefulness and resiliency which motivates and brings vitality to one's life. This meaningfulness is found along the movement of existence when one is passionately attuned, for the pursuit of one's passions is a cultivation of one's authentic ability-to-be and consequently, it is a mode of becoming who one properly is.

The ontological-existential structures of passion as a mode of meaningful experience are maintained across divergent modes of passionate meaning in life, including art, sports, athletics, writing, science, philosophy, healthcare occupations, and even craftsman disciplines such as carpentry, masonry, etc. In other words, there are innumerable ontic-existentiell possibilities for experiencing meaning in life through passionate attunement, though we cannot know in advance which possibilities for meaning in life any particular person will actually experience as meaningful. Echoing Frankl, we cannot prescribe a meaning.[41] The constituting existential structures, however, allow us to make sense of divergent sources of meaningfulness. Put differently, that which unifies this type of meaningful experience are the existential structures outlined in this section.

Existential meaning, then, refers to the existential structural constitution of meaning in life, and meaning in life refers to the specific instances of meaning that a particular person might experience. Consequently, to ask, "what constitutes meaning in life?" is to ask about existential meaning. In articulating an answer to this question with reference to passion as a mode of meaning in life, we would point to the following structures: 1) Passion as an attunement (which always has its understanding). 2) The self-understanding temporal retrieval of one's past, which

[41] With reference to creative meaning, we cannot prescribe a meaning because we cannot a priori determine what any particular person might be passionate about. They must explore and experience, try and retry, until they hit upon something which ignites them with passion.

is gathered into the present, thus disclosing one's situation as properly one's own (resoluteness) and is projected toward futural possibilities (transcendence). 3) All of which takes place in an authentic mode of being, resulting in the cultivation of one's authentic ability-to-be.

4.5 A Preliminary Articulation of Love

Love, in contemporary western culture, is a term used for a variety of purposes. One speaks of loving their partner, a family member, or a friend. Love is also used in referring to objects, as when one proclaims their "love" of chocolate, sports cars, or beer. It is further used in reference to the deep feeling and devotion that one may have for an activity or way of life, such as when a football player says, "I love football" or a dancer says, "I love dancing." For my purposes, I will refrain from using the term "love" in reference to objects or activities. I will maintain a broad application of the term, however, in allowing it to refer to love for a romantic partner, family, or close friends. Standard definitions of love cite an intense, strong, and/or deep feeling of affection for another person.[42] While we might accept this as a preliminary definition by rendering "deep feeling" as attunement, the idea that this "deep feeling" is a feeling of "affection" is problematic. What does "affection" commonly refer to? "A feeling of liking and caring for someone."[43] If we put these definitions together, love would be defined as something like "a deep feeling of liking and caring." This is a wholly uninformative, deficient, and ambiguous definition. Furthermore, love doesn't seem to be contingent upon a particular feeling

[42] Britannica Dictionary. "Love Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary." Accessed July 10, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/love.; Oxford English Dictionary. "Love, N.1: Oxford English Dictionary." Accessed July 10, 2023. https://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/110566.

[43] Merriam Webster. "Definition of Affection." Accessed July 10, 2023. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/affection; Britannica Dictionary. "Affection Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary." Accessed July 10, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/affection#:~:text=Britannica%20Dictionary%20definition%20of%20AFFECTION.

or affect. We might experience excitement, joy, comfort, and happiness in relation to our beloved, but we might also experience frustration, sadness, vulnerability, and fear. When we love someone, that love persists despite the fleeting affects which accompany various contextual circumstances. Stated clearly, if one stopped loving another in the absence of affectionate feeling, we would be unlikely to refer to that as love, but rather as infatuation or lust. An emphasis on affection, then, seems to be a deficient way of conceptualizing love. Following this, the only characteristic we can take from the common way of defining love is the idea that it is a "deep feeling," which we will render as "attunement."

Because love is something we experience toward another person, it has an intentional referent. We've described attunement as a pre-intentional background structure that orients our intentional activity by disclosing that which matters to us, in addition to the way in which it matters. Love, as I will attempt to show, is not only a structural element of one's experience when one is intentionally oriented toward their beloved, but that, as a pre-intentional background structure, love reverberates across the broad range of one's existence, structuring one's possibilities, worldly concerns, projects, and activities.

4.6 A Description of Love

Common experiences that are made possible through reciprocal loving relationships, which equally apply to romantic, familial, and friendly relationships, include being-together over a shared meal, authentic expression and conversation, gathering to celebrate an achievement or success, or to honor and mourn something or someone that has been lost, comforting and supporting one another during hardship or grief, supporting one in their passionate pursuits/receiving support, providing/receiving assistance when in need, expressing oneself

openly and freely, sacrificing for one's beloved, sharing projects/interests, etc.[44] I will draw on a few of these experiences before attempting to discern the existential structures of love as a mode of meaningful experience.

A meal that is being shared between individuals that have cultivated a reciprocal loving relationship serves as more than an act of sustaining life through nourishment—it is an occasion for being-together. In this being-together, more than food and drink are being shared. Life is being shared through expression and conversation. You might talk of joyous and exciting experiences or achievements, and your beloved shares in the joy and success. They might speak of hardship or loss, and you share in the sorrow. More peculiar to longstanding relationships are the expressions which are not explicitly communicated. You might sense that your beloved friend or partner has something which they are carrying with them that is causing them concern, something that they have not confessed or offered to tell. It could be their disengaged manner of conversation, an unordinary mood, their tone of voice, or a peculiar expression of their bodily mannerisms—an expression that would only be salient to someone with whom they have a shared history. You ask if something is weighing on them, and the simple act of recognition causes an emotional response followed by an articulation of their weighty concern. Such open expression is experienced as relief, evidenced by the common phrase that is sometimes uttered after we communicate something that we have held within us, which was ready to burst outward: "A weight has been lifted." Somehow, one feels "lighter" and revitalized after such an expressive experience. This intimate being-with our beloved presupposes a shared "exploration of life—

[44] Many of these interactions and experiences are not exclusive to love. That is, we can have many of these experiences with mere acquaintances, new friends, and even strangers. The way in which the interaction/experience manifests, however, will differ. The difference will become apparent in the forthcoming descriptions.

something having-been, but which isn't gone," as it is a condition which has made possible this intimate experience of being-together. Your shared history "informs the present, as you understand one another in ways that others might not, and this provides access to depths which are not easily revealed."[45] This shared history implies more than a stripped-down notion of being-with, for we can spend time with another person, sharing aspects of life over the course of many years, without penetrating the depths of their unique individuality.

Knowing someone deeply presupposes an openness, and "love is that which opens the human being up to the world, to that which is other."[46] This loving openness allows the "wrappings" which hide one's unique self to fall away, thereby disclosing the "individual nuances" of the beloved.[47] "The more deeply we penetrate into a man through an understanding cognition guided by personal love, the more unsubstitutable, irreplaceable, nonexchangeable, individual, and unique does he become for us."[48] In relationships which invite and support the cultivation of the beloved's unique self, wherein the "wrappings" which hide oneself fall away, we become deeply connected—intertwined, even—with the beloved's unique style of being.[49] Our life and the structure of our world are seemingly expanded through such a connection to the extent that one is shown a novel way of experiencing and interacting with the world through the distinctive perspective and style of the beloved.

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[45] Bell, "The Structure of Meaning in Experience: Rediscovering That Which Has Been Lost."
[46] Davis, Zachary, and Anthony Steinbock. "Max Scheler." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021. Accessed July 10, 2023. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scheler/#MeaPhe.
More than a prerequisite to knowing another person, love, for Scheler, is the essence of all knowledge and understanding.
[47] Scheler, Max. *The Nature of Sympathy*. Routledge, 2017. p. 121
[48] Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy,* p. 121
[49] The idea of a "style of being" will be expanded upon in the next section.

To know another human being in a deeply profound manner, and to be known the same, enriches each person's life in a variety of ways. Not only does such deep understanding create the conditions which allow for experiences like the one described above, but the openness which presupposes this deeply profound understanding creates a clearing in which joyful being-together can unfold. Such joy can be "childlike," in that the openness allows for one to embrace a kind of unconcerned expression. A silly thought or a spontaneous expression serves to bring a simple moment of joy to an otherwise mundane situation. A deeper sense of joy can unfold, too, as when a meaningful project is being cooperatively pursued, or when our beloved actively supports the unfolding of our unique self. Loving openness allows for more serious interactions, too.

We might think back to an occasion in which a beloved friend, partner, or family member came to us (or us to them), with a confession that one's way of life had gone astray in some significant manner; that one had lost oneself to a lifeless career, a loveless relationship, or a years-long perpetuation of detrimental habit. The confession might serve as a commitment that our beloved has made to taking back their life as properly their own. This could entail a career change, attending university, cultivating a passion, escaping an abusive relationship, confronting a loveless relationship, overcoming substance addiction, etc. We might respond by affirming our beloved's commitment while "sharing and promoting the beloved's tendency to grow."[50] This affirmation could manifest through moderately passive encouragement and care, or it might entail active engagement with the world on behalf of our beloved, and direct support for our beloved in the restructuring of their way of life. The clearing afforded through love is not only a space for joy, support, comfort, and affirmation, however, as "we can even oppose particular

[50] Vacek, Edward V. "Scheler's Phenomenology of Love." *The Journal of Religion* 62, no. 2 (April 1982): 156–77. https://doi.org/10.1086/486932. p. 167

qualities, deeds, and expressions when these are not consonant with the beloved's ideal essence."[51]

We might imagine a beloved partner or friend that suddenly begins taking part in a destructive habit that could hinder their career, impair their studies, stymie their passion, damage their wellbeing, or hurt their relationships. This could be experienced as saliently discordant with the unique aspects, individual nuances, and inherent value of the beloved, which have been disclosed to us through our love for them. Love illuminates that which is good and unique in the beloved, and then shares that vision with the beloved, which is contrasted with the discordant qualities or characteristics in question. In contrast to force, control, and domination in opposing discordant qualities and characteristics, "love simply invites, 'Become that which you are,'" while gently urging the beloved away from that which they are not.[52]

While love is a diverse and far-reaching phenomenon, of which there is plenty more that could be said regarding existentiell manifestations of love, the foregoing descriptions are sufficient for our existential structural analysis.[53]

4.7 The Existential Structures of Love as a Mode of Meaningful Experience

I will begin my existential analysis of love with an overview of Heidegger's notions of "being-with" and "solicitude." Following this, I will discuss attunement, understanding, resoluteness, temporality, and authenticity, lifting their structural moments into view such that

[51] Vacek, "Scheler's Phenomenology of Love," p. 167
Although it was not the author's original intention, for our purposes we might interpret "ideal essence" as something like "authentic ability-to-be."
[52] Vacek, "Scheler's Phenomenology of Love," p. 166
[53] This descriptive summary, while sufficient for the purposes of this project given the scope and limitations, is deficient in nearly every other manner. In other words, the phenomenon of love is deserving of much more descriptive analysis than I have been able to express in these pages.

they can be seen in the foregoing experiential descriptions. I will then show that love, despite having an intentional referent (the beloved) serves as a pre-intentional background structure to experience. I will end by summarizing the existential structures of love as a mode of meaningful experience.

As a being-in-the-world, human beings are always-already immersed in a world which presupposes the existence of other human beings.[54] Being-with others is not dependent upon the physical proximity of other people. Even when we are alone, we are being-with as an essential aspect of our being-in-the-world. As I sit here alone in my study, for example, I am nevertheless embedded in a world with other people, evidenced by the books that I have stacked on my desk, which were written by other people, or the chair that I am sitting in that was crafted by another person, and so on. Solicitude (Fürsorge) is the term that Heidegger uses to refer to the way that we comport ourselves in our being-with other people. Heidegger contrasts solicitude with concern (Besorge), both of which are subsumed under the structure of care (Sorge).[55] Concern refers to our dealings with non-human objects and equipment. For example, when I am undertaking a project, such as fixing my fence, I am *concernfully* dealing with various equipment such as a tape measure, a hammer, and nails. The tape, hammer, and nails, then, are things of "concern."[56] Human beings have a distinctive ontological character that differs from mere objects or equipment. As such, the proper comportment in being-with is distinctive from the way in which we comport ourselves in the use of objects and equipment. The proper mode of comportment in being-with others is "*solicitude*."[57] An implication of the distinction between

[54] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 155
[55] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 157-158
[56] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 157
[57] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 157

concern and solicitude is that, when relating to and interacting with other human beings, it is improper to engage with them as if they were mere objects or pieces of equipment because their essential being is distinctive from that of objects and equipment.

Solicitude can take on an authentic or inauthentic form. Inauthentic solicitude "can, as it were, take away 'care' from the Other and put itself in his position in concern: it can *leap in* for him."[58] Put differently, this mode of solicitude displaces the other, thereby taking over the other's concerns for oneself through which "the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent."[59] This is a form of domination in the sense that one is displaced from their own existence and their possibilities for being are taken over and decided by someone else. We can illustrate this basic idea with a few mundane examples.

A co-worker might see us struggling with a task, and instead of guiding us through the process, they "leap-in" for us to finish the job. A controlling parent might habitually "leap-in" for their child by not allowing their child to make decisions or complete any tasks on their own. A totalitarian government might decide how their citizens lives will unfold, thereby "leaping-in" and controlling the possibilities of an entire population.

In contrast, authentic solicitude "does not so much leap in for the Other as *leap ahead* of him…not in order to take away his 'care' but rather to give it back to him authentically…"[60] This mode of solicitude is liberating, as opposed to dominating, in that "it helps the Other to become transparent to himself in his care and to become *free for it*."[61] In "seeing" possibilities which the other cannot yet see, one can "leap ahead" of the other. In so doing, one does not take those

[58] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 158
[59] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 158
[60] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 158-159
[61] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 159

possibilities away from the other, but rather illuminates them such that the other can "see" them, too.

Contrasting examples, when compared to inauthentic solicitude, might be teaching a co-worker how to complete a task instead of doing it for them, guiding one's child toward making proper decisions instead of always deciding for them, and a government which structures its state such that, instead of forcing citizens into a particular set of possibilities, a landscape of possibilities are provided from which the citizens are free to choose their way of life.

In articulating the existential structures of love, I will attempt to show where in the previously described experiences of love that temporality, resoluteness, attunement, understanding, and authenticity (including authentic solicitude) can be "seen."

Temporality, as the co-arising of past, present, and future, is an essential feature of any relationship, as the life that has been shared between two people is repetitiously retrieved, thereby informing the present being-together, which is futurally projected toward possibilities of being-with. For example, in discerning the meaning of a subtle expression of our beloved, which implicitly signals an unconfessed worry, we are gathering our past into the present and throwing it forward. In having shared many experiences with our beloved, we have come to know their style of being, including their subtle expressions, which has given rise to the possibility of discerning the meaning of such an expression. This informs the present, and in a moment of resoluteness, we seize the authentic possibility of being-with by confronting their expression as a cause of concern. The moment is resolute insofar as the situation disclosed is one's own. It is a possibility of one's authentic ability-to-be in the sense that a stranger could not step-in and take one's place, for they would lack the shared history required for this intimate possibility of being-together. There is a further aspect of authenticity in the form of solicitude, as we "leap ahead" of

our beloved by prompting them to confront their weighty concern. Such opportunities for authentic being-together presuppose an openness, and this openness presupposes love.

As mentioned in the previous section, love opens one up to that which is other. For Scheler, love (and the openness it affords) is the prerequisite of all knowledge and understanding.[62] More specifically, personal love, as we saw, allows the "wrappings" which hide one's "individual nuances" to fall away, allowing the beloved to reveal their unique self in the openness afforded by love.[63] For Heidegger, openness is a prerequisite for truth as unconcealment. For things to become unconcealed, they must first "come out or be brought out into the open" because "as long as things lie hidden from us, we have no access to any truths concerning them."[64] In Heidegger's existential framework, attunement constitutes the human being's "openness to the world" and is subsequently an a priori condition of truth.[65] We might, then, characterize the openness afforded by love as an openness wherein another human being becomes unconcealed and truths about them are disclosed.

That love has understanding is supported by Heidegger in *Nietzsche, Volume 1 The Will to Power as Art*, where Heidegger states that, in contrast to something like infatuation, "love is never blind: it is perspicuous."[66] Because love invites and supports the beloved in becoming their authentic self, love acts as a cooperating disclosure of each person's authentic possibilities. In other words, our beloved helps us become who we are and who we want to be, they aid us in our

[62] David and Steinbock, "Max Scheler"
[63] Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, p. 121
[64] Dahlstrom, Daniel. "Open (Offene)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 560–61. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.150. p. 560
[65] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176
[66] P. 48
Understanding as that which grants "vision" where "vision" refers to the disclosedness of possibilities (Wrathall, p. 799).

attempt to uncover our authentic possibilities, and in turn we do the same for them. This can be seen in love which opposes a discordant characteristic or in the affirmation and promotion of the beloved, and in acts of authentic solicitude. In sharing our existence with the beloved, we are affected by their style of being, and they are affected by ours, thereby offering new ways of disclosing the world to each other, subsequently revealing otherwise concealed possibilities for being.

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Matthew Ratcliffe describes one's "style" as "an overarching *way* of experiencing" and interacting with the world.[67] One's way of thinking, their demeanor and emotive tendencies, how/why they respond to various situations, what they find salient (and in what way), the way they anticipate and subsequently pursue certain possibilities, how/why they act, etc., are characteristics of one's style of being. In longstanding-intimate relationships, wherein a deep understanding of each person's unique way of being is allowed to flourish, we might begin to become intertwined with the other's style of being such that our own style is altered and expanded in significant ways. "This involves being *affected* by the other person, having the possibilities of one's own world somehow altered by an engagement with their possibilities."[68] As we begin to appreciate the way that the beloved experiences the world, we may assimilate their way of experiencing into our own such that we encounter, experience, and interact with the world in new ways which reflect the style of the beloved. Alain Badiou points to this experiential expansion as the fundamental characteristic of love: "What kind of world does one see when one experiences it from the point of view of two and not one? What is the world like when it is experienced, developed and lived from the point of view of difference and not

[67] Ratcliffe, Matthew. *Grief Worlds*. MIT Press, 2023. p. 83
[68] Ratcliffe, *Grief World*, p. 119

identity? That is what I believe love to be."[69] Moreover, love can disclose possibilities which are not *mine* or *yours*, but *ours*. As such, love is capable of disclosing a new dimension of possibilities beyond those that are strictly one's own, subsequently revealing a novel way of being-in-the-world—a being-together—which enriches and expands each person's existence.

Love, and the way in which the beloved is embedded in our life, doesn't wax and wane with their physical presence—such a thing wouldn't be love. In other words, we are not only attuned by love when we are with our beloved or when we are intentionally oriented toward them. The enduring nature of love, and the way in which love reverberates across the broad range of one's existence brings a sense of "cohesion and perdurance to our essential being."[70] It is a way of finding oneself in the world. Who we have been, who we are, and who we might be is bound up with our loved ones and, as a result, our very way of being-in-the-world is similarly linked to them such that the beloved is implicitly considered and "present" in the pre-intentional background that structures our experience.

One may be half a world away from one's beloved and love continues to structure their experience of the world. The gift shop at the airport is salient because it offers the possibility of finding a souvenir for one's beloved. The song on the radio is salient because it is our beloved's favorite song. If one is also a parent, their possibilities might be constrained such that whimsically extending their trip does not feature into their experienced possibilities. A friend might be searching for a rare book, which you happen to come across while browsing a new bookshop. Such a book, which may be of no interest to you, was encountered as significant in relation to your beloved friend. Without this, the book would not have been a salient feature of

[69] Badiou, Alain, and Nicolas Truong. *In Praise of Love*. Translated by Peter Bush. Serpent's Tail, 2012. p. 22
[70] Heidegger, *Nietzsche Volume 1 The Will to Power as Art*, p. 47

your experience. For couples that have spent many years together, their lives might be so deeply interwoven that much of what they experience is encountered as significant in such a way that presupposes their being-together. That forest trail is the path *we* walk every Sunday morning, that restaurant is where *we* get dinner on Friday nights, this puzzle is *our* afternoon project, that tree in the front yard is the one that *we* planted, this is *our* favorite album, and so on. Such things are experienced as significant to *us.* This "significant to us" endures even when our beloved is not with us (in a physical proximity sense). For example, we might be giving a visiting friend a tour of the town, showing them each of the aforementioned places/things. Nevertheless, those things continue to be encountered, and may even be described to our friend, in terms of their significance to *us*.

Parents often talk about the way in which having children changes the way that they experience the world. The most common articulation of this in casual conversation seems to take the form of, "the world looks different." My mother has said something very similar to me: "The world changes when you have children." Similarly, a friend told me that, after the birth of his children, many things which used to have importance now seemed trivial. In other words, that which one experiences as significant, and the way in which it is significant, changes when one becomes a parent, and as a result, the world is experienced in a novel way. One might quite literally see things differently, as things which used to be salient features of one's experience have been displaced, and new concerns begin to guide one's experience.

The foregoing examples help illustrate the way in which love shapes how one interprets, interacts with, and understands the world, oneself, and other people, in addition to how love alters, expands, and discloses possibilities for being. Love influences what is salient and significant, including the way in which it is experienced as being salient or significant, thus

shaping one's intentional activity, projects, concernful dealings, etc. Despite love having an intentional referent, then, love is a pre-intentional background which structures experience and shapes particular intentional contexts.

It was mentioned at the beginning of the section on love that love is not synonymous with any particular feeling or affect, and that it is not contingent upon any particular intentional context or mood. One might experience a wide range of feelings or emotions which are contingent upon an intentional context, and which occur against the backdrop of one's attunement of love. I.e., being afraid for one's sick child, sad that one must be away from their partner during a business trip (or happy to be reunited), upset because one's partner lied, etc. Without love and care for one's child or partner, such intentional contexts would not arise. Attunement, as a way of finding oneself in the world, is not contingent upon any particular intentional context but rather serves as part of the existential structure which conditions and shapes those intentional contexts.

To have a unique experience of meaning in life derived from one's relationships is to be embedded in a particular intentional context. Because attunement is part of the existential structure which shapes those contexts, and because love is the guiding attunement for deeply meaningful relationships (supported both phenomenologically and empirically), love is a necessary background condition upon which these types of meaningful experiences arise.[71] In

[71] Love, for Frankl, is part of the "experiential" category of meaning. Other "experiential" meanings include aesthetic phenomena, such as experiencing a beautiful landscape, sunset, or waterfall which strikes one with a sense of awe and wonder. I do not think subsuming these types of meaning in life under the same category is helpful. I will, then, speak of the meaning in life derived from love on its own terms. This deviates from the way in which I talked of passion insofar as I accepted Frankl's "creative" category of meaning in relation to an attunement of passion.

other words, love as an attunement is an a priori existential structure for experiences of meaning in life that are derived from a deep connection with other human beings.

The possibilities disclosed through love as attuned-understanding are meaningful possibilities for being and the world as meaningful is uncovered and illuminated by love. There is an opening up of oneself to another, and a cooperative disclosure of each person's authentic ability-to-be. Love provides a clearing for each person to be and become who they properly are. Love liberates the other for their authentic being-in-the-world and offers the novel possibility of authentic being-together. Love opposes inauthenticity in its dismantling of facades and wrappings which hide one's unique self. Hardships are shared and thus relieved, joy is shared and thus increased. Space for solace is granted, and possibilities for communion, cooperation, comfort, open expression, and support are disclosed and salient when one is attuned by love. While it may be an experiential certitude that loving relationships are great sources of meaning in life, there is, additionally, a treasure trove of empirical insight supporting this intuition.[72] Such studies indicate that love and friendship are highly valued sources of meaning in life for both adolescents and adults.[73] Furthermore, the cultivation of healthy relationships is strongly correlated with increased wellbeing and life satisfaction in adults, bringing vitality, purpose, and

[72] Lambert, Nathaniel M., Tyler F. Stillman, Roy F. Baumeister, Frank D. Fincham, Joshua A. Hicks, and Steven M. Graham. "Family as a salient source of meaning in young adulthood." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 5, no. 5 (2010): 367-376; King, Laura A., and Joshua A. Hicks. "The Science of Meaning in Life." *Annual Review of Psychology* 72, no. 1 (January 4, 2021): 561–84. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-072420-122921.

[73] Pezirkianidis, Christos, Evangelia Galanaki, Georgia Raftopoulou, Despina Moraitou, and Anastassios Stalikas. "Adult Friendship and Wellbeing: A Systematic Review with Practical Implications." *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (January 24, 2023). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1059057; O'Rourke, John, Craig Harms, and Lynne Cohen. "They're Always There for Me! Friendship and Meaning in Young People's Lives?" *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 60, no. 6 (September 11, 2019): 596–608. https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12570.

value to one's existence.[74] In sum, the loving relationships that we cultivate and maintain throughout adolescence and adulthood are integral to leading a meaningful life.

Although experiences of meaning in life through loving relationships are diverse, they share a structure. That is, a longstanding relationship with a friend is different than a relationship with a romantic partner, and both differ from the relationships that we have with our family.[75] Despite their concrete differences, each unique relationship presents opportunities for experiencing meaning in life. Experiences of meaning derived from a connection with another human being are unified by the structures of existential meaning. That is, we can make sense of the existentiell diversity of such meaningful experiences by looking at the existential structures which condition those diverse experiences, thus finding unity in plurality. In asking about the constitution of meaning in life with reference to the meaning experienced through love is to ask about the existential structures. These structures include: 1) Love as attuned-understanding, which affords an openness that invites each person to be and become their proper-authentic selves, in addition to disclosing possibilities for being-together. 2) The self-understanding temporal retrieval of one's past (including shared history), which is gathered into the present, disclosing the situation as properly one's own (resoluteness), thereby providing possibilities for solicitude, which is thrown forward in a movement of transcendence. 3) An authentic mode of being. 4) Resulting in a cooperative disclosure and cultivation of each person's authentic ability-to-be.

[74] Gómez-López, Mercedes, Carmen Viejo, and Rosario Ortega-Ruiz. "Well-Being and Romantic Relationships: A Systematic Review in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 13 (July 7, 2019): 2415. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16132415.

[75] There is further diversity in the particular relationship we have with different friends and family members, and there may be less diversity between the relationship we have with a close friend and our family members. Nevertheless, each relationship is unique in some way or other.

In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at the interplay of attunement, resoluteness, and authenticity. I will begin my analysis by looking at anxiety as presented in BT, taking special interest in the notion that anxiety is an authentic attunement. After reiterating Heidegger's articulation of anxiety, I will continue with an elaboration of authenticity and resoluteness. The purpose of this will be to better understand the relationship between authenticity, resoluteness, and attunement. Once anxiety, authenticity, and resoluteness have been brought into view, I will draw attention to a tension in Heidegger's analysis. I will show that anxiety is at odds with authenticity and resoluteness and that, as a result, BT is devoid of authentic attunements. I will proceed by reiterating passion and love as authentic attunements which are compatible with resoluteness, and my analysis will culminate in the suggestion that passion and love, rather than anxiety, are better described as authentic attunements through which resolute being-in-the-world can unfold.

Chapter Five – Authentic Attunements

While an analysis and critique of anxiety as an authentic attunement might seem irrelevant to my investigation of meaningfulness, embarking on such a task will allow us to better understand the relationship between authenticity, resoluteness, and attunement, resulting in a more lucid demonstration of passion and love as attunements through which authentic-resolute being-in-the-world unfolds. This is significant insofar as the enactment of authentic-resolute being-in-the-world through an attunement of passion and/or love is where I have suggested that experiences of meaning in life unfold. Therefore, firmly establishing passion and love as authentic attunements supports the integrity of my overall project.[1]

5.1 A Critique of Anxiety

Anxiety, in BT, is considered an attunement of authentic-resoluteness due not only to the way in which it discloses the possibility of authentic existence, but also because through anxiety, one arrives at an authentic understanding of existence.[2] There is a nuanced problem with this conception, however.[3] Before detailing my critique, I will briefly summarize Heidegger's analysis of anxiety, resoluteness, and authenticity. Then, after challenging the idea that anxiety is

[1] The critique of anxiety was unplanned. The tension between anxiety, authenticity, and resoluteness surfaced spontaneously as I was attempting an analysis of these phenomena for the sake of describing the way in which they are connected, so that I could then perform a parallel analysis, placing passion and love within this context.

[2] Withy, Katherine. "Mood (Stimmung)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 500–503. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.137. p. 503
It should be noted that in later works, Heidegger introduces a variety of other attunements that similarly disclose authenticity, such as profound boredom.

[3] This is a nuanced critique because one can look at the "authentic" character of anxiety from two different perspectives. 1) Methodological authenticity, which pertains to an authentic understanding of existence. 2) Authenticity as a way of being-in-the-world. I will not challenge the former, but I will argue that the latter is at odds with anxiety. The distinction will become clear later in the chapter.

an attunement of authentic-resoluteness, I will suggest that passion and love, rather than anxiety, are better described as attunements through which authentic-resolute being-in-the-world unfolds.

Heidegger says that when one is attuned by anxiety, the world is disclosed as bereft of significance, and "the totality of relevance discovered within the world of things…is completely without importance. It collapses. The world has the character of complete insignificance."[4] Through this collapse of significance, *beings* within the world withdraw, and *being* is disclosed. Because beings have withdrawn, anxiety does not have an object as an intentional referent (contrast with fear). Rather, one is anxious about their being-in-the-world as a whole.[5] Consequently, anxiety discloses being-in-the-world as a whole. It reveals the fallen everyday mode of existence that we normally inhabit, it shows us that we are thrown into the world, and it discloses death as our ownmost possibility—which is the horizon of possibilities. Attuned by anxiety, "the 'world' can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others."[6] As the significance of the "world" sinks away, the human being is deprived of "the possibility of understanding itself…in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publicly interpreted."[7] Consequently, anxiety effectively extracts one from the fallen everyday mode of inauthentic existence and "makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being—that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself…and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always is."[8] In other words, anxiety

[4] Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Edited by Dennis J Schmidt. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University Of New York Press, 2010. p. 186
For sake of clarity, when I reference Joan Stambaugh's translation, I will include the full citation in the footnote so as to distinguish Stambaugh's translation from the Macquarrie and Robinson translation, which I have been using throughout.
[5] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 233
[6] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 232
[7] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 232
[8] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 232

discloses the possibility for authenticity. One need not do as *they* do, and one need not exist as *others* suggest one exist, one is free to choose one's existence.

From this, we can see that anxiety discloses matters of ontological-existential significance. As such, anxiety is first and foremost methodologically important for Heidegger. Tersely put, Heidegger believes that from an attunement of anxiety, an authentic understanding of existence is disclosed. Being, as opposed to beings (entities) is encountered through such an attunement, according to Heidegger. In my critique, I will not challenge the idea that anxiety discloses an authentic understanding of existence, including the disclosedness of the *possibility* of authentic existence. Rather, I will argue that anxiety is not an attunement *through* which authentic existence unfolds and that, as a result, BT lacks explication of a sufficiently authentic attunement. Before my critique can be put into view, however, we need a better understanding of resoluteness and authenticity.

Resoluteness can be understood as "a modified way of living in the world that, rather than carrying on in conformity with generic identities and social expectation, organizes the way the concrete situation for action appears so that it sustains and guides one in the project of being one's own individual self."[9] Because it "organizes the way the concrete situation for action appears," resoluteness discloses one's situation as one's own, and the possibilities disclosed comprise authentic possibilities. In the previous chapter, I offered examples of resoluteness, such as the artist creating a painting unique to her ability-to-be, which could not be created by anyone else. Resoluteness signals that one understands oneself and one's situation authentically, and this authentic understanding is enacted through "projecting oneself upon one's ownmost ability-to-

[9] Crowe, Benjamin. "Resoluteness (Entschlossenheit)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 641–47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.176. p. 641

be."[10] By resolving to take some course of action relative to the situation that has been authentically disclosed, resoluteness becomes definite.[11] "Resoluteness, as *authentic Being-one's-Self*, does not detach Dasein from its world," it is, rather, the "authentic disclosedness" of the world, and the authentic mode of being-in-the-world.[12] This is to say that resoluteness is a concrete phenomenon of a particular human being, in a particular situation, and "at a particular time."[13]

Recall authenticity as an existentiell modification of the average everyday way of being-in-the-world, in which one takes hold of one's own existence and one's ownmost ability-to-be in a self-understanding way. Like resoluteness, authentic existence is not detached from the world. It is a distinctive "way in which such everydayness is seized upon."[14] Consequently, an authentic mode of being-in-the-world is one which makes use of everyday understanding. "Authentic Dasein, too, exists in an everyday understanding, subject to public norms…you find yourself at grips with equipment whose meaning and possibilities are established by public practices."[15] For example, the passionate artist is at grips with the relevant tools that are required to create her painting, but she is wielding those tools is an authentic manner when she creates a unique work of art. The distinction between inauthenticity and authenticity, then, is the *way* in which one enacts their being-in-the-world. In the fallen inauthentic mode of being, one acts "for-the-sake-of" one's *undifferentiated* ability-to-be. In authenticity, one acts "for-the-sake-of" one's "self-chosen" ability-to-be.[16]

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[10] Crowe, "Resoluteness (Entschlossenheit)," p. 641
[11] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 345
[12] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 344
[13] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 345
[14] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 224
[15] Kaufer, "Authenticity (Eigentlichkeit)," p. 72
[16] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 344

To conceptually distinguish authenticity and resoluteness, we might say that authenticity is something like recognizing one's ownmost ability-to-be and taking hold of one's existence as one's own, and resoluteness is the disclosedness and enactment of one's authentic possibilities in a particular situation.

To begin my critique, the relationship between anxiety and resoluteness is uncertain. As Katherine Withy notes, pointing to two seemingly contradictory claims in BT: "On the one hand, experiencing anxiety allows one to be authentic, since anxiety exacts resoluteness of us; on the other, anxiety is that which resoluteness exacts of us and so is possible only for the authentic person."[17] In anxiety, does one become resolute? Or when one is resolute, is one anxious? Looking to other passages in BT, Heidegger seems to implicitly suggest that in anxiety, one becomes resolute, because it is through anxiety that one can be shaken from their inauthentic fallen existence in the first place.[18] While the exact relationship between anxiety and resoluteness is a problem in its own right, most significant to my critique is the way in which Heidegger characterizes anxiety and its function, and the tension this creates in relation to authentic-resoluteness. In the foregoing analysis of resoluteness and authenticity, I emphasized the way in which Heidegger makes explicit that both phenomena are concrete-existentiell phenomena. In contrasting this emphasis with Heidegger's articulation of anxiety, we can bring this tension into view.

If, on the one hand, anxiety discloses the world as bereft of significance, wherein "the totality of relevance discovered within the world of things…is completely without importance… [and] the world has the character of complete insignificance" and, on the other, authenticity and

[17] Withy, Katherine. "Anxiety (Angst) and Fear (Furcht)." Chapter. In *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall, 37–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. doi:10.1017/9780511843778.010. p. 37
[18] It might also be the case that, for Heidegger, the relationship is somehow bi-directional.

resoluteness are modifications of existentiell being-in-the-world, it is difficult to see how one could be simultaneously attuned by anxiety whilst enacting authenticity through resolute being-in-the-world.[19] In claiming that "the totality of relevance discovered within the world of things" collapses and is completely insignificant, Heidegger is saying that the structure of concernful dealings has collapsed. If such a thing collapsed, we would be incapable of simple tasks, such as using a hammer to mend a fence. More importantly for our purposes, the passionate artist would be incapable of creating her oeuvre. To take hold of a concrete situation in an authentically resolute manner presupposes something that anxiety withholds insofar as anxiety "is a rare breakdown in a life, in which the world lacks significance and entities lack importance or involvement."[20]

Put simply, the world must *matter* and have *significance* if one is to take hold of the situation in which one finds oneself. Involvement in the world presupposes worldly significance. To reiterate, Heidegger is clear that authenticity and resoluteness are not removed from the world but constitute a modification of existentiell being-in-the-world. "*Authentic* disclosedness modifies with equal primordiality both the way in which the 'world' is discovered…and the way in which the Dasein-with of Others is disclosed."[21] This is a modification of the *way* in which the world, oneself, and one's situation are disclosed as *significant* and a modification of the *way* in which one enacts one's being-in-the-world. Such modifications would be rendered impossible whilst attuned by anxiety as Heidegger has described it. Anxiety doesn't modify worldly significance; it deprives one of encountering the world as significant whatsoever. It brings one

[19] Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Edited by Dennis J Schmidt. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University Of New York Press, 2010. p. 186
[20] Withy, "Anxiety (Angst) and Fear (Furcht)," p. 37
[21] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 344
Notice how this is at odds with Heidegger's earlier claim that in anxiety, "the 'world' can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others" (*Being and Time*, p. 232).

"face to face with the 'nothing' of the world."[22] Now, this need not entail that anxiety is incapable of disclosing one's *possibility* for authenticity. That is, having been extracted from one's fallen inauthentic existence through anxiety one might catch sight of the possibility of authentic existence. Anxiety, then, seems to disclose the possibility of authentic existence, but anxiety is not consistent with resoluteness, and it cannot be an attunement *through* which authentic being-in-the-world is enacted. Consequently, anxiety as described by Heidegger cannot be an attunement of authentic-resoluteness insofar as authentic-resoluteness presupposes meaningful engagement with the world.[23] A further question arises from this. Namely, even if the possibility of authentic existence is disclosed through anxiety, where does one go from there? To have the possibility disclosed without relating it to the significance of the world indicates that it is an empty disclosure insofar as authenticity is an existentiell phenomenon (and thus a worldly phenomenon). Put differently, how does one take hold of one's existence, and how is one to enact authentic being-in-the-world if the possibility of authenticity is disclosed in the face of a world devoid of significance? In sum, anxiety might disclose the *possibility* of taking hold of one's existence as one's own, but it is uninformative as to what this means with reference to being-in-the-world. One must move past anxiety before one can meaningfully take hold of their existence and resolutely enact their chosen existence.

From this critique, we can identify two significant problems. 1) Anxiety is not an authentic attunement insofar as it is not an attunement *through* which one enacts authentic-resolute being-in-the-world.[24] 2) Assuming that anxiety does, at least, disclose the *possibility* of

[22] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 321

[23] While I will not demonstrate this here, the same critique seems to hold for Heidegger's articulation of "profound boredom."

[24] Anxiety may be an authentic attunement, methodologically, insofar as it discloses an authentic understanding of existence (at least according to Heidegger). Again, while there may be room to criticize this aspect of anxiety, I will leave it unchallenged.

authentic existence, it is difficult to discern what this possibility amounts to in the face of a world devoid of significance and involvement. Because anxiety is inconsistent with authentic-resolute being-in-the-world, Heidegger's project in BT is devoid of authentic-resolute attunements. I will proceed by suggesting that passion and love are not only compatible with authenticity and resoluteness, but that passion and love are attunements *through* which authentic-resolute being-in-the-world unfolds.

5.2 Passion and Love

In the previous chapter, passion was described as an attunement that discloses the situation as one's own (resoluteness), resulting in the cultivation of one's authentic possibilities for being. We said, therefore, that through passion, one is faced with the possibility of being and becoming who one properly is (authenticity). In stark contrast to anxiety, which discloses the world as devoid of significance, passion discloses the world as meaningful. The meaningfulness disclosed through passion is not disclosed in terms of public interpretation (fallenness/inauthenticity), but in relation to one's chosen possibilities for being. That passion discloses the world as meaningful and unconceals possibilities for experiencing meaning in life is not an arbitrary designation, for the value, meaning, and purpose derived from passionate being-in-the-world was both experientially and empirically supported.[25]

Love was described as an attunement that, like passion, discloses the situation as one's own (resoluteness), thereby resulting in the cultivation of one's authentic possibilities. Love is distinct, however, in providing a clearing for each person to be and become who they properly are, thereby liberating the other for their authentic being-in-the-world, resulting in the

[25] See chapter four.

cooperative disclosure and mutual unfolding of each person's authentic possibilities for being. Love makes manifest the meaningfulness of the world and discloses possibilities for experiencing meaning in life. This, again, was not a forced or arbitrary designation, for the manifestness of meaning through love was supported experientially and empirically.[26]

In the previous section, we noted that for Heidegger, the "for-the-sake-of-which" one enacts resolute-authenticity is "for-the-sake-of" one's "self-chosen" ability-to-be.[27] Passion is a lucid demonstration of this aspect of resolute-authentic existence. Love, however, is more complex in this respect. While love discloses the situation as one's own, which signals resoluteness and allows one to project toward their authentic possibilities for being, that for the sake of which one enacts this resolute being-with is not confined to one's self-chosen ability-to-be. Through love, resolute enactment is for the sake of one's self-chosen ability-to-be, but more importantly, this enactment is for the sake of the beloved's authentic ability-to-be, too. This was demonstrated in the existentiell description of love, wherein the situation was disclosed resolutely (as one's own), through which one enacted one's own authentic possibilities for being whilst simultaneously acting for the sake of the beloved's ability-to-be through authentic solicitude.

In summary, through passion and love, one takes hold of one's own existence as one's own. Passion and love disclose one's authentic possibilities for being, and the situation that one finds oneself in is organized in relation to those possibilities. Consequently, passion and love are authentic attunements *through* which resolute being-in-the-world is enacted, and it is through

[26] See chapter four.

[27] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 344

Because of the way in which meaning and purpose are interrelated, it is worth noting that purpose is implicit in any "for-the-sake-of-which." For example, if when attuned by passion, one is being-in-the-world "for-the-sake-of" their authentic ability-to-be, the *purpose* of such being-in is their authentic existence.

passion and love as authentic-resolute attunements that meaningful existence unfolds. Because BT is devoid of attunements through which authentic-resoluteness is enacted, and because resoluteness and authenticity appear in BT as formalisms lacking existentiell substantiation, my articulations of these phenomena serve a secondary purpose, which might viewed as an attempt to supplement the lack that we find in BT.[28]

As I turn to the concluding chapter of this thesis, I will begin by giving a clear description of existential meaning and meaning in life, including the way in which they relate to one another, in addition to their distinguishing characteristics. I will continue by summarizing the essential components of this thesis, which will be succinctly articulated as a response to the question: "What is meaningful existence?" I will then proceed to a discussion of the implications regarding the foregoing analysis of meaning, and I will end by providing suggestions for further research.

[28] That resoluteness and authenticity lack "existentiell substantiation" means that, in my view, Heidegger fails to show how these phenomena manifest in our being-in-the-world. Given Heidegger's insistence that resoluteness and authenticity are existentiell phenomena, a peculiarity emerges insofar as BT fails to offer any existentiell descriptions or examples of these phenomena.

Conclusion

Meaningful Existence

Due to the peculiar articulation of existential meaning presented in this thesis, and the way it both contrasts with and relates to meaning in life, it is worth reiterating the basic sense in which each term is to be understood. Existential meaning refers to the ontological-existential constitution of meaning in life. Put differently, it indicates the existential structures which constitute experiences of meaning in life. Existential structures shape particular intentional contexts. Existential meaning, then, refers to the structures which shape particular experiences of meaning in life. It should be noted that existential meaning is not itself a structure, over and above the structures of which it is composed. Rather, it is a term of art used to reference the existential structures of meaningful experience. In other words, I am not adding the structure "existential meaning" to the plethora of existential structures that we find in Heidegger's work.[1] I have merely analyzed concrete meaningful experience and attempted to discern the existential structures of those experiences from within Heidegger's existential framework, which I then grouped under the term "existential meaning."

Existential meaning, then, refers to the following existential structures: 1) Attunement (specifically passion and love), 2) Understanding, 3) Authenticity, 4) Resoluteness, and 5) Temporality. The structures that I have articulated herein should not be taken as an exhaustive list of the structures that constitute experiences of meaning in life, as there may be additional structures uncovered upon further analysis. Similarly, my focus on passion and love as modes of

[1] This isn't to say that one is confined to the existential structures that Heidegger has explicated. It would be worth considering what he might have overlooked in his existential analytic, insofar as it is possible that additional existential structures might be unconcealed.

meaningful experience does not imply that these are the only possible types of meaningful experience.

Meaning in life can be contrasted with existential meaning insofar as it refers to particular experiences of meaning in the lives of unique individuals, such as the meaning that is experienced by the passionate artist, or through the cultivation of a loving relationship. That meanings are unique to unique individuals implies that meaning in life is a concrete-existentiell phenomenon. Consequently, Frankl says that "to ask [about] the meaning of life in general terms is to put the question falsely because it refers vaguely to 'life' and not concretely to 'each person's own' existence."[2] To ask about meaning in life, then, is to ask in reference to a particular person and their unique being-in-the-world.

Because meanings are unique, we find a wide range of possibilities for experiencing meaning in life, though we cannot know in advance which of these possibilities someone might experience as meaningful. For example, until I engage with playing the guitar or writing music, I will not know if I will experience these things as meaningful, and the meaning in life that someone derives from such endeavors is not an indication that they will be experienced as meaningful by someone else. Consequently, meaning in life is diverse and pluralistic. Existential meaning unifies the diversity of meaning in life by providing a constitutive structure that is shared across the broad range of possibilities for meaning. That one cannot know what one will experience as meaningful prior to having the experience implies that one cannot discover their unique meaning in life through disengaged rational analysis. To be clear, reasoning that is

[2] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 61-62

detached from the broader framework of one's life cannot provide a meaning to life.[3] Rather, meaning in life is disclosed through attunements such as passion and love. Passion and love *tune* one into the meaningfulness of existence.

Having briefly clarified the way in which meaning in life and existential meaning are to be understood, I will now attempt to succinctly answer the guiding question of this thesis. Namely, "What is meaningful existence?" In answering, I will begin by saying something about meaning qua meaning, proceeding then to point to meaningful existence by way of summarizing the findings of the foregoing thesis.

Meaning is neither a material object in the world nor a mental object of the intellect. Rather, meaning in life is a transjective and experiential phenomenon. To say that it is transjective means that it is neither external and "objective," nor is it internal and "subjective." Consequently, meaning is neither in oneself, nor is it in the world. As I have attempted to convey throughout this thesis, the most basic way in which humans exist is not as subjects which stand against a totality of objects, but rather as beings-in-the-world.[4] Being-in-the-world is a unitary phenomenon. One finds oneself as an existing being which is always-already bound up with the world. When one experiences anything whatsoever, it is always in the context of being-in-the-world.[5] As a result, when one experiences meaning in life, it is likewise as a being-in-the-world.

[3] It should be noted, however, that I am not insisting on discarding rationality. After one has discovered meaning in life, rational analysis can help guide one toward the cultivation of that meaning. For example, once one has discovered a passion, rationality can inform the cultivation of that passion.

[4] It should be noted that the world of subjects and objects isn't "false" or "wrong" in Heidegger's view. Rather, it is a derivative mode of interpreting the world. It is the mode of "present-at-hand," to use Heidegger's language. In other words, it is a way of engaging with the world and a mode of understanding the world, but not the only way, and more significantly, it is not the fundamental mode of existence.

[5] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe expresses an idea that captures the unitary aspect of being-in-the-world: "Man knows himself only to the extent that he knows the world; he becomes aware of himself only within the world, and aware of the world only within himself" (Goethe, Von, and Erich Trunz. *Goethes Werke:* Munchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1981. p. 38).

More specifically, it is through distinctive *ways* of being-in-the-world that meaningful existence unfolds. Because meaning is not a material object that one could collect and store for later use, or a mental object that can be created or summoned at will (like a fact or statement that might be rehearsed) it is, in a sense, impermanent. This impermanence doesn't indicate that the meanings that one has fulfilled are lost to the past, for what one has-been isn't irrevocably lost. Rather, its impermanence signals the need for *renewal*. In this renewal, there is a repetitious return to those modes of meaningful being-in-the-world wherein one gathers what one has-been, throwing this forward in an act of becoming (transcendence).[6]

In the case of passion, this is an existential movement of being and becoming who one properly is, which is enacted through authentic-resolute being-in-the-world. Passionate being-in-the-world is for the sake of one's authentic existence. In the case of love, this existential movement becomes a double movement insofar as love is a cooperative disclosure and mutual becoming through which there is the simultaneity of resolute enactment for the sake of one's own self-chosen existence *and* for the sake of the beloved, resulting in each person's authentic being and becoming. Meaningful existence, insofar as it is authentic and resolute, presupposes purpose and responsibility. In choosing one's own existence (authenticity), one has taken

[6] This articulation provides phenomenological significance to the empirical claim that one aspect of "meaning in life" is a sense of coherence. In this context, coherence refers to the notion that one's life "makes sense." That the events, activities, and projects of one's life "cohere" across past, present, and future. The phenomenological significance is that coherence is not simply a cognitive activity. Rather, coherence is lived insofar as one retrieves what one has-been, gathers it into the present, and projects it futurally. One first creates coherence through their being-in-the-world.
For more information on "coherence" in meaning in life studies, see:
Costin, Vlad, and Vivian L. Vignoles. "Meaning Is about Mattering: Evaluating Coherence, Purpose, and Existential Mattering as Precursors of Meaning in Life Judgments." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, January 7, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000225.
Martela, Frank, and Michael F. Steger. "The Three Meanings of Meaning in Life: Distinguishing Coherence, Purpose, and Significance." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 11, no. 5 (January 27, 2016): 531–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623.

responsibility for who they are and what they will become. In being resolute, one resolves upon a particular course of action toward a purposeful end. In being oriented toward one's self chosen way of existence through authentic-resoluteness, one is both responsible for and purposeful in their being-in-the-world. When one's self chosen way of existence includes a commitment of love, purpose grows and one shares in the responsibility of the existence of the beloved, as one's being-in-the-world is not only for the sake of oneself, but also for the sake of the beloved. In a phrase, meaningful existence is the repetitious unfolding of who one properly is (and the mutual unfolding of the beloved's proper self in the case of love) which is manifested through the purposeful enactment of authentic-resolute being-in-the-world attuned by passion and love.

Passion and love, as modes of attuned-understanding, are ways of finding oneself in the world. They are pre-intentional existential structures that illuminate the meaningfulness of the world and disclose meaningful possibilities for being through the way in which they shape the intentional contexts in which meaning is experienced. That passion and love are capable of such unconcealment is due to the way in which attunement discloses one's "being-in-the-world"[7] as a way of such being, and understanding illuminates more "fully the meaning" of that which is disclosed through attunement.[8] Moreover, understanding discloses "possibilities *as* possibilities" and, as such, it discloses the transcendence of which one is capable.[9] What one experiences as salient and significant, including the *way* in which it is experienced as being salient and significant is shaped through one's guiding attunement. The encompassing nature of attunements is atmospheric; they pervade one's experience and one experiences the world through their

[7] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176
[8] King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 59
Recall attunement and understanding as equiprimordial.
[9] King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 59

attuning structure. Attuned by passion and love, then, the world is disclosed as meaningful and understanding illuminates this disclosedness such that possibilities for meaningful being are unconcealed.

Implications

While there are many implications that one might draw from the foregoing thesis, I will briefly discuss the implications that my analysis might have for nihilism, logotherapy, and positive affect (or happiness/pleasure).

In the broadest sense, nihilism claims that existence is devoid of meaning, value, and purpose.[10] Some forms of nihilism are more discerning than others insofar as they make a distinction between "objective" meaning, value, and purpose, and something like a "subjective" kind. Without regard for any particular theory of nihilism, the foregoing analysis, if accepted, calls into question the nihilistic narrative that existence is necessarily devoid of meaning, value, and purpose. I have not provided a theoretical argument against nihilism, but by describing experiences of meaning, I have attempted to show where meaning might be found. If my articulations were successful in pointing to something real, and if we are justified in referring to the phenomena which I have pointed to as meaningful, then we must concede, at the very least, that some type of meaning exists.

[10] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 121; Pratt, Alan. "Nihilism." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2022. https://iep.utm.edu/nihilism/.
Perhaps uncoincidentally, explicit use of the expressions "meaning of life" and "nihilism" made their way into the literature within a few years of each other. "Nihilism" was first used in 1796, and "meaning of life" in 1797/98. For more information on the history of these expressions and their meaning, see the following:
Toribio Vazquez, Juan Luis. "Nietzsche's Shadow: On the Origin and Development of the Term Nihilism." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 47, no. 10 (December 3, 2020): 019145372097545. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453720975454.
Leach, Stephen D, and James Tartaglia. *The Meaning of Life and the Great Philosophers*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, An Imprint of The Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Some nihilists might object, claiming that this is irrelevant insofar as they might accept something like "subjective" or "personal" meaning while rejecting "objective" meaning. That is, they might claim that what I have described is "subjective" meaning, and as a result, my analysis offers nothing novel with reference to the nihilism which accepts the "subjective" while rejecting the "objective." As I have attempted to show, however, meaning is neither objective nor subjective, and as beings-in-the-world, we are not "subjects" which stand against a totality of "objects." As a result, talk of "objective" meaning in contrast with "subjective" meaning is part of a dialectic which cannot arise from the existential framework established herein. There is simply "meaning," and it either exists or it does not. If the foregoing analysis of meaning is accepted, then theoretical nihilism cannot be true. That theoretical nihilism is incompatible with the foregoing thesis isn't to say, however, that individuals—or even entire epochs—are not plagued by feelings of meaninglessness. That meaning in life is experienced through particular modes of being-in-the-world entails that not every possible way of existence is meaningful. In other words, existence might not be devoid of meaning, purpose, or value, but individuals may nevertheless experience meaninglessness throughout their lives.

As noted in chapter three, Frankl was aware that a meaning crisis was developing in the 20th century, which was marked by an increase of individuals who were experiencing feelings of meaninglessness. Frankl describes feelings of meaninglessness "as a private and personal form of nihilism" which can be understood "as the contention that being has no meaning."[11] This "lived nihilism" is characterized by thoughts and feelings that one's life is "meaningless."[12] Frankl developed logotherapy to help individuals suffering from this "lived nihilism." The

[11] Frankl, *Feelings of Meaninglessness*, p. 65
[12] Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 121

logotherapist is tasked with alleviating thoughts and feelings of meaninglessness by revealing to the patient possibilities for meaning and purpose.[13] As mentioned earlier, the logotherapist does not prescribe a meaning or purpose, but rather attempts to show, through dialogue, description, and example, where the patient might find meaning and purpose.[14] Referring to Frankl's three categories of meaning in life, the logotherapist might show how meaning and purpose can be (or has been) derived from "creative," "experiential," and "attitudinal" values. I.e., by contributing to the world through creative or contributive endeavors (art, science, purposeful work, etc.), by experiencing something or someone (a beautiful and serene landscape, cultivating a relationship), and by adopting a certain attitude or perspective in response to difficult situations and unavoidable suffering.[15] As it stands, however, logotherapy lacks the theoretical grounds from which to answer the question posed in chapter four, which was: "If meaning in life is pluralistic, what are the unifying characteristics such that two divergent experiences of meaning can both be understood as meaningful?"

The implicit answer from logotherapy might be to refer to the aforementioned categories of meaning. As such, an answer to the question posed above might be that, although person A derives meaning in life through art and painting, while person B derives meaning in life through guitar and music, both are deriving meaning from "creative" pursuits. Although this might be helpful insofar as it brings a categorical unity to various types of meaningful pursuits, it fails to answer the question of *why* person A experiences painting as meaningful but doesn't derive the

[13] It is worth reiterating the fact that Frankl never suggested that logotherapy should function on its own, or as a replacement for other forms of psychotherapy. Rather, he viewed it as a necessary supplement when dealing with issues such as "lived nihilism."

[14] There are further "techniques" in logotherapy, such as paradoxical intention and dereflection, which I will not elaborate on here. For an overview on these techniques, see Viktor Frankl's book, *The Will to Meaning*.

[15] Interestingly, in BT, Heidegger says that we "can, should, and must…become master of [our] moods" (p. 175). This seems to relate to Frankl's attitudinal category of meaning in life.

same kind of meaning from playing the guitar. In other words, why do individuals derive meaning from some creative disciplines and not from others? By admitting the existential analysis of meaningful experience into the logotherapeutic understanding of meaning in life, we can answer this question, thereby unifying the plurality of possibilities for meaning in life. As a result, the logotherapist can elaborate on their articulation of creative possibilities for meaning by shifting the dialogue and description to the attunement of passion. Such an elaboration might aid the patient in finding meaning and purpose insofar as it could help them identify "feelings" of meaning and purpose, thereby priming the patient to recognize experiences of meaning derived through passionate attunement.[16] Whether someone experiences meaning, or lives a meaningful existence, however, is not necessarily an indication of a happy or pleasant existence.

The distinction between happiness (or positive affect generally speaking) and meaning is significant insofar as experiences of meaning are not synonymous with experiences of happiness or pleasure, and a happy life is not necessarily a meaningful one (and vice versa). I will introduce this idea by discussing empirical research on the matter before turning to a phenomenological illustration.

Although empirical researchers have identified a relationship between happiness and meaning, they have also identified a number of distinctions between these two phenomena.[17] Such research suggests that happiness (defined in terms of positive affect) is temporally oriented toward the present, and that those who prioritize happiness tend to be more self-interested,

[16] This is just one example of the way in which the analyses of meaning presented in this project might aid logotherapy both theoretically and practically.

[17] Baumeister, Roy, et al., "Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2012. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2168436.
Li, P. F. Jonah, Y. Joel Wong, and Ruth C.-L. Chao. "Happiness and Meaning in Life: Unique, Differential, and Indirect Associations with Mental Health." *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 32, no. 3-4 (April 21, 2019): 396–414. https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2019.1604493.

seeking to satisfy desires which might result in positive affect.[18] Meaningfulness (defined in terms of purpose, value, and significance), in contrast, seeks to "integrate events across time,"[19] and rather than self-satisfaction, those in pursuit of meaning show characteristics such as "responsibility…delayed gratification, sacrifice, and transcendence."[20] In terms of positive affect, "happiness but not meaningfulness was related to feeling good,"[21] and happiness was correlated with the perception that one's life was relatively "easy."[22] Meaningfulness, by contrast, could persist despite the ease or difficulty of one's life. "Some people live highly meaningful but not very pleasant lives, perhaps because their meaningful activities require strenuous and unpleasant activities."[23] One might imagine the life of an Olympic athlete as consisting of a strict diet, multiple training sessions each day (including early morning), monotonous routine, etc. Daily life for such a person is difficult and strenuous, but it is also meaningful. This person structures their life around a self-chosen goal and is purposeful in their activity.[24] A more casual-everyday example might be "visiting a dying relative," an act which is "more relevant to meaning in life than to happiness."[25] A further example is parenthood, which is full of sacrifice and increased levels of stress. In fact, parents often report lower levels of happiness but higher levels of meaning in life than non-parents.[26] Such distinctions between

[18] Baumeister, et al., "Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life," p. 3; Li and Wong, "Happiness and Meaning in Life," p. 13
[19] Baumeister, et al., "Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life," p. 2
[20] Li and Wong, "Happiness and Meaning in Life," p. 4
[21] Li and Wong, "Happiness and Meaning in Life," p. 4
[22] Baumeister, et al., "Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life," p. 4
[23] Baumeister, et al., "Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life," p. 4
[24] Contrast with a person that structures their life around positive affect. The latter might have plans to wake up early to exercise, but upon waking, they *want* to go back to sleep and because they are oriented toward positive affect, they heed their desire.
[25] Li and Wong, "Happiness and Meaning in Life," p. 4
[26] Twenge, Jean M., W. Keith Campbell, and Craig A. Foster. "Parenthood and Marital Satisfaction: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65, no. 3 (August 2003): 574–83. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2003.00574.x.

meaning and positive affect have been implied throughout my phenomenological articulations of meaningfulness.

In chapter four, I characterized passion and love as attunements which are part of the pre-intentional structures of existence that shape the intentional contexts in which particular experiences of meaning in life arise. Further, I argued that neither passion nor love were synonymous with any particular feeling, affect, or mood which might arise within a particular intentional context. When we love someone, that love is maintained despite a range of fleeting feelings which are dependent upon changing circumstances. I.e., we can be angry, frustrated, excited, happy, sad, or afraid with reference to our beloved depending upon the intentional context. Similarly, a variety of feelings might inspire/motivate passionate engagement, the activity itself might be characterized by a variety of feelings, and one's engagement/activity can result in a plethora of feelings, all of which depend on the particular intentional context. Passion and love, then, are not synonymous with any particular affective phenomena whether positive or negative. Consequently, one does not engage in meaningful endeavors for the sake of positive affect. Rather, meaningfulness is an end in itself and any positive affect derived from such engagement is "a by-product, as the side-effect of living out the self-transcendence of existence."[27]

[27] Frankl, *Feelings of Meaninglessness*, p. 44
One should be careful not to interpret this as saying that one must endure endless unhappiness and negative affect for the sake of love. I want to be explicit that I am not suggesting that anyone remain in an abusive relationship, for example. Such a relationship would not be love as I have conceived of it herein. Rather, I am simply suggesting that passion and love are not *always* and *only* characterized by positive affect.

Suggestions for Further Research

Although I have offered analyses of two modes of meaningful experience (passion and love), there are still other modes deserving of analysis. For example, gratitude. While gratitude might initially be thought of solely as an intentional phenomenon (such as being grateful toward a friend for their support) there may be a more general sense in which gratitude could be framed as an attuning structure. For example, being grateful for existence seems to lack a particular intentional referent.[28] Such an attunement would act as a pre-intentional background structure of existence, through which one experiences the world and other people. I.e., if attunement structures experience and shapes intentional activity, then an attunement of gratitude would entail a salience landscape which affords opportunities to be grateful and appreciative. More concretely, one might point to something like an encompassing appreciation for life, nature, other people, etc. While the phenomenology would need to be worked out, some empirical research has been conducted which shows a positive correlation between gratitude and meaning in life.[29]

Of the modes of meaningfulness articulated herein, supplemental existentiell description and further existential discernment are warranted. An existentiell expansion would entail additional descriptions of concrete meaningful experiences through an attunement of love and/or passion. I.e., the athlete, musician, or writer in the case of passion, or the many meaningful

[28] A possible objection to this would be someone that practices a monotheistic religion, who might contend that the intentional referent for this type of gratitude would be God.

[29] Zhang, Ping et al., "The Influence of Gratitude on the Meaning of Life: The Mediating Effect of Family Function and Peer Relationship." *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (October 28, 2021): 680795. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.680795.
Kleiman, Evan M. et al., "Gratitude and Grit Indirectly Reduce Risk of Suicidal Ideations by Enhancing Meaning in Life: Evidence for a Mediated Moderation Model." *Journal of Research in Personality* 47, no. 5 (October 2013): 539–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2013.04.007.

experiences which are derived through loving relationships. From these supplemental existentiell descriptions, further existential analysis could occur, which might result in the unconcealing of novel existential structures which are shared across the broad range of meaningful experiences.

Furthermore, a number of questions loom over the foregoing analysis of meaningfulness. A sample of such questions include the following: 1) What is the phenomenological interplay of attunements? In what sense, for example, do passion and love compete and/or cooperate in structuring the experience of someone that is deeply passionate and who is also involved in a network of loving relationships? 2) Is it possible for meaningful existence to endure through an obsessive pursuit of any single mode of meaningful experience, or does meaningful existence presuppose a more holistic approach which balances passion and love?[30] 3) In what ways can the foregoing analysis of meaning help make sense of empirical research on meaning in life? For example, can the empirical claim that meaning in life is made up of purpose, significance, and coherence be illuminated by looking at the phenomenology of meaningfulness?[31] In what way do these empirical concepts manifest in experience? Such an analysis would seek to decrease the space between experiences of meaning in life and the empirical concepts which attempt to define meaning in life. 4) If particular attunements disclose existence as meaningful, is there a prevailing attunement (or set of attunements) through which existence is disclosed as meaningless? In other words, what are the attuning structures of lived nihilism?

[30] We might add gratitude to this duo so long as gratitude turns out to be a viable mode of meaningful experience upon further analysis.

[31] In an earlier footnote, I suggested that the idea of coherence can be aided by looking at the structure of temporality. Purpose might be aided by looking at authentic-resoluteness. Significance (the perception that one's life matters/has value) might be aided by looking at authentic possibilities. I.e., if some possibilities are disclosed to me as uniquely *mine*, I might perceive my life as valuable insofar as I experience a sense of responsibility. I might feel that my existence adds something to the world.

Throughout this thesis, I have made explicit Frankl's repeated emphasis on the need to investigate meaning in life by way of phenomenology. Despite Frankl's suggestion, phenomenological research is wholly absent from the literature on meaning in life.[32] This thesis is but a humble beginning in the attempt to look at meaning in life by way of phenomenological analysis. My articulations of the phenomena are neither definitive nor complete. It is my hope that by attempting to illuminate the phenomenological structures of meaning in life, I have provided a clearing in which others can stand, and from which further phenomenological analysis can proceed. It is worth noting that subsequent analyses are not confined to taking a Heideggerian approach, even though that is the framework from which I have proceeded. In fact, a rich and robust phenomenological literature on meaning in life presupposes articulations from a variety of phenomenological frameworks. For example, the framework of Maurice Merleau-Ponty invites an investigation of the body during experiences of passionate immersion. Following Edith Stein and Max Scheler, we might investigate how empathy and sympathy contribute to the development and experience of meaningful relationships. Rather than restricting phenomenological analyses of meaning in life to a narrow or singular approach, then, and rather than perceiving divergent analyses as no more than an indication of conflict, I would suggest an approach to meaning in life studies that is motivated by a spirit of cooperative illumination.

[32] Even researchers (philosophers and psychologists alike) that draw inspiration from Frankl in their studies on meaning seem to ignore his insistence that phenomenology is necessary for a thorough understanding of meaning in life.

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