

Teria Shantall

# The Life-changing Impact of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy



Springer

# The Life-changing Impact of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy

Teria Shantall

# The Life-changing Impact of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy

 Springer

Teria Shantall  
Modi'in, Israel

ISBN 978-3-030-30769-1                      ISBN 978-3-030-30770-7 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30770-7>

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*This book is dedicated to **Dr. Robert C. Barnes**, the President of the Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy of the United States. During Dr. Barnes presidency, the Institute's membership has extended into more than 40 countries in 6 continents of the world. With his encouragement and the official backing of the Institute's Board of Directors, I was able, personally trained by Viktor Frankl as I was, to continue his work and vision by establishing logotherapy centers in South Africa, Israel, and Turkey and training hundreds of logotherapy students from all walks of life.*

# Preface

Despite the remarkable progress of Logotherapy in the past two decades in Russia, Kazakhstan, and elsewhere in the world, there is a recognized vacuum in the education of logo-therapists, namely, the neglect of their own spiritual dimension. Shantall's book fills this vacuum remarkably well. Her book deals with the fundamental principles of what it means to be a human being. And particularly with how a person looks upon the world, whether as a meaningless or as a meaningful place. For absence of meaning in life makes existence miserable.

This book reflects and enlivens the author's struggle to turn many meaningless lives into productive and meaningful ones. And her life serves as illustration to this struggle and to its positive outcome.

Shantall's book is based on her long, rich, and distinguished background in Logotherapy, and on her teaching Frankl's theory and method of Logotherapy in different parts and cultures in the world. She is one of Professor Frankl's students in the United States who were fortunate to study under the guidance of the founder of Logotherapy. And this explains her positive and lively approach to the spiritual, philosophical, and particularly to the applied aspects of Logotherapy.

As she so convincingly shows, a logo-therapist is a human being with strengths and weaknesses similar to his or her clients. This means that a logo-therapist is not above the characteristics common to all people. In her lengthy exposition of Logotherapy, she manages to show in great detail how to conduct ourselves so that we may be able to overcome pain, sorrow, frustration, sickness, and even death.

Shantall demonstrates that nobody is beyond hope, beyond redemption. The more one experiences lack of meaning in his or her life, the more he or she may benefit from using Logotherapy to combat feelings of distress and helplessness. As all therapists know, the caring and curing function of Logotherapy is vested in establishing a close emotional bond between therapist and client. This bond is called trust. Trust is a central condition of therapy, of all therapy. It plays a crucial role in individual and social well-being.

According to Shantall, trust in the hands of a logo-therapist means recognition and responsibility for the potential of changing a person's entire life for good or bad. There is an explicit agreement about the expectations of what each party has to do.

And if this trust is damaged and lost, then the whole practice is gone. Therefore, both parties should be equally interested in the outcome of the therapeutic work.

The encounters in Shantall's book between client and therapist are based on the "Socratic Dialogue." Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, is generally regarded as the "father of ethics." His method of teaching is commonly known as "midwifery." Similar to the midwife who helps the mother to give birth, Socrates helped his listeners and students to give birth to the truth that resided in their souls. Socrates used "provocative questions" to elicit answers from his opponents in order to awaken in their hearts a sense of personal responsibility for their attitudes to life and truth.

The "Socratic Dialogue" was developed by Frankl as a helping and teaching technique for the practice of Logotherapy. It teaches the seeker of help how to use his or her power, fantasy, dreams, and caring for another person to find meaning in life. This method is basic in the encounter with a client. When the encounter has a positive value for the client, it leads to trust.

In order to achieve trust, a logo-therapist needs to be a person of virtues. As Shantall notes, Logotherapy is based on moral requirements. First and foremost among them are integrity and decency of the practitioner. A logo-therapist must be an individual with honesty and authenticity. For intervening in another person's life needs courage, wisdom, life experience, and a great measure of responsibility. And above all, a logo-therapist must realize that he or she is a worker.

Shantall's book is a work of love. All works of love benefit the giver and the receiver. Viktor Frankl has said that life revolves around work. People fulfill a meaning when they create something, when through their work they improve the world. And Voltaire the French philosopher said that, rather than philosophizing about the purpose of life, one has to understand what life demands from all of us, namely work for the sake of other people – not only for my own sake.

There are many books written on the various facets of Logotherapy by well-known logo-therapists. Yet, none gives such detailed account, nor goes to such lengths to demonstrate the actual work requested from the practitioner to advance the well-being of a client.

Shantall built her book mainly on the spiritual dimension of a human being. This dimension, as Frankl said, is the most important among the three dimensions, namely the biological and the psychological dimensions. The spiritual dimension includes wisdom, which in turn is based on freedom of choice that's unique to human beings. Wisdom is not open to scientific measurements or to analysis. Wisdom can be approached only by philosophy, which in turn deals with personal experience. As Shantall shows in the personal experiences of her own life and in the cases she presents in her book, these lives can't be repeated, but they can be changed for the better.

She begins each chapter in her book with an exposition of the main subject. This is followed with a discussion of the important concepts contained in the chapter, including case illustrations, and ends with a series of questions that she raises for the reader. The questions provide an opportunity for the reader to verify that she or he

has grasped the meaning of that chapter and its implications for his or her own life. This approach to the applied aspect Logotherapy is most valuable and refreshing.

Logo-therapists must help their clients to use inner resources when confronting a difficult challenge. Pain and suffering are integral parts of life. And when suffering is extreme, it can destroy the quality of life. Frankl spoke about suffering as a normal part of human experience in life. He maintained that the human spirit is able to triumph over evil for it is capable of elevating itself to unimagined heights for the sake of another human being one truly loves, or for an idea in which one truly believes.

The subject of pain and suffering is well-known to Shantall from her own personal experience and from her dedicated work with many clients, especially with survivors of the Holocaust, who have suffered a lot. In her book, *Life's meaning in the Face of Suffering* (2002), she emphasizes that suffering is always a challenge. What matters is one's attitude to pain and suffering.

Logo-therapists need to differentiate between two kinds of pain: acute and chronic pain. Acute pain may be compared to a venomous snake that attacks you and should be eliminated by all available means. Chronic pain resembles an ox that carries its burden patiently. Chronic pain that's impossible to eliminate by medicine and psycho-therapeutic intervention must be tolerated. Comforting the sufferer is a human and professional necessity in such cases.

Logotherapy teaches us that when we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. And we should always remember what Kant the philosopher said, namely, that we should never treat a person merely as a means to an end.

Shantall uses literary sources and especially stories and wisdoms contained in the Old and the New Testament to support her thesis. Stories may be very useful to all therapists. Let's take for example the Biblical meeting of Jacob with his brother Esau as illustration. According to the story, Jacob stole the rights of the first born from his brother Esau and fled to Babylon. He spent there many years and returned to the Land of Canaan as a rich person. But he had to meet Esau on the way. Jacob was afraid very much that his brother Esau would avenge the wrong he did to him. Thus he prepared for the meeting in three ways: with a prayer, with a gift, and with a readiness to fight.

The encounter with a client requires similar preparations by a logo-therapist. The prayer is for strength in facing the client, especially when the client may have unstable and unpredictable, or aggressive and demanding behavior. Contemplation, prayer, and planning the appropriate steps how to counteract such behavior can help a lot in the encounter.

The fight resembles the struggle with the client in the search for meaning. It is accompanied by pain that's inevitable in any encounter. And the gift is a reward. Jacob was rewarded by the angel with whom he struggled throughout the night with a new name, Israel.

A logo-therapist – if successful in the encounter with the client – may gain a different reward: A feeling that the struggle was worth, that something valuable and meaningful has happened, that there is a feeling of change for the better by the

client, and that the encounter was not in vain. This feeling may be perceived by both client and therapist as a gift, as a turning point, and as a foundation for positive encounters in the future.

Shantall's book is more than an exposition of Logotherapy. It is more than a description and explanation of Logotherapy's theory, methods, and philosophy. This is a most valuable and much needed book, a welcome addition to the applied aspects of Logotherapy. The book is practice oriented and comprehensive. It clarifies Frankl's ideas regarding the purpose of all logo-therapeutic work. Her book is well-organized and clear.

The focus of this book is on the life-changing impact of Frankl's meaning-centered approach in counseling and psychotherapy, called Logotherapy. This book seeks to illuminate meaningful interaction between logo-therapist and client in a face-to-face interaction between them, emphasizing the uniqueness of both. This interaction has important ramifications outside the counseling context as well.

Shantall makes it clear that her book is not "religious," even if it uses some examples from major world religions. Her book is universal in its aim and focus. She supports Frankl's approach to the place of religion in logo-therapeutic work as explicated in his *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*. Accordingly, logo-therapists must make a clear differentiation between medical and religious ministry. Logotherapy is a philosophical and spiritual outlook on life. It refrains from missionary spirit and zeal. Logotherapy leaves the saving of souls to religious ministry.

Logotherapy is interested in helping human beings in emotional or mental distress to live responsible and meaningful lives. While Logotherapy is anchored in values, and in spirituality, these do not necessarily have to be religious ones. Logotherapy leaves to the individual the option for what, to what, or to whom he or she understands himself or herself to be responsible.

Frankl emphasized many times the need to re-humanize medicine. The re-humanization of all psychotherapies is even more important today in our terror-ridden world. It is the main task of Logotherapy. And Shantall's book is most valuable in this respect. She elevates humanness in helping people in sickness and distress to a spiritual height.

A great advantage of Shantall's book is that you don't have to be a logo-therapist to benefit from reading it. Any reader seeking to enhance the meaning quality of their own lives will find in this kind of therapy a treasure for improving their mental health. This book will help them to navigate successfully the troubled waters of life. This book will enable them to make intelligent and informed decisions about what is valuable and applicable to their situations in life, what appeals to their souls and spirit, and what may give meaning to their own lives.

Shantall's book will appeal particularly to practicing logo-therapists and to students of Logotherapy at all educational levels, and especially to those holding advanced degrees in academia. Her book will enrich the knowledge base of psychotherapists in religious and pastoral care and counseling too, for it provides a much needed spiritual depth to their professional work.

I am most happy to recommend this book wholeheartedly and without reservations to logo-therapists, to members of the helping professions, and to the general public.

Faculty of Welfare and Health Sciences  
School of Social Work  
University of Haifa  
Mount Carmel, Israel

David Guttman

# Prologue

## *Adam, Where Are You?*

There is a call addressed to all of us, one we can hardly escape. It is a call recorded in the story of creation (Genesis 3:9).

Where are we?

What are we doing with our lives? How are we living it? Are we hiding somewhere, shying away from the challenge to come out, step into our lives, and live it in a way we can really feel good about? Are we prepared to take full responsibility for the way we are living our lives, or is there a sense of shame, guilt, and uneasiness if we have to give an honest account of it?

Are our lives going somewhere? Has it got a worthy purpose? Do we have a sense of direction and destiny? Do we feel we are where we should be, doing what we should be doing with a sense of satisfaction and contentment? Do we sense that we have a calling, a reason why we are alive, and a mission or tasks in life to fulfill? Or are we just floundering about, maybe even badly off course?

We may be refusing to look into such issues, merely taking life as it comes or doing what we feel like doing without any thought of tomorrow or where what we are doing may take us. We may even be set on a path we have carved out for ourselves, stubbornly discounting any way other than the one we have worked out as best suited to ourselves.

But can we escape the scrutiny of conscience?

What kind of people are we? If we fully look at ourselves, what do we see? Are we living up to what we *can*, and, in a deeper sense, what we hope and really *want* to be? Can we escape the uncanny feeling of what we *ought to be*? Do we really like ourselves, approve of ourselves, and feel good, contented, and even happy about ourselves? If we had to judge ourselves from an outsider point of view, will we be pleased about ourselves or ashamed? If ashamed, who will we be shaming?

*We will be shaming ourselves!*

What do we do about this restlessness we have about ourselves, the feeling that we do not really want to face ourselves; look at our face in the mirror? Is it just a question of being moralistic? Or is the feeling deeper, like an inescapable feeling of

*dissatisfaction* about ourselves? Is it that we *know* that we, and we alone, are failing to be the kind of person that we very well know we *could* be?

We may realize that we are not fully ourselves, not really “at home” with who we are!

And what about our lives? Do we feel we are misdirecting it, throwing it away, or wasting it, just letting it pass by? Or do we feel that there is more to life, that we can be further along the road going somewhere?

We may have to sit down with ourselves and truthfully think things through, take the way we are living our lives to its logical conclusion. Is what we have settled for enough or even right? Is it good or bad for us? Does it, in the long run, make any real sense?

We may need to come to a point of saying: “Enough is enough. I am not making sense. Where I am, what I am doing, the way I am living, does not appeal to me. I’m restless. Some things have to change and change quickly, not tomorrow, not the next day, but *now*. I want to be in the moment, be *me* in all that I experience and have to deal with in a way that makes me feel good about myself. I want *this* kind of feeling of connectedness: to be an active agent in my own life, a life I can shamelessly account for. I want to be in the real flow of things, part of all that really matters in life. I want to be in vital touch with myself and what I stand for. I want to be out there, making a difference, making my own and meaningful mark on the world. I want to play my part!”

The only sensible answer to the call “Adam, where are you?” is to say “Here I am, *send me*. I am ready to go and be on my appointed way!”

Life must have a destination. Life must be a mission, have a goal and a purpose, and we must be *in it*, giving it shape. Otherwise, where will we be but nowhere, not anywhere special at all? Without a destination, we are rudderless, rootless, not amounting to much. We remain on the fringes of things, playing around with life in the shallow waters, outside of ourselves, doing little, effecting even less. We may even be in dark and dangerous waters, our lives sinking to the bottom. We may be losing all grip on ourselves as we gulp for air. We may be in great need to breathe freely, have some solid ground under our feet, and have something good in sight.

Our lives must have outcomes and results and good ones; otherwise, what is it all for?

What is life all about? How do I make sense of it? Who and why am I? What am I expected to do and be?

These are the questions that we all, at some time or another, should ask ourselves. The answers would determine whether we would feel in tune with ourselves and with life or not.

The logotherapy of Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) is a school of thought that addresses such questions.

Viktor Frankl was born, lived, worked, and died in Vienna. He was a medical doctor who specialized in psychiatry and neurology. He also held a doctorate in philosophy. As a Jew and Holocaust survivor, he became world famous after the publication of his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, a book about his experiences in the concentration and death camps of Nazi Europe. This book, originally written in

German, got translated into English and, with its rise in popularity, it was translated into many other languages of the world. This opened the door to travelling the world to lecture and teach his particular approach to life and human suffering and what we, as human beings, are called to do in the face of it.

Life may be tragic in so many ways, but the essential thrust of it is positive. The latter Frankl came to deeply believe. Life *has* purpose and meaning, and we are challenged to find it. Furthermore, life has meaning not just in a general sense or abstract way. No. Its meaning is to be experienced in a *profoundly personal* sense. *Our* lives have meaning. *We* were destined to be. There is a unique purpose in life, an irreplaceable role to play for every one of us. And we are assigned the task to find and realize the unique meaning and destiny of our own lives. We can hardly do less since we really *want* to experience our lives as meaningful and worthwhile! Without a sense of meaning in our lives, we feel unfulfilled. Something is amiss or lacking or seriously wrong. We may even lose our will to live!

Logotherapy seeks to illuminate what *is* meaningful in life and how we can realize the meaning, purpose, or destiny of our own lives. In its focus on how we can experience life as meaningful and worthwhile and ourselves as a worthy part of it, logotherapy illuminates the art of living. This explains its special appeal to all of us, whether we study it as professional therapists and counselors or explore its significance in our own lives as a way of enriching our understanding of life and of ourselves. In fact, it is to the degree that the core principles of meaningful living, as expounded by logotherapy, impact on our own lives and person, that we will be able to apply these principles in ways that will be highly beneficial and of supreme benefit not only to ourselves but also to others.

“Each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible” (Viktor Frankl 2006:109).

# Keywords

Life-changing impact  
Meaning-centered  
Logotherapy  
Viktor Frankl

# Contents

|          |  |    |
|----------|--|----|
| <b>1</b> | <b>What Is Logotherapy?</b> .....                                | 1  |
|          | Healing Through Meaning .....                                    | 1  |
|          | Missing and Finding the Mark .....                               | 3  |
|          | True Happiness .....   | 4  |
|          | But Why Then Do We Suffer? .....                                 | 4  |
|          | There Is Evil in the World .....                                 | 5  |
|          | Victims of Injustice .....                                       | 5  |
|          | Existential Frustration .....                                    | 6  |
|          | The Call to Come Out of Hiding .....                             | 6  |
|          | When Meaning Becomes a Mission: The Story of Viktor Frankl ..... | 6  |
|          | An Innocent Childhood .....                                      | 7  |
|          | A Lasting Impression .....                                       | 7  |
|          | The Meaning of the Moment .....                                  | 8  |
|          | The Teenage Years .....  | 9  |
|          | The Shaping of a Life Task .....                                 | 9  |
|          | Crucial Choices .....  | 10 |
|          | To Be a Jew: The Bigger Picture .....                            | 11 |
|          | Like Sheep to the Slaughter? .....                               | 13 |
|          | Chosen in the Fire of Affliction .....                           | 14 |
|          | Suffering as a Task .....  | 14 |
|          | The Sustaining Power of Right Choices .....                      | 15 |
|          | Breaking Through to the Dimension of Meaning .....               | 15 |
|          | A Vision for the Future .....                                    | 16 |
|          | The Remaining Question .....                                     | 17 |
|          | Exercise for You, The Reader: What Is Man? .....                 | 18 |
|          | References .....   | 18 |
| <b>2</b> | <b>An Existential Analysis of the Human Condition</b> .....      | 19 |
|          | An Inescapable Truth .....                                       | 19 |
|          | Unlike Any Other .....   | 20 |
|          | A Deeper Injunction .....  | 21 |

The Freedom of Responsibility..... 21

The Meaning of Meaning..... 22

Ecce Homo! ..... 25

“Who Is This Coming Up from the Wilderness,  
Leaning on the Arm of Her Beloved?” (Song of Solomon 8:5)..... 27

The Suffering Servant ..... 28

The Faith That Sets Us Free..... 28

The Call to Meaning ..... 29

A Compass for Life..... 29

Before the Court of Conscience..... 30

A Higher Consciousness ..... 32

The Unconscious God..... 33

The Irreligiously Religious ..... 35

A Way of Life for Everyone..... 37

The Sovereign Right of Every Person..... 38

A People of the Book ..... 39

The Truth Made Flesh..... 40

The Certainty of Uncertainty ..... 41

Different Levels of Being..... 41

A Little Lower Than the Angels ..... 42

The Imperative ..... 43

A Commitment Given in Freedom..... 44

A Human Versus a Sub-human Way of Life ..... 44

A Personal Experience of the Meaning of Life ..... 45

Life Questions Us! ..... 46

Tragic Optimism ..... 47

About This Book..... 47

Exercise: The Power of Right Choices ..... 48

References..... 49

**3 Tender Beginnings: The Unscathed Human Spirit..... 51**

The Question..... 51

The Unscathed Human Spirit..... 52

Perfect Love Casts Out All Fear ..... 52

The Saving Grace of Love ..... 54

A Right to Life..... 54

The Silencing of Foe and Avenger..... 55

Paradise Lost: Losing Face..... 56

The Need to Experience a “Yes!” from Life..... 57

The Cry of the Abandoned Child..... 57

The Normal Versus the Abnormal..... 58

Shut Away from the World..... 59

Pathological Slumber..... 60

The Person Behind the Affliction..... 60

Lewis..... 61

The Challenge ..... 61

An Imprisoned Existence ..... 62

Lewis, Where Are You? The “Yes!” Game ..... 62

A Rebirth Experience..... 63

Finding the Child in You ..... 64

The Purity of Innocence..... 65

The Concealed God..... 65

Exercises For You, The Reader: Say “Yes!” to Life..... 66

References..... 68

**4 Who Are You, Sitting Opposite Me? The Person of the Client ..... 69**

Who Are You? ..... 69

A Logotherapeutic Orientation ..... 70

The Beauty and Power of the Human Spirit ..... 71

You ..... 71

And Your Life..... 73

Another Side to the Story..... 74

A One and Only, Once and for All Time ..... 74

Down to the Very Depths of Being ..... 76

The Real You..... 77

A Confident Hope in the Outcome..... 78

In Dialogue With Life ..... 78

The Heart of the Matter..... 79

A Radical Shift in Focus ..... 84

In Session!..... 85

Let’s Summarize!..... 92

Listening with a Third Ear ..... 93

Exercise for You, the Reader: The Unconscious God ..... 93

References..... 94

**5 Who Am I, in Relation to You? The Person of the Logotherapist ..... 95**

Who Am I? ..... 95

The Summons ..... 96

Listen and Heed! ..... 96

Look and See! ..... 97

My Own Experience of Meaning..... 97

An Essay on Meaning ..... 99

This Is My Moment Too! ..... 101

The Unquenchable Thirst for Meaning..... 102

Unto the Third and Fourth Generation..... 103

“Comfort, Comfort My People” (Isaiah 40:1) ..... 104

Grief as a Gift..... 106

    Love ..... 106

    Beauty and Nature..... 107

    Goodness..... 108

My Experience of Finding Meaning in Suffering Through  
 Experiential Values..... 108  
 Love ..... 109  
 Beauty and Nature..... 109  
 Goodness..... 110  
 Truth..... 110  
 Where Am I Now? ..... 111  
 Gratitude ..... 111  
 Treasure Chest..... 111  
 Journal..... 111  
 Logotherapy Values..... 112  
 Restoring a Lost Past ..... 113  
 Who Then, in Conclusion, Am I in Relation to You?..... 114  
 Exercise for You, the Reader: “The Dissatisfied Frustration  
 of Unlived Life” (James Hillman) ..... 117  
 References..... 117

**6 What Is your Real Problem? The Crisis of Meaning..... 119**  
 The Unheard Cry for Meaning..... 119  
 The Suffering of Suffering ..... 121  
 The World as It Should Be ..... 121  
 Who We Were Meant to Be..... 123  
 A Broken Vessel..... 123  
 The Prisoner of Our Thoughts ..... 123  
 The Will to Meaning ..... 127  
 A Jacob’s Struggle ..... 129  
 Height Psychology ..... 130  
 From the Periphery to the Center of Being..... 132  
 From Shame to Conviction ..... 134  
 Coming Out into the Light..... 137  
 For You, the Reader: Coming Out into the Light..... 137  
 References..... 140

**7 How Am I to Address Your Problems? The Methods  
 and Techniques of Logotherapy..... 141**  
 “Adam, Where Are You?” ..... 141  
 “I Will Question You, and You Shall Answer Me” (Job 38:3) ..... 142  
 The Arsenal of Logotherapy ..... 142  
 A Case in Point ..... 142  
 Logohints ..... 146  
 The Gist of The Matter..... 147  
 Lorna and Teria..... 148  
 This Is My World!..... 151  
 Hands on Exercises ..... 152  
 The Analysis of Happiness..... 158  
 A Life of Overcoming..... 159

Anna ..... 161

The Ecce Homo Technique: A Special Case of Dereflexion..... 162

Frankl’s Prototypical Case: Frau Anastasia ..... 162

Comments About the Ecce Homo Technique ..... 163

A Case Study..... 165

Elfrieda G..... 167

A Possible Cause of the Illness? ..... 168

Exercise for You, the Reader: A Radical Shift in Focus ..... 169

The Logotherapeutic Creed..... 170

    The First Stage ..... 170

    The Second Stage..... 170

    The Third Stage..... 171

References..... 171

**8 Why Does Logotherapy Work? The Transformational Power of Meaning ..... 173**

Life Changing Encounters ..... 173

Encountering Life ..... 174

The Empathy of Pity ..... 174

The Empathy of Empowerment ..... 175

Feelings of a Different Kind ..... 176

The Spiritual Unconscious..... 177

Psychodynamics Versus Noodynamics ..... 177

The Tension of Direction ..... 178

Need-Satisfaction Is Not Our Goal, But Meaning Fulfillment!..... 178

For the Sake of the Other..... 179

Coupling with Life..... 181

Transformed into Being Ourselves!..... 184

An Experiment with Children..... 185

A Success Story ..... 186

Exercise for You, the Reader: You Have Always Known..... 187

References..... 188

**9 A New Look at Psychopathology: This Is Not You ..... 189**

The Potential You..... 189

Rock-Bottom Realizations..... 190

“Therefore, Choose Life!” (Deuteronomy 30:19) ..... 191

Arguments for Life..... 194

Unmasking the Face of Meaninglessness ..... 195

The Greatest Freedom..... 197

Dis-ease..... 198

A Therapy of Restitution..... 199

The Hurt of Blame ..... 200

The Sickness of Shame ..... 201

The Sword of Condemnation ..... 202

Under the Yoke of Bondage ..... 203

The Shame of Being Blamed ..... 205

Original Sin? ..... 206

Civilization and Its Discontents ..... 208

Homage to Sigmund Freud ..... 208

“He Shall Be Like a Tree Planted by the Waters” (Jeremiah 17:7, 8) ..... 210

The Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth?..... 211

The Whole Picture ..... 212

Conscience Versus the Superego..... 213

The Release From Internalized Blame..... 214

A Moral Rebirth: the Nodynamics of Repentance..... 216

“Come Now, Let Us Reason Together” (Isaiah 1:18) ..... 217

The Homecoming..... 218

For You, the Reader: Forgiveness..... 219

References..... 220

**10 The Meaning of Suffering: You Are Chosen!**..... 221

“I Have Chosen You in the Fire of Affliction” (Isaiah 48:10)..... 221

Where Happy Little Bluebirds Fly..... 224

“In Your Blood, Live!” (Ezekiel 16:6) ..... 225

From Senselessness to Meaning ..... 226

Witnesses for Life ..... 227

Turning a Tragedy into a Triumph ..... 230

“I Broke My Neck But My Neck Did Not Break Me” ..... 231

Enabling the Disabled ..... 232

Suffering as a Task ..... 234

Passing on the Torch ..... 236

The Face of Compassion..... 237

“Till Death Do Us Part” ..... 239

Having Been Is the Surest Way of Being (Frankl)..... 240

Unfinished Lives ..... 241

Pathetiques ..... 241

A Hundredfold in This World (Matthew 19:29) ..... 242

For You, the Reader: Reflections..... 244

References..... 245

**11 Ultimate Meaning: Your Destiny in Life**..... 247

The Quest for Destiny ..... 247

Life Needs Us ..... 248

A Once and Only ..... 248

Who Snaps at Our Heels? ..... 249

In Hot Pursuit..... 249

The Freedom to Be..... 250

The Joy of Living..... 250

The Pursuer ..... 251

From Start to Finish ..... 252

A Hope That Endures..... 253

A Basic Trust in Being..... 254

The Ultimate ..... 255

    We Can Answer! ..... 256

An Extended Human Science ..... 256

We Must Retain an Open Mind! ..... 256

The Divide..... 257

Faith Must Be Translated into Works..... 257

We Are to Stay Human! ..... 257

An Open Search ..... 258

An Unconscious Possession..... 259

A Confirmation of Faith on the Human Level ..... 259

Destined Lives..... 261

Pursue Versus Ensnare ..... 262

Reflection for You, the Reader: Back to the Source..... 265

    Cowboys and Crooks ..... 265

References..... 266

**12 The Choice Is Yours: Become What You Have Been**

**Created to Be!**..... 267

Divine Being ..... 267

An Attitude of Gratitude ..... 268

The Focus of Meaning ..... 269

The Journey ..... 269

Man With a Mission..... 271

“What Man Is, He Is Not Yet, But Ought to Be and Should  
Become” (Frankl, 1968/2006:67) ..... 271

The End of The Matter..... 272

To Each His Own ..... 273

A Common Will to Common Meaning..... 274

The Essence of Human Existence..... 274

The True North..... 276

Sacred Missions ..... 276

Missionaries of Transcendence ..... 277

“But the Greatest of These Is Love” (1 Corinthians 13:13)..... 278

The Evil of Evil..... 279

Holy Unbelief..... 279

“Though He Slay Me, Yet Will I Trust in Him” (Job 13:15) ..... 280

Righteous Anger..... 281

A Monument to Weal or to Woe ..... 281

Free-Willed Obedience ..... 282

The Power of Hope Has Been Invested in Me!..... 283

Graced with Life ..... 284

The Legacy..... 284

The Final Injunction..... 285

The Moment Is Now ..... 285

Divine Enablement..... 286  
A Final Reflection, for You, the Reader: The Tree  
in the Midst of the Garden ..... 287  
Postscript..... 291  
References..... 291

**References** ..... 293

**Author Index**..... 299

**Subject Index**..... 301

# Chapter 1

## What Is Logotherapy?



**Abstract** In answering the question set as the heading of this chapter, the reader is first of all provided with the basic tenets of logotherapy, namely, that as human beings we have freedom of will, an inherent will to find meaning in our lives and that the meaning we are searching for is there to be found. How are these fundamental human yearnings challenged by suffering and disaster; how free do we feel in the face of the pain and tragedies that we experience in our own lives; what do we make of the meaning of life in the face of so much evil and violence, sufferings and disasters that we witness in the world around us? What about Frankl’s own life? How did he manage to survive his internment in Nazi concentration and death camps and come out of it with the belief that life still holds meaning?

**Keywords** Logotherapy · Freedom of will · The will to meaning · Meaning in life · The meaning of suffering · Frankl’s Holocaust experiences

### Healing Through Meaning

“Logos” is the Greek word for “meaning”. Logotherapy is therefore healing (or therapy) through meaning. Logotherapy is the term coined by Viktor Frankl to describe his particular approach to life and human suffering and who we are called to be and what we are to do in the face of it.

Logotherapy is based on the following three tenets, principles or concepts: (1) the freedom of will; (2) the will to meaning; and (3) the meaning of life. Taken together, it says the following:

*We have the freedom to search for, find and realize the meaning of our lives.*

#### 1. **Freedom of will**

As human beings we have *freedom of choice*. This is the **first tenet**. We are not haplessly driven, compelled to act in a certain way, pushed and pulled this way and that. Or, at least, we need not be! We are not determined by inherent inclinations,

good or bad, which we have no power to direct or control. We are not automatically good without effort and dedication on our part. Nor are we helplessly fallen creatures, unable to say “No” to what proves to be bad or destructive behavior.

We have a self-determining part to play in the shaping of our own lives.

## 2. *The will to meaning*

We all want to make sense of our lives. This is **the second tenet**. What makes sense is when one thing connects meaningfully to another. Things hold together, they do not fall apart. There is harmony, things are related to one another; parts fit together in a greater whole. Cohesion is the basis of understanding and grasp: “this makes sense, it has meaning, I can see how it works; I understand it!” Disconnected, conflicting, contradictory parts hostile to and set against each other (things that tear apart and destroy), do not make sense to us. They are disordered and create confusion and unrest.

Meaning is something that is inherently lawful, something we fundamentally need and want. It brings order and harmony into our lives. We feel at peace. It appeals and speaks to us, draws us to it in a good way. We experience a sense of connectedness, of being related to and included as an inherent part of a greater whole. What is meaningless *disturbs* our feelings of connectedness. We feel threatened by what feels *alien* to our nature; by something that severs, breaks up our connection to one another; makes us feel at a loss, uncertain and confused. Such a situation is *not* what we want; not what we are striving after and seek to attain. We *will* something *other* than and different to this. We want to experience *meaning* in our lives.

Our deepest desire, need or want, therefore, is to reach out to and connect with what is meaningful to us in the most fundamental sense of the word. We seek connection with something or someone outside of ourselves. We want to be linked to, harmoniously part of some greater whole where everything is held together in a good, non-disruptive and life-enhancing way. We want to be called out of ourselves and into some kind of enlivening interaction with others and with our world.

We feel good, happy about and at peace with ourselves when we have something or someone to live for, something of *worth* to contribute to the common good. We are doing our share for the good of the world around us. This forms the basis of a feeling of *self-worth*, of being a person in our own right. We are *needed*: we *belong* somewhere, have a unique space to fill or role to play.

We *fit* into the greater picture!

## 3. *The meaning of life*

It would make little sense if we had the freedom to search for, and a fundamental will to find meaning in our lives, if such meaning in life did not exist in any real way; if it was just a case of fantasy, a mere projection of what we desire life to be. This is the **third tenet**: life must be meaningful in and of itself. It must hold meaning outside and beyond us. Its meaning must be *incontestable*. Only if life is *objectively* meaningful is it *there* for us to become part of, embrace, appreciate and enjoy.

Life must have enduring worth beyond human caprice, beyond being something of our own making or something that we can shape to our own liking; this one in this way, and that one in that way. If my answer is as good as yours and anybody else's, whose answer will hold? Life will remain a question with no definite answer, nothing to find in any ultimate sense. So why strive for anything beyond what I may make of life, no matter if it is diametrically opposed to what you or others choose to make of it? Why even try? Life will be a conflict without resolution. What a depressing thought!

Only if the meaning of life is something beyond human speculation and manipulation is its meaning indestructible. Only then can nothing and no-one arbitrarily change or nullify life's meaning. Life's meaning will remain, be unassailable, beyond spoiling, always there to be found by anyone, at anytime, anywhere, no matter what anyone does or tries to do to darken its horizons.

Consider this: what meaning is there in life if everything is arbitrary or happenstance, if we are in this world through some freak accident, soon to slip into oblivion as if we never lived and if, in the end, it makes little difference whether we were here or not?

Furthermore: for life to be real to us, something we can trust and really believe in, ourselves as meaningfully part of, it must be *everlasting*. It must have been in existence *before* us and go on *after* us. Our present lives must be a vital link in the chain of time. If there is a roster, a timing of what is to happen and when, there is *progress*. Without a beginning of intent towards an envisaged goal, no progress is possible. History will be haphazard, without meaning, a mindless repetition of the same old story, a going around in circles. We will simply be swallowed up in this whirlpool of unrelated happenings, floating about as one piece amongst myriads of other broken pieces on the surface of meaningless events.

Meaning is meaning *because* if it has purpose and direction!

## Missing and Finding the Mark

Lives that are lived meaninglessly are arbitrary, given over to chance. Such lives fall away from, fail to find and miss out on what is meaningful in life. They *disconnect*, lose anchor and continuity. But once directed towards finding and fulfilling meaning, these lives take on significance, fall into line. Then the truth starts to operate, also retroactively and even to former generations that may have missed the mark!

The truth is this: we are *meant* to have a history, an origin and a genealogical line. We have a prophetic destiny, one we are meant to embrace. How else can we lay hold of life to live it in the way we are called to do if there was no such coherence of a beginning towards an end; if there was not an original plan and an ultimate purpose to the life given to us all?

Our individual lives must feature in the greater scheme of things, be recorded as significant for posterity and as part on an *ongoing* story. We must be players, the characters, in life's unfolding story.

The most optimal place to be, one earmarked by mental and spiritual well-being, is to have *unconditional faith in the unconditional meaningfulness of life*. Coupled to this, Frankl contested, is the awed awareness of our own *unconditional worth*: our capability to achieve and live a most meaningful life, a life that contributes to the quality of life of others and to the betterment of the world.

We have the dignity of personal responsibility!

## True Happiness

Life is beautiful. But why do we not always see it, realize it, embrace and enjoy it with the awe, the wonder, the joy, the gratitude it should evoke? Self-absorption and fear are our greatest drawbacks. Optimal being is optimal *well-being*. The stressors are removed, the veil lifted. We are completely *open* to the beauty that surrounds us: we *see* the flowers, the trees, the fields, skies and mountains, the seas and rivers, the magnificence of creation, its creatures; every wondrous aspect of nature.

We live in an awesomely beautiful world.

Nature is a statement of fact: the world is here for *us*. It is *our* domain. How important that makes us! It affirms our worth, our having *to be* here. It is the backdrop to the scene of which we are the front figures. The world is at our feet, not to trample it under foot, but for us to take center stage, find our rightful place in it.

The more we learn about the wonders of nature, the awesome harmony and order of our universe, the more we begin to grasp the potential of human greatness in a world designed for togetherness and peace.

We experience, in ever greater measure, that it is *good* to be alive!

## But Why Then Do We Suffer?

What about suffering? The world can look so ugly, so frightening, its face of beauty hidden from us. We can be so full of insecurities, uncertainties; doubts about ourselves. Life can be so painful, others so insensitive and cruel. We may be plagued with anxiety; frightened by what we experience, what we see out there in the world. Life can seem like a tragic affair.

So much of its tragedy is precisely *because* it is spurned, not appreciated for what it can give. Things are in disarray and *unnatural*. We fail to understand and appreciate each other. We do not believe in ourselves or in one another. We nurture our hurts, are self-defensive, full of resentment, feel at a distance from and at odds with one another. Brother fights brother. Communities are torn apart by factionalism. One opinion is hostile and opposed to the next. The world is a place of uprisings, wars and violent conflicts. There is blood-shed and misery, lewd ways of living, lawlessness and corruption almost everywhere. Tyrannical regimes oppress

their peoples and seek to dominate the entire world and subject it to its will; terrorist groups even compete for power among themselves.

How do we make sense of the world, of life in the face of so much anguish, turmoil and strife?

## **There Is Evil in the World**

Are we inherently evil creatures, inclined towards falling into unspeakable depths of depravity and cruelty, and is there very little, if anything at all that can be done about it?

How can anyone believe in life as just and fair if evil holds such sway, has such a free hand, is so rampant and common place that there is no stopping of it, no force strong enough in the world to effectively resist and eradicate it?

We can still see the sense of having to put something right if we did something wrong, if we are faced with the miserable consequences of our own foolish actions. But how does life retain its meaning if we are subjected to injustice, to suffering we have not brought upon ourselves, when we are faced with that which, at the moment of happening, is beyond our power to prevent or change? There is an inherent injustice to falling ill, to becoming a prey of some or other mortal physical affliction. Such tragedies happen to us beyond our ability to safeguard ourselves against it. And can we stop ourselves from growing older; can we prevent our eventual and inevitable deaths?

## **Victims of Injustice**

It is the answer to all the above questions that has made *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl's book that captured his own experiences of suffering as a Jew in the Nazi concentration and death camps, a best-seller to this day.

Frankl was a survivor of what became known as the Holocaust, the systematic slaughter of over six million Jews, including one and a half million Jewish children, by a power seeking National Socialist Regime in Germany during the Second World War. Millions of other victims also died in the camps or were killed during the course of the war.

Frankl wrote over 30 books in his lifetime, all expounding the truths he captured in the first two books he wrote soon after his release from the camps. The first was the rewriting of the lost manuscript of his book entitled: *The Doctor and the Soul*, a book he hastily wrote just before he was captured and sent to the concentration camps. The second, *Man's Search for Meaning*, written shortly after the rewriting of his first book, not only contains the story of his Holocaust experiences, but also captures the essence of all he expounded in his unique school of psychotherapy, namely, logotherapy.

Since its first publication, *Man's Search for Meaning* has been read and continues to be read by millions of people all over the world. The book impacts on the reader in a life-changing way. Why? Frankl posed this question himself. Is it that people *are* in fact trying to make sense of their lives and of life itself? There is so much hurt and tragedy and disaster in the world and it also finds its way into our personal lives. This is where we suffer the most. For indeed, Frankl observed, none of us can really claim that we have remained untouched, unhurt and unshaken by the tragic facts of life.

## Existential Frustration

Frankl spoke about *the tragic triad of human existence: pain, guilt and death*. Who of us can say that we will never suffer, always get things right and never fail or make mistakes? We are all going to die! He also spoke about suffering *boredom*. There is a particular anguish about feeling what he described as an inner state of *emptiness*. A logotherapist, Genrich Krasko (2004), entitled his book: *The Unbearable Boredom of Being*. If nothing much matters, if there seems to be little to really be excited about, not much reason for anything, we *suffer*. There is, as Frankl called it, an *existential vacuum*, a feeling that nothing much matters in life.

## The Call to Come Out of Hiding

But it is in the very face of life's tragedies and disappointments, pain and hardships, its losses, anguish and grief, in the experience of an intolerable feeling of *meaninglessness* that we are most keenly provoked to search for answers. Not only do we yearn for a different kind of world but we also seek to live life in a different and more fulfilling way. From within the very depths of our being, we experience a longing, even a *loneliness*; something that tells us that we want to be lovingly restored to what we feel we were originally given, something we had or *could have had*; something that was given to us as a potential or a promise of what life could have been or was meant to be like.

It was something meant to be ours, but that somehow got lost.

## When Meaning Becomes a Mission: The Story of Viktor Frankl

A study of the life of Viktor Frankl, someone who had found what we sense we are all looking for, holds great meaning for us.

There is a golden thread of meaning in his life; a destined path that can be traced throughout it. All of his life's experiences, from the most meaningful to the most painful, had a shaping influence upon his thinking. It was as if there was a preparation taking place towards a point of readiness which launched his life into a very much more vividly clarified direction.

Viktor Emil Frankl was born in Vienna in 1905 to a devout and morally enlightened Jewish family and died in that same city in September 1997. Between those two dates there is a space of life that contains all the struggles, challenges and triumphs of what it means to be human.

It is a story that addresses all of us.

## An Innocent Childhood

In his autobiography, *Viktor Frankl: Recollections* (1997), published a few months before his death, Frankl recalled a few major experiences and events in his life. Two of his earliest recollections vividly illustrate what later became the cornerstones of his thinking.

He described the first event, when only a 4 year old, as follows: "One evening, just before falling asleep, I was startled by the unexpected thought that one day I too would have to die. What troubled me then – as it has done throughout my life – was not the fear of dying, but the question of whether the transitory nature of life might destroy its meaning" (1997: 27). What was the meaning of life if it comes to an end, if death, a total end to it, is what inevitably awaits us all?

Little did he know that soon afterwards he would be given an answer to this painful question in the following and second significant event: "One sunny morning, I was awakened. With my eyes still closed, I was flooded by the utterly rapturous sense of being guarded, sheltered. When I opened my eyes my father was standing there, bending over me and smiling" (1997: 31).

## A Lasting Impression

The impression left with him was that there *is* meaning in life waiting for us to awaken and reach out to and that this meaning is hidden in the very fact of life's transitory nature.

Time does not stretch out endlessly. It passes and it ends. Birth and death enclose us within a limited space of time. Time is therefore extremely precious. Every moment is a space waiting for us to step into and *fill* with meaningful content. Time asks something from us. We seem called to do something with and about it. Indeed, each day, every moment of time, presents us with something to do or someone to respond to - something is expected of us in each and every situation.

## The Meaning of the Moment

Every situation offers us something unique, comes to us but once and never again. The encounter with every such a moment changes us. We do not meet the next moment in exactly the same way. We change with time, become more of who we will prove to be. Every situation is a chance to show ourselves, to give expression to ourselves in ways that all the more define us. "This is so and so. This is what he or she is like."

We make ourselves known in the world.

Do we want to stay in hiding, tucked away in some kind of enclosure of our own making, not facing life at all? To be unknown in this way, to have never really lived and made our impression on the world or, even worse, to have made a false impression on the world, leaves us with feelings of sadness and regret. Not to have *lived* our lives, is to not have really existed. We can easily be replaced by another. We will not really be missed and will be quickly forgotten. But even more tragic than this type of non-existence is to have lived a wasted, even a bad life, to have damaged what could have been precious in our lives, to have thrown our lives away. How will we be remembered then? Do we want to leave a bad impression, have the way we have lived our lives speak against our person? Do we want to be riddled with guilt and shame, in a state of humiliation and defeat, with no hope of being saved out of it? No one in their right mind would want to leave the kind of legacy that people would like to erase from memory!

The truth of the matter is that we want to be missed. We want to be remembered with love, admiration and respect.

We want to live a life that matters.

Time is meant for progress. It is not to be wasted or thrown away, but it is meant to achieve something of worth. Time indeed waits for no man. We will all come to the end of the time allotted to us. Time will go on without us. When our time is up, we would want to feel satisfied with the way we have lived our lives. We would want to see that we needed to be here and to have done and experienced what we did. Our lives had impact. It meant something. It formed a meaningful part of the whole, of some bigger picture or story, a story that started long before we were born and that will continue its narrative after we have gone, but a story we were part of! We had a say in its plot. We were part of history; a history that started with magnificent intent and works towards an ordained end: a good and meaningful, a benevolent, and yes, a glorious conclusion. It was all very worthwhile!

Death, therefore, gives life its meaning as a once given precious gift of opportunity.

Life is for living it in the way it is meant to be lived!