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Meaning is What is Meant – Viktor Frankl's logotherapy

Mag. Sabine Indinger MOP

Viktor E. Frankl put forward a revolutionary approach to psychotherapy known as logotherapy, referring to the Greek word 'logos' for 'meaning'. The following article outlines the basic assumptions and ideas of Viktor E. Frankl's logotherapy starting with the Frankl's concept of man and his philosophy of life. Furthermore, it delivers insight into resources of the human spirit such as will to meaning, task orientation, conscience, self-transcendence, self-distancing and humour – logotherapy's medicine chest. The article explores what 'meaning' in the context of logotherapy means and ways to discover meaning by use of improvisation, individualisation, dereflection, modification of attitudes and guideposts to meaning. In the course of this article some parallels and differences with reference to Solution-Focused thinking are mentioned as a basis for further exploration.

If Steve de Shazer had ever met Viktor E. Frankl – what would they have talked about? Where would they have found common ground? Where would they have disagreed? Would they have identified areas of mutual enrichment? Though this conversation never took place during their lifetimes¹, it could be a thought experiment here and now: more than anything else, this article is an invitation for future discussion and exploration.

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¹ As far as I know, though, during Steve de Shazer's time at the MRI (Mental Research Institute) in Palo Alto, Frankl's 1930s work on paradoxical intention was quoted and cross-referenced with the concept of the koan in Zen Buddhist practice (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974).

What is the person, the human being?

During and partly because of his suffering in concentration camps, Frankl validated a (then) revolutionary approach to psychotherapy known as logotherapy. *Logos* is a Greek word translated as 'meaning'. At the core is the belief that man's primary motivation for living is his *will to* and *search for meaning*.

Frankl's concept of man and philosophy of life

Logotherapy is based on an explicit philosophy of life. More specifically, it is based on three fundamental assumptions which form a chain of interconnected links:

- 1 Freedom of Will
- 2 Will to Meaning
- 3 Meaning of Life

The Freedom of Will

"... [T]he freedom of will is opposed to a principle that characterizes most current approaches to man, namely, determinism. Really, however, it is only opposed to what I am used to calling pan-determinism, because speaking of the freedom of will does not in any way imply any a priori indeterminism." (Frankl, 1988, S. 16)

Freedom of will contends that the human being has the capacity of free choice. Humans are finite beings, thus, human freedom is restricted by circumstances. The freedom with which Frankl is concerned, though, is not freedom *from* conditions, but the freedom *to* choose one's attitude toward whatever conditions exist – the freedom to take a stand².

² Whereas the freedom of will is universal, it is clear that the number of choices available to a person varies from situation to situation. Sometimes there is a full range of choices to pick from, sometimes the only choice we have left is to accept the unchangeable fate (e.g. the loss of a loved one, an incurable disease, etc.) – and to decide how to move on with life.

Humans are free to choose how a given situation (e.g. intended or involuntary actions of others, a pleasant encounter, a blow of fate, a new idea, etc.) will be regarded, what meaning does it have, or if meaning will be found in the circumstances of life (Frankl, 1967, p. 14). This makes human nature essentially unpredictable. By the ability to choose, each person is capable of changing the world for the better (Graber, 2004, p. 63). Each person decides what his or her life will be by the choices that are made moment to moment. This gives each individual the freedom to change the direction of his or her life. One of the essential qualities of human nature is the ability to rise above, or grow beyond, the conditioning of biological, psychological or sociological factors. In this, there might be a parallel to SF insofar as SF believes that “change happens all the time” and that there are no ‘*things*’ like ‘structures’, ‘sociological factors’, and the like which do not change.

Frankl developed this in his theory of *dimensional ontology* (Frankl, 1967, p. 127–135; Frankl, 1988, p. 22–30). Human beings can be understood only if they are considered as a totality of all their dimensions, generally described as the somatic, the psychological, and the spiritual, i.e. noetic, dimension. In other words, man *is* a spiritual (i.e. noetic) being, but *has* a body and a psyche:

“A new dimension is opened: Man enters the dimension of the noetic, in counter-distinction to the somatic and psychological phenomena. He becomes capable of taking a stand not only towards the world but also towards himself” (Frankl, 1967, p.14).

Gould (1993) noted that “dimensional ontology changes our focus from the neural and mental aspects of self . . . , to the *noölogical*, or *noetic*, dimension. In so doing, the self is enabled to transcend its psychophysical condition by an existential act of will to enter a new (*noölogical*) dimension of freedom and responsibility [sic!]” (p. 69).

In SF, too, there is no separation of emotions and the situ-

ation in which they occur. SF does not work on emotions so that then ‘a new life’ can occur, nor does logotherapy. Logotherapy in general does not seem to be very interested in emotional states. SF argues that changes in life make changes in emotions possible and vice versa. I think Frankl would fully agree with that.

The Will to Meaning

According to logotherapy, the will to meaning is the primary motivation for living – and acting:

“Man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a ‘secondary rationalization’ of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning. There are some authors who contend that meanings and values are nothing but³ ‘defense mechanisms, reaction formations and sublimations’. But as for myself, I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my ‘defense mechanisms’, nor would I be ready to die merely for the sake of my reaction formations. Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values” (Frankl, 2006, p. 99).

To Frankl, the fact that individuals have an innate desire to find meaning verifies the existence of meaning in human life (Frankl, 1988, p. 95; Graber, 2004, p. 65). Frankl emphasised that the true meaning of each person’s life is something that must be discovered by activity in the world through interaction with others⁴ (Graber, 2004, p. 64). Frankl saw a fundamental difference between being driven to attain something and human striving for attainment of a goal or purpose. The first, he called

³ “Today nihilism no longer unmasks itself by speaking of ‘nothingness.’ Today nihilism is masked by speaking of the ‘nothing-but-ness’ of man. Reductionism has become the mask of nihilism” (Frankl, 1988, p. 21).

⁴ As opposed to through introspection as if each person were a self-contained system.

“just” ‘behaving’, the latter ‘to act as a human being’. Man may be pushed by drives, but is drawn forward by the pursuit of meaning (Frankl, 1988, p. 43).

“I speak of a will to meaning rather than a need for meaning or a drive to meaning. If man were really driven to meaning he would embark on meaning fulfilment solely for the sake of getting rid of this drive, in order to restore homeostasis within himself. At the same time, however, he would no longer be really concerned with meaning itself but rather with his own equilibrium and thus, in the final analysis, with himself” (Frankl, 1967, p. 18).

In this, there could be a difference to SF, as SF would not say that *all* human beings have the *same* motivation for life. SF would argue that everyone has their own and would respect that difference. One suggestion was that SF might simply not ‘think in these philosophical dimensions’⁵.

For me personally it was helpful as it made me understand how I am not driven by my instincts and inner states as their helpless victim. I have no chance not to *feel*, i.e. experience, them, but I *can act* in any way I decide *despite* them (i.e. be the driver).

The Meaning of Life

Meaning is contained within the concrete experiences of daily life. In addition, each person has a special purpose to fulfil in life. Each person is unique and cannot be replaced by another. There will not be a second chance to fulfil the special assignment for which the individual is responsible in life. The task is specific and unique, as is the opportunity to accomplish the task. Frankl termed this the ‘demand quality of life’: it is life that asks questions of the individual and each person answers by freely choosing how to respond to life.

⁵ Frankl considered himself first and foremost a doctor but by many people was considered first and foremost a philosopher.

“For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment. . . . One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone’s task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it. . . . Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognise that it is he who is asked. In a word, 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” (Frankl, 2006, p. 108/109).

This might be a parallel to SF’s unwillingness to find solutions in the abstract. SF looks for concrete steps in the ‘here and now’ of the client and not for general explanations, interpretations and theories. I remember a line from my teacher, Elisabeth Lukas, a student and close friend of Frankl, in one of her lectures: *“The calming thing about elaborate explanations and interpretations is that in the end they prove wrong anyways in most cases, so why go there in the first place.”* So she focused on what helped the client here and now to be better able to cope with his or her life – here and now.

Interestingly, there is an interview with Insoo Kim Berg on the meaning of life, and what she says is very much in line with what Frankl would probably have put forward:

“Berg: . . . But you think about what is the meaning of life in a very different way when you get older.

Yalom: For example?

Berg: What am I living for? What is the purpose of living on? What do I want to do with the time I have left? That kind of stuff . . . I’d like to be able to say I had a good life. And what’s the definition of a good life? I made some difference. That’s it. If I could just say that. I’ve made some difference because I’ve been here in this world. Life is a little bit better

and I contributed to that. I think that would be a good life” (Berg, 2003).

The meaning of life is always changing, but it never ceases to exist. Life has meaning under all circumstances, even the most challenging ones.

“It is true that we logotherapists are convinced, and if need be, persuade our patients, that there is a meaning to fulfil. But we do not pretend to know what the meaning is” (Frankl, 1988, p. 68).

This would neither be possible nor necessary. It is not *possible* as the meaning of the moment is a very personal and situational one and cannot be ‘prescribed’ but can only be discovered by the person him- or herself. It is not *necessary* as the person has all the resources of the noetic dimension to find meaning and to respond to the question(s) life asks him or her in each moment. This seems to be similar to the SF way of thinking that if you see something as a problem you also probably have the resources to solve it. Logotherapy might even take it one step further: If you have the ability to perceive something in the world (be it a problem, a void, something beautiful, a treat, a gift, etc.) you probably not only have the resources to act accordingly (e.g. solve it, fill it, enjoy it, use it, etc.) but also the responsibility to do so.

Resources of the human spirit

The human spirit could also be called the medicine chest of logotherapy. People are able to use it to make decisions about what to do with their motivations, their needs, their emotions, with the gifts and handicaps of their bodies, with the circumstances in which they find themselves. This is why the spirit is not only a medicine but also a treasure chest (Fabry, 1988, p. 5).

Here are some of the resources of the human spirit:

1. **Will to meaning** as the primary motivational force that draws the person forward.
2. **Task orientation**

“There is much wisdom in the words of Nietzsche: ‘He who has a ‘why’ to live for can bear almost any ‘how’.’ ... In the Nazi concentration camps, one could have witnessed that those who knew that there was a task waiting for them to fulfil were most apt to survive” (Frankl, 2006, p. 104).

To lead a full life, a person needs tasks waiting for him or her, both short-term and long-term tasks. They need to be self-chosen, not forced on him or her (Fabry, 1988, p. 5).

3. **Conscience**

“Conscience is the capacity which empowers man to seize the meaning of the situation in its very uniqueness” (Frankl, 1988, p. 19).

Conscience is the compass needle that points in the direction of the meaning of the moment. The voice of the conscience is feeble and often drowned out (Fabry, 1988, p. 5), but a person never completely loses the ability to hear it and thus can always decide to follow it.

To be sure,

“true conscience has nothing to do with what I would term ‘super-egotistic pseudo-morality.’ Nor can it be dismissed as a conditioning process. Conscience is a definitely human phenomenon. But we must admit that it is also ‘just’ a human phenomenon. It is subject to the human condition in that it is stamped by the finiteness of man. For he is only guided by conscience in his search for meaning, he is sometimes misled by it as well” (Frankl, 1988, p. 65).

Nonetheless a person has no better compass than his or her conscience:

“But if man is not to contradict his own humanness, he has to obey his conscience unconditionally, even though he is

aware of the possibility of error. I would say that the possibility of error does not dispense him from the necessity of trial. As Gordon W. Allport puts it, 'we can be at one and the same time half-sure and whole-hearted.' . . . The possibility that my conscience errs implies the possibility that another one's conscience is right. This entails humility and modesty. If I am to search for meaning, I have to be certain that there is meaning. If, on the other hand, I cannot be certain that I will also find it, I must be tolerant . . . it does mean that I acknowledge another one's right to believe, and obey, his own conscience" (Frankl, 1988, p. 66).

SF's 'every case is different' seems to point in a similar direction. Both logotherapy and SF would find it hard to formulate an ethics that is valid for all time. This is why I think Frankl's concept of conscience is so helpful: it is a highly personal and individual instrument that helps discover the meaning of the moment, i.e. what life asks from somebody, and it is therefore especially needed when general ethics, authorities, guidelines, rules and norms do not help or are ambiguous. When Frankl talks of conscience there is no religious connotation to it. It might therefore be different from other concepts that in the language of psychotherapy and/or everyday life are also called 'conscience'.

4. Self-transcendence

"Self-transcendence is the essence of existence. Being human is directed to something other than itself" (Frankl, 1988, p. 50).

" . . . The I-Thou relation can be regarded as the heart of the matter. Yet . . . [t]he encounter between I and Thou cannot be the whole truth, the whole story. . . . Therefore, if Martin Buber, . . . interprets human existence basically in terms of a dialogue between I and Thou, we must recognize that this dialogue defeats itself unless I and Thou transcend themselves to refer to a meaning outside themselves" (Frankl, 1988, p. 8).

‘Transcendence’ in this context does not *a priori* have a religious denotation⁶. What Frankl tries to illustrate with the idea of self-transcendence is that human beings are able and willing to reach beyond their egocentricity, beyond being concerned solely with their own well-being and direct themselves towards something or someone *in the world*. In the first instance this does not imply a ‘higher’ meaning or being. Of course, from there it is only a small step towards spirituality for those who are used to going or willing to go there. Although this is, as far as I understand, nothing that SF is traditionally concerned with, it might be of interest to some readers to explore connections here between what they do in their (SF-)work and what they believe.

Frankl regards self-transcendence as one of the two unique capacities of human beings, self-detachment (or self-distancing) being the other.

5. Self-distancing / Self-detachment

“To detach oneself from even the worst conditions is a uniquely human capability” (Frankl, 1988, p. 17).

This is the ability to step away from yourself and look at yourself ‘from the outside.’ In self-distancing, the noetic ‘you’ steps away from the psychophysical ‘you’. You can take a stand towards physical illness as well as emotional states (e.g. fear, anger, etc.) in your noetic dimension. You have, as Frankl calls it, ‘the defiant power of the human spirit’, a vital resource of your inner medicine chest (Fabry, 1988, p. 6).

A famous saying by Frankl sums that up: “Man muss sich von sich selbst nicht alles gefallen lassen” (German), which I would try to translate as follows: “You do not have to put

⁶ Frankl was very careful to keep religion/spirituality and logo(psycho)therapy strictly apart as he always stressed that logotherapy must be able to provide support no matter if someone had a strong (religious) belief or was an atheist. (Frankl, 1988, p. 143)

up with everything you yourself are confronting yourself with.“

As I see it, the Miracle Question presupposes this human ability and uses it most skilfully by inviting the client to jump forward – beyond his or her current problems, shortcomings, etc. – and to explore what is there and what is ‘really wanted’.

6. Humour

Humour is, among other things, a practical way of self-distancing, of seeing how funny our behaviour sometimes seems or is. The search for meaning might be serious business but it can be greatly facilitated by humour (Fabry, 1988, p. 6).

What does ‘meaning’ mean?

Meaning is What is Meant

“On one of my lecture tours through the United States my audience was requested to print questions in block letters for me to answer and hand them over to a theologian who passed them on to me. The theologian suggested that I skip one, for, as he said, it was “sheer nonsense. Someone wishes to know,” he said, “how you define six hundred in your theory of existence.” When I read the question I saw a different meaning. “How do you define GOD in your theory of existence?” Printed in block letters, “GOD” and “600” were hard to differentiate. ... But only one way to read the question was the right one. Only one way to read the question was the way in which it was meant by him who had asked it. Thus we have arrived at a definition of what meaning is. Meaning is what is meant, be it by a person who asks me a question, or by a situation which, too, implies a question and calls for an answer. I cannot say, ‘My answer right or wrong,’ as the Americans say, ‘My country right or wrong.’ I must try hard to find out the true meaning of the question which I am asked (Frankl, 1988, p. 62).

To be sure, man is free to answer the questions he is asked by life. But this freedom must not be confounded with arbitrariness. It must be interpreted in terms of responsibility. Man is responsible for giving the right answer to a question, for finding the true meaning of a situation. Meaning is something to be found rather than to be given, discovered rather than invented. Meaning also differs from situation to situation, from person to person. Something that might be highly meaningful to one person in a given situation might be not at all meaningful for another person. Therefore, what is meaningful in a given situation for a given person is not a ‘thing’ with a fixed denotation (meaning) but has to be negotiated and discovered between people. Meaning is what is meant – in its particular context.

‘The’ Meaning of Life and the Meaning of the Moment

“... there is no such thing as a universal meaning of life but only the unique meanings of the individual situations”
(Frankl, 1988, p. 55).

The meaning of the moment is a meaning that is readily found in daily situations. Every situation, every unrepeatable moment, offers a specific meaning potential. To respond to these meaning offerings of the moment is to lead a meaningful life. In most situations the meaning of the moment is nothing spectacular; it’s the daily routine. Some moments are subtler than others. Some offer bigger choices than others.

In both SF and logotherapy it is very clear that it is always the client who is the only one to know or discover the specific meaning of the moment and the practitioner would always have to ask him or her. It will most probably be an interactional process to discover this meaning – the client interacting with the questions of the practitioner and the practitioner interacting with the answers of the client. This is also where Frankl’s concept of conscience comes into play: in the very end it is the conscience, the ‘meaning-organ’ that tells (‘whispers’ to) the person what the meaning of the

moment is. The practitioner does not necessarily understand what it is, nor does he or she have to. Meaningful means meaningful for the client.

This shows that every case is different *and* that the client is the expert, insofar as only he or she will be able to find out ‘what is – really – meant’. The practitioner will (at best) be helpful to this process but will definitely not be able to show, explain or ‘give’ meaning to the client.

How to find meaning – and where?

How can you know which of the many possibilities offered by a particular moment is meaningful to you?

“Life can be made meaningful in a threefold way: first, through what we give to life (in terms of our creative works); second, by what we take from the world (in terms of our experiencing values); and third, through the stand we take towards a fate we no longer can change (an incurable disease, an inoperable cancer, or the like) (Frankl, 1967, p. 25).

Individualisation and Improvisation

“The uniqueness of logotherapy stems not from psychological tactics, strategies, or techniques, but from the creativity required for adapting logotherapy to the needs of each individual. This requires therapist improvisation designed to specifically address the unique wholeness of the individual client” (Lukas & Hirsch, 2003, p. 338).

Elisabeth Lukas noticed that if she wanted to respect her patients’ individuality, their unique situations, and wanted to be helpful as a therapist, then, instead of remembering and following special formulas, she had to *listen* to her clients:

“I opened my ears to the simple expressions of my patients, I sought out the melody of their voices, and searched for . . . traces of meaning . . .” (Fabry & Lukas, 1995, p. 33) (S. Indinger, Trans.).

This seems to be very similar to SF, which is not a formula either. In SF therapy and coaching the practitioner reacts to what the client has said – the process of negotiating meaning, of creating a valuable interaction for the client is therefore constantly improvised and does not follow preformulated plans or strategy. This is the same with logotherapy: Frankl has always stressed the importance of encountering each person as the unique human, i.e. noetic, being who he or she is – and take it from there.

Dereflection

Dereflection focuses the client's attention on other persons, or away from self-interests and thus taps the noetic resource of self-transcendence. It is useful for changing attitudes in all those who brood and spend a great deal of time observing themselves, their emotional states and/or their problem(s). Dereflection consists of two parts: a stop sign that puts the brakes on so-called hyper-reflection⁷, and a guidepost that turns the mind to other thoughts. This new direction gradually creates a positive, meaning-oriented, rather than self-centred, view of the world.

This seems to be similar to SF 'perspective change' questions: When someone speaks about "gaining more self-confidence" a SF practitioner might ask: "So how would your mother notice that you have higher self-confidence?" If I understand that correctly, this also serves the purpose of making a rather abstract, general goal more specific and thus tangible for the client: "What does being more self-confident mean to *you*? What in your terms and understanding would your behaviour be like if you were more self-confident?" This is also true for logotherapy. One main aspect of logotherapy's dereflection, however, is to put a stop to the person's revolving around his or her problem(s) and shortcomings to make him or her see that there is something out there in the world that is

⁷ i.e. on obsessing about themselves and/or a problem.

waiting for them. That is, turn the person's attention from self-centredness towards self-transcendence.

Modification of Attitudes

Modification of attitudes leads away from seeing oneself as a helpless victim (of drives, genes, environment, society, the past, and the like) and toward seeing oneself in control, in whatever degree possible. In modification of attitudes, the emphasis is on the (meaning) potential of each situation, as described by these guiding principles:

- Alternatives *are* possible.
- Behaviour patterns *can* be changed.
- You *can* find meaning in all situations.
- Life *has* meaning under all circumstances.
- Something positive *can* be found in all situations.
- Opportunities *can* be found even in mistakes, failures, sickness, irretrievable losses.

Attention is directed toward goals, purposes, tasks, values, freedom of choice, and responsibility. The focus is away from those doors that are locked. Focus is on doors that are open or can be opened.

To me, Frankl and de Shazer seem to be thinking alike in these points.

Guideposts to Meaning

One of the basic assumptions of logotherapy is that, in the *height* of your noetic dimension, you know what kind of person you are, what your potentials are, what is important and meaningful to you. The Socratic dialogue⁸ might use the following guideposts to probe the areas in which meaning can be found (Fabry, 1988, p. 9):

⁸ Socrates believed that it was the task of a teacher not to pour information onto the students, but rather to elicit from the students what they know intuitively. Frankl believes it is the task of the logotherapist to elicit the wisdom that is hidden within the spirit, i.e. the nous, of each seeker.

Self Discovery

Who are you? Which talents and resources do you have? What fascinates you more than anything else? What is really important to you? What is it that you really *want* to bring/give to the world?

In logotherapy, self-discovery is not about finding out ‘Who you really are’ as in ‘You are probably hiding something inside yourself that has to be brought to light’ but self-discovery is about what you really want – just as in SF, as I understand it.

Choices

The more choices you see in your situation, the more meaning will become available as you feel like a human being making a decision, taking action or a stand towards the situation.

The first step is to become aware that you do have choices. The second step is to determine what is most meaningful for you at this time in your life. In a rough simplification, this can be done by using Socratic dialogue (or inner monologue, if need be) probing the guideposts of meaning and/or by paying close attention to the voice of your conscience.

Uniqueness

You are most likely to find meaning in situations where you are not easily replaced by someone else. Meaning is most likely to be found where your specific talents, capabilities, resources, experience, knowledge, etc. meet a concrete demand (maybe even void) in the world. Because this is where and when specifically *you* are asked to take action and respond to what life asks from you.

Responsibility

There are three pathways to finding meaning through responsibility: by responding to the meaning(s) of the moment

(*responsibility*); by making responsible choices where choice exists (*freedom*); and by not feeling responsible when there is no choice (*acceptance*: change/choice of attitude).

Self-Transcendence

Self-Transcendence is the specifically human capacity to reach beyond yourself and act for the sake of someone you care about, or for the sake of a cause that means something to you, i.e. reach beyond your egocentricity. No one is expected to *forget* their self-interests, but rather to *transcend* them, to include others into their circle of self-interests.

After having outlined basic assumptions of Frankl's philosophy, here are some topics of potential interest for further discussion:

Areas of further Interest and Interaction

'Ethics Check': Is what I want 'worthy' of being wanted?

The guideposts to meaning might be used as an 'ethics check' when working towards the future perfect in terms of 'what is wanted': Is what I want 'worthy', i.e. meaningful/valuable, of being wanted? In which respect, if at all, could such a 'check' be useful? For whom?

An Attitude rather than a Methodology?

"What matters is never a technique per se but rather the spirit in which the technique is used" (Frankl, 1988, p. 29).

To me, tapping into Frankl's philosophy was like a revelation in the sense that it felt like it was something I had known all along but now finally had the words to express and explain it – to myself and others.

So, to me Frankl's ideas are what I use as foundation – an attitude based on which I am free to choose a(ny) methodology, technique or tool which seems helpful. I learned that those with experience in the SF approach often seem to move

away from techniques and towards an attitude of mind that gives rise to novel and useful questions.

(Re-)Humanising the Workplace: Challenging People with Meaningful Offerings

Frankl's philosophical foundation might be of interest for organisations, the workplace and the people interacting in this environment. One aspect is 're-humanising' the working environment the same way Frankl demanded it for psychology and psychotherapy: by regarding people as beings in search of meaning perfectly equipped with all necessary (human) resources to find meaning and realise values (be they creative, experiential or attitudinal). E.g. by creating and maintaining a working environment that enables people to find meaning in what they do; by challenging people with meaning offerings in the workplace; by acknowledging the freedom to make responsible choices; by trusting their (noetic) capabilities and resources; ... what else?

I hope that there will be lively discussion and interaction about Frankl's philosophical ideas, their potential practical relevance and application to various fields, especially organisations, and about all the SF-related questions that might come up. I am very much interested in an active exchange on how Frankl's logotherapy, (or rather *-philosophy*), compares with SF, what the similarities are and where there are differences. In short: I am highly interested in your thinking. sabine@indinger.at

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Viktor E. Frankl was born in 1905 in Vienna, Austria, where he died in 1997. During his teenage years he took up correspondence with Sigmund Freud and became a student of Alfred Adler. He earned a medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1930 and worked as a neurologist and psychiatrist.

In 1942, Frankl, his first wife Tilly and his parents were deported to the Theresienstadt camp. Even though he was in four Nazi camps, Frankl survived the Holocaust, whereas Tilly, his parents, and other members of his family died.

On returning to Vienna in 1945, Frankl published a book setting out his ideas on Logotherapy. By the time of his death, Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* had been translated into 24 languages, reprinted 73 times and had long been used as a standard text in high school and university courses in psychology, philosophy, and theology. In a 1991 survey of general-interest readers conducted by the Library of Congress and the Book of the Month Club, *Man's Search for Meaning* was ranked among the ten most influential books in the USA.

Frankl received twenty-nine honorary doctorates and was a visiting professor at Harvard, Stanford and other universities in Pittsburgh, San Diego and Dallas. Frankl has given lectures at 209 universities on five continents.

partly taken from:

<http://www.logotherapyinstitute.org/life-and-works.html>

Viktor E. Frankl's Logotherapy in a Nutshell

Logos is a Greek word translated as "meaning". Logotherapy focuses on the future. According to Logotherapy, meaning can be discovered in three ways:

- By creating a work or doing a deed
- By experiencing something or encountering someone
- By the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering.

Franklian Philosophy

- The belief in a healthy core is the basis of Franklian Psychotherapy.

- The principle goal is to help the person become aware of the resources of their healthy core and to help them use these resources.
- Life does not owe you happiness, it offers you meaning.

Basic Concepts of Franklian Psychology

- Life has meaning under all circumstances.
- Main motivation for living is our will to find meaning in life.
- Freedom to find meaning.

Assumptions of Franklian Psychology

- The human being is an entity encompassing the three dimensions body, psyche, and spirit (Greek: nous).
- Life has meaning under all circumstances, even the most miserable.
- People have a will to meaning.
- People have freedom under all circumstances to activate the will to find meaning.
- Life has a demand quality to which people must respond if decisions are to be meaningful.
- The individual is unique.

Aims of Franklian Psychotherapy

- Become aware of spiritual resources.
- Make conscious spiritual resources.
- Use “defiant power of the human spirit” and stand up against adversity.

Franklian Philosophical Questions

- How do we find meaning?
- How do we know when suffering is unavoidable and meaningless?
- How do we find the meaning of the moment in situations of value conflicts?

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It was Frankl's merit to provide the psychological and philosophical foundation and superstructure. It is the merit of his successors to (further) develop its practical applications and to apply Frankl's ideas to various areas beyond psychotherapy.