

Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy. Victor E. Frankl, 1969. New York, New York: Washington Square Press.

Victor Frankl, Viennese neurologist and psychiatrist, wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* in 1959. This widely read classic explores the transformation of suffering to meaning as the theory of logotherapy, based on Frankl's experience of degradation as a prisoner of war in Nazi concentration camps. The book has sold more than 10 million copies and was rated one of the 10 most influential books ever read by respondents in a Library of Congress survey. Frankl died in Vienna in 1997 at the age of 92. He authored 32 books, received 29 honorary doctoral degrees, and founded the Institute of Logotherapy in Vienna. He is regarded as a luminary healer and theorist in existential psychology. Famed psychologist Gordon Allport introduced Frankl's work to the United States and wrote the revised edition's introduction titled, "From Death-Camp to Existentialism." This edition condenses 14 German volumes of Frankl's theory into 60+ pages in a small paperback book, all the while engaging the reader and explaining the intricacies of therapy. The bibliographic data is extensive and includes many of Frankl's own writings. The book is divided into two parts, experiences in a concentration camp and basic concepts of logotherapy.

In the first part of the book, an account of daily life in a Nazi prison camp, the reader is transported to a life and death portrayal of dark despair and rich inner experience. Frankl carries the reader through the concentration camp, past the watchful and merciless scrutiny of the Capos, with a telling preoccupation with food from near starvation. This is a sensory portrait of horrific lack and limitation in an environment of ceaseless drudgery. Prisoners lived with threatening uncertainty and loss of the most essential dignities including privacy, clothing, and adequate sleep. It is an evocative look at captivity as an abiding sense of fear, dread of brutality, perpetual discomfort from cold or lice, and anesthetizing detachment from watching violent parades of death. While it is a testimonial from a witness to inhumanity, it becomes a tale of transcendence as the reader observes prison life through Frankl's philosophical observations that layer everyday interactions. Personal freedom was so minutely constrained that the one remaining choice in prison life was one's attitude.

The second portion of Frankl's book contains a succinct description of his theory of logotherapy. Profound loss of freedom in the camp aroused Frankl's introspective contemplation

on the meaning of life. A psychotherapist before being interned in the camp, he became a camp doctor as he endured the bitter experience of being a fellow prisoner. He secretly scavenged scraps of paper to record his theories and observations when his manuscript was taken from him on entering the prison. He attributed survival to his determination to write the theory of logotherapy as his own meaningful life purpose. Frankl explained that logotherapy supersedes psychoanalysis because it goes beyond the context of drives and instincts, ego and adaptation, to the larger context of fulfilling meaning and actualizing values.

Logos is a Greek word for “meaning.” The theory of logotherapy is that finding a life meaning or purpose is an essential motivation of every person. Frankl was influenced by existentialism in the works of Freud, Adler, Jung, Sartre, and Nietzsche. His explorations were with existential concerns: life and death and their meanings, freedom, responsibility, creativity, commitment to tasks, self-awareness, relationships, and purpose. Frankl viewed boredom as an existential vacuum and pervasive contemporary problem. Logotherapy is future-oriented as the therapist engages the client toward a perpetual and deliberate confrontation of existence, with the belief that there is opportunity for choice in every situation, including acceptance of suffering and sacrifice as chosen avenues of responsibility.

The TR student or therapist could gain instant insight from this book. The “experience” of the book can be savored as a story, just as contemporary storytellers use story therapeutically. The teller heals and gains meaning from telling, and the reader learns from another’s story. Frankl’s notion that a person becomes well by focusing on his purpose and meaning in life (changing one’s life with purpose) has remarkable relevance for the goal-orientation of therapeutic recreation. Frankl objected to the notion of striving for homeostasis; he stated, “What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling from some goal worthy of him” (p. 166). Frankl cautioned that only the patient can interpret his or her life task; the role of the therapist is not teaching or preaching but “consists in widening and broadening the visual field of the patient so that the whole spectrum of meaning and values becomes visible to him” (p. 174). As a counseling approach, the principles of logotherapy are especially useful for participants and therapists assessing developmental issues and life transitions; exploring values and attitudes; finding meaning; seeking personal growth; and foremost, making choices. Frankl’s discussion of the “will to meaning” has theoretical resonance with emerging TR practice models that emphasize participants’ self-determination, when their autonomy is constrained by conditions of suffering.

Frankl helped to make sense of suffering as a life task, an escalated experience for all TR participants and a common experience of therapists and participants as humans. The TRS helps people find reasons to recover from acute conditions, and more often, to discover reasons to live well in their individual integration of chronic conditions. According to logotherapy, the ability to rise above outward conditions (e.g., stigma, disorder, disfigurement, victimization) is self-transcendence; it is the human spirit finding expression as an unwounded core that prevails over psychological disorder (neurosis) or biological disorder (illness or a disabling condition). A person may need therapy to help unblock the effects of biological or psychological disorder.

Logotherapists’ belief in human capacity is a corollary to the “strengths” emphasis in TR expressed as the participant’s “leisure ability.” Bliss and flow, as desirable qualities of leisure experience, capture the essence of participants answering the call of life. As a therapy of fulfillment, in logotherapy, happiness and pleasure are by-products of the achievement, not the luck or fate, of finding meaning through the tension and stress of existence (suffering). Accompanying a person into self-discovery by uncovering meaning through the participant’s attitudinal values is the art of a skilled healer. This is not a simplistic endeavor nor the endeavor of a technician. In this regard, the TRS who borrows logotherapy principles to inform practice

will need to study and understand esoteric concepts like paradoxical intention, nihilism, and pan-determinism. [For an application of Frankl's theories to practice in helping professions, see *Logotherapy for the Helping Professional* (Guttman, 1996).]

The significance of logotherapy for consideration in TR may be its emphasis on spirituality where aspiration to meaning in life is an enterprise of the spirit. How spirit transcends embodiment is a paradoxical human ability that needs philosophical understanding. The TRS may observe transcendence in participants, and even facilitate it through leisure experiences, without having an intellectual grasp of logotherapy or humanistic psychology. Understanding the spiritual dimension of transcendence, however, may be essential art and wisdom for the future of TR if existential outcomes are embraced as its calling. Humanistic psychologists who incorporate existential approaches believe that human potential is more important and more interesting than basic functioning because it is the unpredictable and extraordinary capacity of every changing, growing, undetermined human being who is becoming a person. The principles of logotherapy align with beliefs that people have choices in all situations and freedom to find meaning in their life. People can transcend incapacity when they discover their "will to meaning" by facing the momentary challenges of living a personally determined responsible life.

Finally, *Man's Search for Meaning* speaks to the personal journey of the TRS to find meaning and purpose in his or her own life. Frankl guides his readers to this exploration as he presents the principles of logotherapy. It is impossible not to wonder and reflect on one's personal circumstances of meaning, across one's biography and in the current moment, as one reads these pages. It is unlikely that a TRS will help participants to find meaning and purpose if he or she has not worked through important crucial human areas and spiritual emergencies. This book is recommended as a reflective "required" read, and an invitation to a philosophy of meaning-making as a role call for all TR practitioners and students.

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Philosophy of Therapeutic Recreation: Ideas and Issues Volume II. Edited by Charles Sylvester, 1996. Arlington, VA: National Recreation and Park Association

This second volume of *Philosophy of Therapeutic Recreation: Issues and Ideas* is a Niagara of creativity with a common theme—thoughtful and sensitive practice of therapeutic recreation in troubled times for professions. Eight authors and four co-authors converge to turn the century with calls to reflective practice. Every author holds up the mirror to uncover flaws in current practice perspectives that perpetuate confusion in the field. This "error thinking" may be the result of well-intentioned but culpable alignment with the medical model, cultural insensitivity or rigidity in ignoring spiritual or feminist dimensions of care, or intolerance of the means/ends philosophical debate in an urgency for outcomes that secure clinical status or reimbursement. Every author offers a way out, not an easy way, but a reassuring illumination of practice clarity by returning to moral traditions that honor the uniqueness of TR as facilitating autonomous leisure with persons who are vulnerable. I have summarized each chapter here with a personal observation as an educator, therapist, and perpetual student of philosophy.

Cathy O'Keefe invites the TR profession to become a "community of philosophers" in her personal account of learning and teaching experiences with the topic of philosophy. She engages the reader in a deliberate conversation about living one's philosophy at varying levels of application. For students, she acknowledges that philosophical language can be difficult and urges guidance with: (a) selective readings, especially enlivening story sources; (b) amassing a