

## **Adventures with Viktor Frankl and Advances in Logotherapy (AEPP01)**

### **Lesson 2: The 3 Basic Tenets of Logotherapy**

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*“The meaning of my life is to help others find meaning in theirs.” – Viktor E. Frankl*

#### **Recap from Lesson 1**

What was Viktor E. Frankl's important discovery that can help others find meaning in their lives? The answer is that Frankl not only restored the soul to psychology but also discovered the spiritual truth that our quest for meaning originates from the deepest spiritual yearning from the soul (Wong & Laird, in press).

In Lesson 2, I want to explain why the three basic tenets of Logotherapy are the preconditions necessary for a fruitful and exciting journey of searching for meaning. There are good logical and empirical support for Frankl's propositions.

#### **Who Are You Really?**

That is the first question we need to answer before we go deeper. I have to credit Jens Zimmermann for making the case that one's understanding of “meaning and concepts of selfhood are inseparably interwoven” (Zimmermann, 2012, p. 57).

There are different perspectives of selfhood (Smith, 1978) with difference consequences. For example, if one holds the view that human beings are nothing but intelligent animals, a super-computer, or a consumerist creature, then it follows that such a cognitively-oriented or drive-oriented view of selfhood will not be motivated by an existential yearning for meaning and spirituality.

Therefore, Zimmermann argues that only a spiritual/existential perspective of selfhood can lead to the existential understanding that to be a human being means to be an (a) interpretative meaning seeking being, (b) an ethically responsible being, and (c) a relational being, who is connected with a community, our planet earth, and the Creator.

Such a high and noble view of selfhood is also necessary for a Christian perspective of human flourishing in a technological world (Zimmermann, n.d.). Zimmermann's theoretical framework is very similar to Frankl's view, as articulated in the next section of Lesson 2.

Frankl (1946/1984) was probably the first psychiatrist or psychotherapist who advocated this spiritual/existential framework. According to his formulation, Logotherapy is a medical ministry, an adjunct to the practice of medicine, nursing, social work, or psychology. This view is echoed in a recent article (McKernan, n. d.):

“While psychology and social work tend to focus on support of ego (our particular self) spiritual attention enriches the perspectives of social work by inviting us to see the soul (in

transpersonal psychology “Self” is an alternative term) - a deeper, more connected dimension of human experience. This calls attention to the abiding mystery of our essential natures and innate reverence warranted for each human being. Just as important though, is the attention to a notion of foundational energies that shape our experience.”

The above quote from a social worker highlights two reasons for a spiritual/existential perspective of selfhood: (a) it allows us to explore the depths of the unconscious, such as the Shadow aspects of the Self; and (b) it allows us to explore the heights of the farthest reaches of consciousness: the mystical, transcendental source of “foundational energies” which in turn can shape our experience on earth.

In view of the above logic, one has nothing to lose but every to gain by holding a noble and sacred view of selfhood. Here is widely cited quote from Albert Camus: “I would rather live my life as if there is a God and die to find out there isn't, than live as if there isn't and to die to find out that there is.” Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) came to the same conclusion long before Camus. Pascal’s main argument is that faith in God is a more rational and functional belief than faith only in natural science. Confronted with the orderliness of the vast universe, and the mystery of life and death, faith in God and in our spiritual resources is necessary for the motivation to create our preferred future and transcend all forces of evil. Pascal remarked that:

“Belief is a wise wager. Granted that faith cannot be proved, what harm will come to you if you gamble on its truth and it proves false? If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation, that He exists.”

[END OF LESSON PREVIEW]