

# Man and Meaning: Frankl's Logotherapy

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## ***Abstract:***

This paper will attempt to explicate the concept of man from Viktor Frankl's clinical practice as a psychotherapist and his personal lived experiences as a Holocaust survivor. Frankl recognized that the lack of meaning is a widespread phenomenon of the modern age and considered it a challenge to modern psychiatry. This became the catalyst that paved the way to the institution of logotherapy (literally translated as therapy through meaning). Logotherapy is a form of existential psychiatry which draws insights from phenomenology and existentialism. Central to the understanding of Frankl's concept of man are three affirmations— 1) Man is a self-creating being; 2) Man is a self-transcendent being; and 3) Man's native orientation is to search for meanings. His hermeneutics of meaning is crucial to the correct interpretation of his philosophico-psychological anthropology. In his expositions, Frankl defines meaning rather obscurely as that which is what is meant. Meaning is realized in creative, experiential and attitudinal values.

## ***Keywords:***

Frankl, logotherapy, meaning, freedom, responsibility

The year 2010 marks the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The occasion brings to our memories the unimaginable horror and atrocities that befell countless victims who have tragically lost their lives or have endured insurmountable pain and suffering. Pope John Paul II recalled the courageous examples of those who were committed to the good. His message reads, "even though man is capable of evil, and at times boundless evil, evil itself will never have the last word. In the very abyss of suffering, love can triumph. The witness to this love shown in Auschwitz must never be forgotten. It must never cease to rouse consciences, to resolve conflicts, to inspire the building of peace."<sup>1</sup> Out of the gruesome experiences in the Auschwitz concentration camps, Frankl's logotherapy was born.<sup>2</sup> The sum of Frankl's thought is the result of his personal lived experiences, particularly as a holocaust survivor.

This paper seeks to articulate the concept of man in Frankl's logotherapy. It will be divided into three major sections- man as a self-creating being, man as a self-transcendent being and man as a meaning-motivated being.

## ***Man as a Self-Creating Being***

### ***Frankl and Freedom***

Frankl presents two arguments for accepting human freedom. The first argument focused on the nature of man. Man is free because he has a spiritual dimension. It is for him the core of our personality. Frankl emphasizes the importance of this dimension:

"Being centered around the existential, personal spiritual core, human being is not only individualized but also integrated. Thus the spiritual core, and only the spiritual core warrants and constitutes oneness and wholeness in man."<sup>3</sup>

Frankl argues that since the core of man is free, man likewise is free and it cannot be otherwise. Freedom taken in this context becomes an ontological gift which presupposes

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<sup>1</sup> The message appears in *L'Osservatore Romano* (newspaper of the Holy See), the weekly edition in English for the US is published by the Cathedral Foundation, Baltimore, which can also be accessed in <<http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP2AUSCH.HTM>>.

<sup>2</sup> Logotherapy is a derivative of two words: *logos* or meaning and *therapie* or healing. Frankl coined this term to describe his psychiatric philosophy and method. Many contemporary psychologists interpreted it in various ways. It is either subsumed under the category of humanistic psychology or identified with the phenomenological or existential psychiatry. See also Viktor Frankl, *Unheard Cry for Meaning* (New York: Washington Press, 1978), 129.

<sup>3</sup> Viktor Frankl, *The Unconscious God* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1975), 28. Wholeness in this sense means the integration of the somatic psychic and spiritual aspects.

an intentional referent. "Not only man being free but also his being responsible requires an intentional referent."<sup>4</sup> In any case the religious man "believes man to be created free."<sup>5</sup> Frankl's second argument for freedom can be inferred from man's responsibility. According to Frankl, man is an existential being. He is not a given reality but a possibility. He is a deciding being. To be a human being is to be free and to be responsible. Man is oriented to meaning and he alone is responsible for his decisions and actions. And he cannot be responsible unless he is free. "Man is free to be responsible and he is responsible for the realization of the meaning in his life."<sup>6</sup>

The second argument is similar to the position of Kant who presupposes that man as a moral being must be free.<sup>7</sup> For Frankl, freedom belongs to the immediate data of our experience. It is by virtue of man's spirituality that he has freedom. Man is responsible for steering the course of his life. Thus, spirituality, freedom and responsibility are interconnected concepts in understanding Frankl's ethics.

Frankl, unlike Kant does not need a noumenal world in order to explain human freedom. He strongly affirms that freedom is not absolute. Freedom can exist with determinism. According to him, there are only two kinds of people who deny their freedom-- the schizophrenic patients who suffer from the delusion of having their will manipulated and their thoughts controlled by others and the deterministic philosophers.<sup>8</sup> He asserts that man is free in spite of the various limiting factors. Frankl grouped them into three categories--the biological, the sociological and the psychological conditions.<sup>9</sup>

### **Biological Factors**

Man, whether he likes it or not, is subject to biological predispositions. Man has to satisfy his biological needs. He gets hungry, tired, sick and dies. These things are normal for us because of our biological make-up. We also recognize that there are certain biological endowments which we can not change.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Viktor Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism* (New York: Washington Square Press), 71.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. by Thomas Hill & Arnulf Zweig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Chapter 3, 246-262.

<sup>8</sup> Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), xviii.

Although, these biological factors are determined by heredity, this does not mean that we can not do anything about it. Biological conditioning gives man enough space to act freely. Frankl offers an example to illustrate this point. "Of a pair of identical twins, one became a cunning criminal while his brother became an equally cunning criminologist. Both were born with cunning but this trait in itself implies no values, neither vice nor virtue."<sup>10</sup> He concludes that in spite of biological predispositions, an individual's personality is ultimately the outcome of his decision.

### ***Sociological Factors***

Frankl cites numerous examples to show that in spite of the external pressures, man is capable of transcending the limits of his social environment. Whatever action he makes is the result of his decision and not the outcome of social pressures. In the concentration camp they experienced the worst kind of deprivation and physical abuse. Camp life is literally hell on earth. The overriding tendency of an inmate is to keep oneself alive at any cost. In spite of this he narrates several stories of heroic charity. To add to this we have the story of Fr. Maximillian Kolbe who died a martyr during the Nazi takeover, saving a fellow inmate.

In the *Doctor and the Soul* we read: "Freud once said: 'Try and subject a number of very strongly differentiated human beings to the same amount of starvation. With the increase imperative need for food, all individual differences will be blotted out, and in their place we shall see a uniform expression of the one unsatisfied instinct.'" But in the concentration camps, we witnessed the contrary; we saw how, faced with identical situation, one man degenerated while others attained virtual saintliness."<sup>11</sup> Environment does not make man, but that everything depends on what man makes of it, on his attitude toward a given situation.<sup>12</sup> Frankl's own experiences can attest to what he teaches:

"As a professor in two fields, neurology and psychiatry, I am fully aware of the extent to which man is subject to biological, psychological and sociological conditions. But in addition to being a professor in two fields, I am a survivor of four camps- four concentration

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<sup>10</sup> Frankl, *Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, xix.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Elsewhere, Frankl also wrote that sociological laws never completely determine the individual. It does not deprive him of his freedom of the will. See *The Doctor and the Soul*, 91. He is convinced that facts and factors (environment, heredity and instinct) are nothing but raw materials for self-constructing acts, and describes human life as unbroken chain of such acts. See *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, 69.

camp, that is- and as such I also bear witness to the unexpected extent to which man is capable of defying and braving even the worst conditions conceivable.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Psychological Factors**

Frankl rejects what he calls “pan-determinism,” that is, any position that denies man the intrinsically human capacity to choose freely and tends to interpret existence in terms of dynamics.<sup>14</sup> Freud is guilty of doing so.<sup>15</sup> Frankl insists that neurotic and psychotic patients have a residue of freedom in them. He has enough freedom to accept the fact that he is sick. But there are some aspects in our lives which we can not choose to happen. For instance we cannot choose to undo our past just like the incurable person cannot alter his condition. In such cases, Frankl speaks of a change of attitude as the last resort of freedom. Frankl calls this the “defiant power” of the human spirit. As a consequence, Frankl rejects a passive attitude to confront an unchangeable fate such as entertaining the idea of hopelessness or indulging in self-pity. Instead, he proposes an active attitude, that is to find meaning in the face of such insurmountable suffering. The goal is well formulated in the prayer of St. Francis: “God, grant me serenity to accept things which I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Frankl and Responsibility**

In Frankl, freedom and responsibility are two important concepts that bear mutual relationship. One cannot be understood without the other. Frankl opted to use the term “responsibleness” instead of responsibility.<sup>17</sup> This involves the ability of the person to respond. The person is response-able to situations in life. In “responsibleness” the active participation of the agent is emphasized. Freedom is the consequence of the fact that one is able to respond. And this response or decision is something personal. The response is not imposed by an external source. “Even what comes from the outside must be personalized.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), 123.

<sup>14</sup> Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, 67.

<sup>15</sup> Frankl, *Will to Meaning*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Tengan, *Search for Meaning as the Basic Human Motivation* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 89.

<sup>17</sup> Frankl, “*Psychotherapy and Existentialism*”, 67.

<sup>18</sup> Viktor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 158. In Joseph Fabry's *Pursuit of Meaning*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 120. We used the terms responsibleness and responsibility interchangeably. Frankl distinguished the two concepts. According to him, responsibility is imposed by an external source or agent like the church or government whereas responsibleness is self-imposed. It is something personal.

Tengan suggests that with such distinction it does not follow that responsibleness is more meritorious

Now if man is responsible, one may ask the question: What is man responsible for? Frankl appeals to the “wisdom of the heart” of the human person by which he instinctively knows values and meaning potential in his life.<sup>19</sup> Frankl clearly points out that the “demand quality” inherent in responsibility point out to a transcendental dimension. “The self cannot be responsible merely to itself. The self cannot be its own law-giver. It can never issue any ‘categorical imperative’ for a categorical imperative can receive its credentials only in transcendence.”<sup>20</sup>

According to Frankl, a person’s responsibility has two intentional referents. Man is responsible to a person and to a situation. In the former case, particularly for the believer, life becomes a task or a mission for which he feels answerable to a taskmaster.<sup>21</sup> This is where the role of conscience would come in. When conscience speaks we feel obliged to answer. Conscience does not only refer to transcendence; it also originates in transcendence. Therefore, if we raise the origin of conscience, there can be no psychological answer but an ontological one.<sup>22</sup> This leads us to conclude that each person is responsible to transcendence, although only the religious person is conscious of this fact.

Our response to the challenges of life’s situations is not manifested through words but by actions. This explains why even in the event of suicide one cannot avoid being responsible for his actions. Suicide is a choice, be it a choice to give up in total despair.<sup>23</sup> In this light logotherapy can be defined as an education for responsibility. It assists the individual to confront the challenges of life’s situations. Logotherapy tends to deviate from depth psychology which concentrates on one’s past. Logotherapy is dubbed as height psychology. It awakens a person’s responsibility for the future.

### ***Man as a Self-Transcendent Being***

One of the most salient features of existentialism is man’s search for authentic existence. To be human means to be open to the world, to discover his task and to realize

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than responsibility arguing that in many situations external direction may prove more helpful to the individual than his own choices. (See Tengan, Search for Meaning as the Basic Motivation, 104.)

<sup>19</sup> Frankl, *The Unconscious God*, 124-125.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 57. Here Frankl is against Sartre’s position that man is a law unto himself. Man is the maker of himself, he must assume the responsibility in all situations. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Burns (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 533.

<sup>21</sup> Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, 58-59.

<sup>22</sup> Frankl, *Unconscious God*, 56. More will be discussed about concept. Our discussion suffices for the present purpose.

<sup>23</sup> Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, 53.

values and meanings from his everyday encounter with the world. Such openness could be achieved only if man turns away from himself and direct himself to a cause or to another person. Only in this way can a genuine dialogue be made to exist. Where one is reaching out toward another person, an I-Thou relationship comes into being where partners involved in the encounter truly listen to one another.<sup>24</sup> Frankl stressed that the I-Thou relation is the core of psychotherapy. It converts psychotherapy from being merely a technique into an art. It moves beyond science to wisdom.<sup>25</sup>

The “outward looking” becomes a basis of authentic existence. In Frankl’s own words, self-transcendence is the primordial anthropological fact that being human is always directed and pointing to something (a cause) or someone (a person) other than oneself. Only to the extent that someone is living out this self-transcendence is human existence, is he truly human or does he become his true self.<sup>26</sup> Frankl asserts that this was Freud’s serious mistake because he denied the value of self-transcendence in human existence.<sup>27</sup> Frankl demonstrated that self-transcendence maybe projected in various forms – in man’s religiosity, in our conscience and in humor. We shall now examine these manifestations.

### ***Man as religious being***

Man’s religiosity is a form of self-transcendence. He is capable of self-transcendence because of his spiritual dimension. A deep religious sense is embedded in man’s unconscious depths. Phenomenological analysis reveals that a latent relation to transcendence is inherent in man or if one prefers to call it a relationship between the immanent self and the transcendent thou.<sup>28</sup> This unconscious relation to God is profoundly personal. The unconscious God must not be mistaken as an impersonal force operating in man.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of the I-Thou was introduced by Martin Buber who interpreted existence in terms of co-existence.

<sup>25</sup> Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Frankl, *Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 35. Likewise, see *The Doctor and the Soul*, 294.

<sup>27</sup> Frankl, *Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 35.

<sup>28</sup> Frankl, *The Unconscious God*, 61.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 63. Frankl criticizes Jung for assigning the unconscious God in the regions of drives which implies that we are merely driven to God. It is not a matter of our own choice; hence, we cannot be responsible to him.

Man's religiosity may be conscious or unconscious.<sup>30</sup> And from the unconscious religiousness, we derive the idea of an unconscious God. Our concept of an unconscious God refers to man's hidden relation to a God who himself is hidden.<sup>31</sup> This unconscious relatedness to God can break through in the most unexpected moments and places- in a mental hospital where the psychotic patient suddenly feels the presence of God, in prison where the inmate tries to rebuild his shattered soul or in the serenity of a self-professed atheist facing his last moments. All these can not be explained without recourse to man's unconscious relationship with transcendence.<sup>32</sup>

Man's religious feelings are susceptible to repression. This happens when people try to limit reality to what they touch or see. Obviously, their experience does not include a spiritual being. Repression, however, may result to neurosis. Neurotic existence in some cases seems to be the toll that a crippled relation to transcendence takes on man.<sup>33</sup> Frankl contests the statement of Freud that religion is the obsessive neurosis of mankind.<sup>34</sup> Instead, he tells us that obsessive neurosis may in fact be the result of diseased religiousness.

To elaborate on his concept of God, Frankl shifts to the notion of meta-meaning or super-meaning. He said that this concept is not necessarily theistic. God ought to be conceived as a partner of one's most intimate soliloquies. So that when one is speaking to oneself in utmost sincerity and ultimate solitude, the addressee in such a dialogue can be justifiably called God.<sup>35</sup> The advantage of such definition of God is seen in its avoidance of dichotomy between theistic and atheistic perspectives. He maintains that in principle there should be no irreligious persons. The irreligious person is one who is not conscious of his relatedness to God. He mentioned that man is more religious than he suspects. If God really exists he certainly is not going to argue with irreligious persons because they may mistake him for their own selves and misname him.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Frankl tells us that the borderline between the conscious and the unconscious is a very fluid one. This can be understood through the idea of repression. In the act of repression something conscious becomes unconscious; and vice-versa, in the removal of repression something unconscious is made conscious again. *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-64.

<sup>33</sup> Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, 70.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 70, n.4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.



## Conscience

Etymologically conscience derives from “to know” just as do the German word *Gewissen*, the Greek word *syneidesis* and the Latin word *conscientia*.<sup>37</sup> “Conscience,” then, means the subjective consciousness of the moral worthiness or unworthiness of one’s behavior.<sup>38</sup> Conscience is complicated because no single factor is enough to explain how it is formed. Parental and peer influences, a system of rewards and punishments among others help developed the child’s internal control.<sup>39</sup>

According to Frankl, conscience serves as our guide in realizing values and meanings. We are responsible only to our conscience. He maintains that both religious and irreligious persons have conscience. However, irreligious persons do not recognize the transcendent quality of conscience. Nevertheless, he is not exempted from the responsibility. It is not surprising, says Frankl, because even Samuel, who was a religious person did not immediately recognize the voice of transcendence when it came to him.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes we recognize the voice of conscience in our dreams. Dreams are “utterances of conscience”; one that confronts with the fault we tend to evade or one which gives us a warning which we must take seriously.<sup>41</sup>

## Humor

The human person, aside from his primordial ability to turn away from himself and to reach out to others or to another cause, has the capacity of detaching himself from himself and from his outward predicament. This capacity for self-detachment is made manifest in humor. Frankl describes it as the soul’s weapon in its fight for self-preservation and affords aloofness and the ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds.<sup>42</sup> He also characterizes it as some kind of a trick learned while mastering the art of living.<sup>43</sup> Being a unique human capacity, he conjectures that its rightful place is the noetic

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<sup>37</sup> Gunter Elasser, “Objective Guilt and Neurosis,” *Religion and Medicine*, ed. by David Belgium (Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1967), 246.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Robert Sears, et. al., “How Conscience is Formed,” in *Religion and Mental Health*, ed. Hans Hoffman (New York: Harper and Bros., Publishers, 1961), 292.

<sup>40</sup> Frankl, *The Unconscious God*, 55. The high priest told the boy that the next time he heard his name called, he should say “Speak Lord; for thy servant heareth.”

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

dimension. Indeed, no animal is able to laugh least of all at himself.

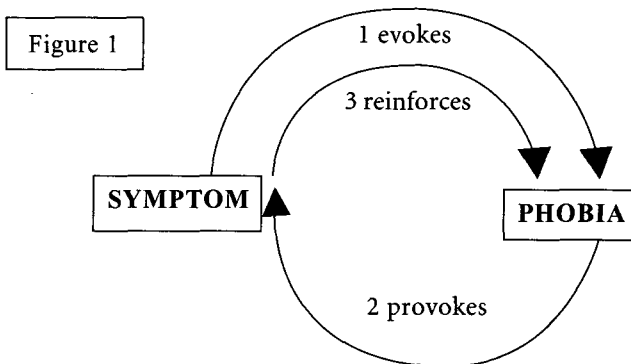
Frankl loves to employ wit and humor and in his lectures. He writes:

“In my opening lecture at the “Styrian Autumn” festival in Graz, I wanted to indicate that I was qualified to speak both as a medical man and as a philosopher, yet I wanted to play down the fact that I had a doctorate in each field, so I said; ‘Ladies and Gentlemen, I have both medical and philosophical doctorates, but usually I do not mention this. Knowing my dear colleagues in Vienna, I expect that instead of saying Frankl is twice a doctor, they would say he is only half a physician.’”<sup>44</sup>

Humor is a powerful tool, which may be employed in different ways. Whereas Kierkegaard used humor to stimulate his readers and Nietzsche used ironic stories to shock or outrage, Frankl uses humor as a means of healing.<sup>45</sup> Frankl’s logotherapeutic techniques, namely, paradoxical intention and dereflection makes scientific use of humor.

### ***Paradoxical Intention***

Paradoxical intention is useful in short term therapy especially in cases of phobia and obsessive compulsive neuroses. The response of patients to phobia is fear of fear. Technically, it is characterized as “flight from fear.” The patient tries to avoid whatever might induce his fear. This pattern is paralleled by a pattern in obsessive neurosis that is the “flight against obsessions.” Both reactions worsen rather than alleviate the condition of the patient. His reactions merely reinforce the symptoms. A vicious circle is then established. A symptom evokes a phobia and the phobia provokes the symptom. The recurrence of the symptom then reinforces the phobia. As the following figure illustrates:



<sup>44</sup> Viktor Frankl, *Recollections: An Autobiography*, trans. by Joseph and Judith Fabry (New York: Plenum Press, 1997), 38.

<sup>45</sup> William Gould, *Viktor Frankl Life With Meaning* (California: Brooks/cole Publishing, 1993), 106. It is tempting to make a comparison between the Socratic irony and Frankl’s paradoxical intention. Socrates used irony to detect the pretended wisdom of the disciple. Thus, an unexamined life is not worth living. Frankl used humor to cure neuroses. An unexamined life leads to noogenic neurosis.

The task of paradoxical intention is to destroy the vicious circle. Paradoxical intention consists in the reversal of the patient's attitude toward the phobia. This can be done if the patient is encouraged to do, or to wish to happen the very thing he fears.<sup>46</sup> The patient then realizes that the more he tried to produce his symptoms, the more he finds himself completely unable to do so.<sup>47</sup> Paradoxical intention makes use of the patient's ability to joke and to laugh at himself. Self-detachment allows himself to view himself from the outside, to take a different attitude toward his condition and most of all to prove that he cannot be a helpless victim of fear but its conqueror. Meanwhile, Frankl cautions us not to be distracted by humor and in effect neglect what is basic in the therapeutic exercise- that is, existential reorientation made manifest in the change of behavior patterns.

Frankl made use of paradoxical intention since 1929, elaborated into a methodology in 1953 and incorporated in the system of logotherapy in 1956.<sup>48</sup> Since it is strictly a scientific procedure, it can be used by all psychiatrists irrespective of a concept of man. There are also some aspects of logotherapy that are not directly connected to the treatment of diseases but related to the attitude towards the disease. This is the domain of medical ministry. In this aspect, the psychiatrist's concept of man is relevant.

### **Dereflection**

The first two pathogenic patterns have been discussed earlier. The third pattern is referred to as the sexual neurotic pattern which is characterized by the patient's fight for sexual pleasure. This compulsion to self-observation and excessive attention to sexual performance is called "hyper-reflection". Sometimes Frankl uses the term hyper-intention to signify the same thing. In hyper-reflection, the more the patient desires to obtain pleasure, the more he gets frustrated. Spontaneity and activity are impeded if made the target of too much attention. This is well illustrated by the story of a centipede which had no problem until his enemy asked him the exact sequence he move his legs. The centipede's preoccupation to the problem immobilized him and he died of hunger.<sup>49</sup> According to Frankl, pleasure is a by-product or a side effect of the fulfillment of our strivings but it is destroyed and spoiled to the extent to which it is made the goal or target. This applies to happiness as well.

Like anticipatory anxiety (shown in the previous figure), hyper-intention and hyper-reflection create a vicious circle. Hyper-intention and hyper-reflection reinforce each other.

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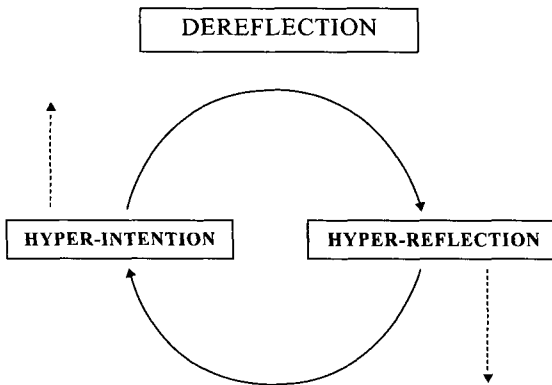
<sup>46</sup> Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 132.

<sup>47</sup> Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, 189.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>49</sup> Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 100.

Figure 2



Although it is specially indicated for sexual neurosis it proves to be an effective cure for insomnia or sleeplessness. The fear of insomnia is caused by the hyper-intention to sleep. This is not possible under stressed conditions. In dereflection the patient is advised not to force oneself to sleep, instead to encourage the opposite which is try to stay awake as long as possible while doing other things. Without even knowing it, the individual is already crawling back to bed. Evidently, the goal of dereflection is to liberate the self from self-concern. The underlying cure is self-commitment.

To sum up, logotherapy fosters right passivity and right activity as positive measures to counteract neurotic behavior. Right passivity, achieved through paradoxical intention enables the patient to ridicule his symptoms instead of withdrawing from them (as in the cases of phobia) or fighting them (as in the case of obsessive compulsive behavior). Right activity attained in dereflection capacitates him to ignore his neurosis by turning away from himself as the focus and eventually commits oneself in pursuit of meanings.

### ***Man as Basically Motivated by Meaning***

Man is not motivated primarily by a will to pleasure (pleasure principle) nor by a will to power (status drive) but by a will to meaning. This is an inherent tendency in man arising from the desire to "create" himself. Surprisingly, Frankl maintains that the search for meanings may bring about tension rather than inner equilibrium. Existential choices are not easy choices. This often involves an internal struggle. For Frankl, meaning is not

centered on the self but reaches to a “what” or a “who” deserving of our devotion. There is no absolute or universal meaning but rather a unique and specific one.

### ***Creative, Experiential and Attitudinal Values***

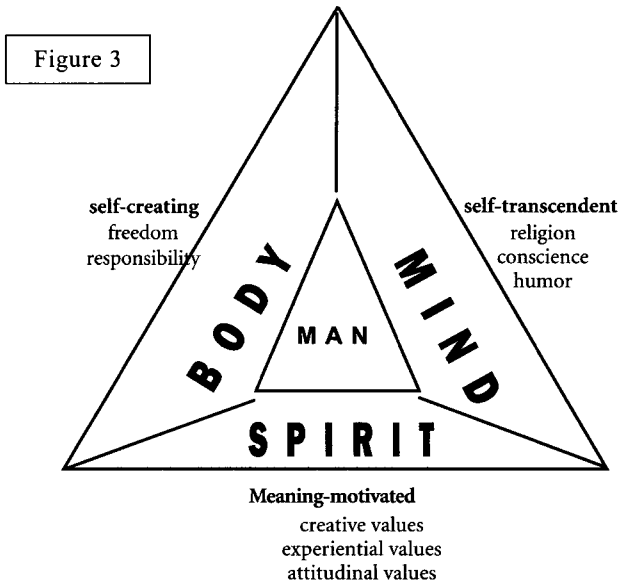
Life becomes meaningful through the work that we do, through an encounter – i.e. when we experience something or someone or through the stand we take toward a fate we can not change. Meaning is possible through the creative, experiential attitudinal values. Creative values are realized in the work we create, a project we have accomplished or a mission we have fulfilled. Experiential values enable us to actively pursue meanings by experiencing something or someone. The highest expression of experiential values is love. For Frankl, love is the validation of the uniqueness and singularity of another person. The third way to a meaningful existence is through the suffering guilt and death. Man’s unique capacity to bear unalterable fate through a positive attitude enables him to transform a personal tragedy to a personal triumph. Also, inherent in man is the capacity for repentance. We are prompted to assume responsibility for an action or its lack and we try to redeem ourselves through repentance. The capacity to change is a human prerogative and it constitutes human existence. When we fail to do something we ought to do, or when we did something we should not do, we experience remorse of conscience. Immediately, we are prompted to assume responsibility for the action or for the lack of it and we try to redeem ourselves through repentance. As Frankl puts it “in repentance man may inwardly break with an act and in living out this repentance which is an inner event- he can do the outer event on a spiritual moral plane.<sup>50</sup> He also adds that “while arbitrariness is freedom without responsibility, guilt is responsibility without freedom”. Lastly, logotherapy teaches us that life becomes more meaningful because of its transitoriness. If man were immortal; there would be no need to do anything at the moment nor to act urgently.

Frankl denies that death will put an end to human suffering. This would imply that nothing would make sense, when everything can be annihilated by death. For Frankl, only missed opportunities to actualize meanings are gone forever because once these value potentialities are actualized they are saved into the past and therefore preserved from transitoriness. For in the past nothing is irretrievably lost but everything is irrevocably stored and treasured.

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<sup>50</sup> Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, 109.

In our endeavor to present Frankl's concept of the human person, the following diagram may sum up our discussions:



### **Concluding Remarks**

Whereas Frankl's model of man attempts at a holistic view of self and renders the noetic dimension of man as primary and essential; whereas his theory of meaning is future-oriented and his message, full of optimism, there are still some aspects of his philosophy that appears to be problematic. Frankl, on several occasions, demonstrated that meaning has a transcendent referent: In *Unconscious God*, Frankl asserts that conscience has an obligative because it is voice of a transpersonal agent.<sup>51</sup> Religion is the search for ultimate meaning.<sup>52</sup> Trust in the ultimate being is possible because the human person is fundamentally related to God.<sup>53</sup> We can find the ultimate meaning of suffering only from the perspective of transcendence.<sup>54</sup>

But eventually, Frankl finds the secular attitude toward man more appealing. Central to this philosophical posture is man's awareness of his potentials to take a stand in any

<sup>51</sup> Frankl, *The Unconscious God*, 54.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Religion*, 68.

<sup>54</sup> Frankl, *Will to Meaning*, 145.

in any given situation and choose an attitude to a fate he cannot change. Consequently, this secular stance led him to depart from his previous position regarding the objectivity of values. The shift from his earlier conception of man was prompted by his desire to make logotherapy accessible even to non-believers. He writes that "logotherapy must be available for every patient and usable in the hands of every doctor whether his weltanschauung is theistic or agnostic".<sup>55</sup> Frankl could have accomplished such goal without abandoning his previous position, by making a distinction between logotherapy as a scientific technique and as a medical ministry. The former is neutral as it involves scientific and rigorous method of healing while the latter is value-laden since it underpins the patient's religious beliefs, which shapes his positive attitude toward his unchangeable fate.

Frankl's secular humanism cannot sustain Frankl's valuable insights of the human person such as freedom, transcendence and meaning, devoid of the concept of God. His secular humanism impoverishes rather than improves his earlier appraisal of man and in no way can provide an adequate metaphysical foundation for the concept of man.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 143.

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