

## Man's Search for Meaning

Viktor Frankl

### Foreward

p. 26. Frankl's concern is less with question of why most died than it is with the question of why anyone at all survived.

28. Life is not primarily a quest for pleasure, as Freud believed, or a quest for power, as Alfred Adler taught, but a quest for meaning. The greatest task for any person is to find meaning in his or her life.

29. Three possible sources for meaning: in work (doing something significant), in love (caring for another person), and in courage during difficult times. Suffering in and of itself is meaningless; we give our suffering meaning by the way in which we respond to it.

35. Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond to the situation.

### Preface to the 1992 Edition

80. "Don't aim at success. The more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, the unintended side-effect of one's dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself.

### 1: Experience in a Concentration Camp

38. Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self.

66. Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms i.e. to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

66. They threaten to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom.

66. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him, mentally and spiritually.

66. Dostoevski said once, "There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings."

67. If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete.

68. Everywhere man is confronted with fate, with the chance of achieving something through his own suffering.

76. Nietzsche's words, "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how."

77. It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.

77. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.

78. There was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.

90. Now, being free, they thought they could use their freedom licentiously and ruthlessly.

90. They justified their behavior by their own terrible experiences.

91. Only slowly could these men be guided back to the commonplace truth that no one has the right to do wrong, not even if wrong has been done to them.

96. The crowning experience of all, for the homecoming man, is the wonderful feeling that, after all he has suffered, there is nothing he need fear any more, except his God.

## 2. Logotherapy in a Nutshell

99. Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives.

113. Suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice.

121. Man must decide, for better or for worse, what will be the monument of his existence.

## The Case for a Tragic Optimism

137. Life is potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable.

137. 1. Turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment; 2. Deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; and 3. Deriving from life's transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action.

138. But happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue. One must have a reason to "be happy."

139. Once an individual's search for a meaning is successful, it not only renders him happy but also gives him the capability to cope with suffering.

145. As logotherapy teaches, there are three main avenues on which one arrives at the meaning in life. The first is by creating a work or by doing a deed. The second is by experiencing something or encountering someone; in other words, meaning can be found not only in work but also in love.

146. Most important, however, is the third avenue to meaning in life: even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself, and by so doing change himself.

#### Afterword

159. Frankl was fond of saying, "I recommend that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast."

159. Suffering is not necessary to find meaning, only that "meaning is possible in spite of suffering."

160. Frankl writes, "but man is ultimately self determining. What he becomes, within the limits of endowment and environment, he has made out of himself."

162. He renounced the idea of collective guilt.

163. He was fond of saying that the aim of psychiatry was the healing of the soul, leaving to religion the salvation of the soul.

164. His goal was to provoke people into realizing that they could and should exercise their capacity for choice to achieve their own goals.