

A Psychological Basis for Restorative Practices:
Viktor Frankl and *Man's Search For Meaning*?

1. Introduction

- a. Jan Peter Dembinski, attorney advocate for RJ since 2003 when trained in RealJustice group conferencing; helped start a Community Restorative Justice program in 2004 in Hartford, VT, have been writing for the VT Bar Journal on RJ since 2004; have worked in the criminal law system as an intern with a public defender and then for a criminal appellate attorney, and as a lawyer representing post-conviction relief petitioners; have been teaching legal education courses to inmates for VT DOC since 1998.
- b. None of this qualifies me to present Viktor Frankl's life work of Logotherapy as a psychological basis for Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices.
- c. Never taken a single course in psychology.
- d. Feel like the shepherd boy who found the dead sea scrolls (searching for a lost goat, threw a rock into a cave and heard a ping, went up, found large clay jars with ancient parchment manuscripts.) But I am sure Frankl's work and life are of value for RJ practitioners and advocates in explaining the psychological underpinnings for what we do and for that which we advocate.
 - i. I had "ping" moment while thinking about Logotherapy. See below (4, b.)
- e. I think the RJ movement needs to examine its psychological underpinnings and recognize them.
 - i. This is not to say the RJ movement does not have other underpinnings, e.g., sociological, political, financial, historical, that need examining as well. The psychological lens is one of many with which to view RJ and its practices, but, undoubtedly it is a fundamental and an important one.
- f. What is the definition of human psychology?
 - i. Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective that emphasizes the study of the whole person. Humanistic psychologists look at human behavior not only through the eyes of the observer, but through the eyes of the person doing the behaving.
(web.cortland.edu/andersmd/HUMAN/WHAT.HTML)
- g. This is completely parallel to what RJ practitioners do.
 - i. RJ practices emphasize justice needs and consequences for the *whole person(s) involved*; traditional punitive justice models do not, but look at crime/harms as a violation of state statutes/school rules, etc. and mete out punishment accordingly.
 - ii. RJ practices allow those involved in them to consider the effect and consequences of incidents, "not only through the eyes of the observer, but through the eyes of the person doing the behaving." See quote above (1, f, i.).

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2. Viktor Frankl

- a. Born 1905 in Vienna, 2nd of 3 children. Father was Director in Ministry of Social Service. Became interested in psychology in high school and by 1923 was corresponding with Freud when he started his medical studies. In 1924 he was drawn to Alred Adler's psychology. In 1925 he wrote an article for an international psychology journal focusing on the frontier between psychotherapy and psychology and the fundamental question of meaning and values—the core focus for Frankl the rest of his life. In a 1926 lecture he first used term *Logotherapy*. In 1929 he organized youth counseling centers where adolescents in need could obtain advice and help free of cost. In 1930 he organized a special counseling program at the end of the school term, whereupon, for the first time in years, no student suicide occurs in Vienna. This work gained him international attention. In 1937 he opened a practice as Doctor of Neurology and Psychiatry.
- b. 1940-1942 Frankl became director of Neurology at hospital clinic for Jewish patients. He made false diagnoses in order to prevent the euthanasia of mentally ill patients under Nazi procedures. He obtained an immigration visa to America but let it expire.
- c. 1942 Nazis forced his wife to have an abortion and they both were arrested and with his parents sent to the Jewish ghetto in Vienna where his father died. Then he and his wife and his mother were sent to Auschwitz. His mother and wife both died in the camps. Frankl never knew of their fate during his time in the camps.
- d. 1942-1945 Frankl was taken from Auschwitz to Dachau work camps and survived for three years finding his fundamental ideas concerning man's psychological make-up and well-being confirmed by his experiences. Upon release back in Vienna he learned of the deaths of his wife, mother, and his brother and his wife, also murdered in Auchwitz.
- e. 1946 Frankl overcame his despair and became director of Vienna Neurological Policlinic, a post he held for next 25 years. He dictated over 9 days what became the account of his experiences in the concentration camps—the first part of what is later titled *Man's Search for Meaning* ("MSFM").
- f. In 1951 Frankl published "Logos and Existence" which sets out the basis for *Logotherapy*.
- g. Remaining years, Frankl and logotherapy gained international fame and recognition. He was promoted to Professor at University of Vienna in 1955 and becomes guest professor at Harvard in 1961 and later at various other universities in the United States.

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3. Frankl's Concentration Camp Experiences & Logotherapy Fundamentals (both are summarily recounted in *MSFM*)
 - a. Concentration Camp experiences
 - i. The hell of the concentration camps Frankl survived, the diabolical nature of the camps, is clearly portrayed. The voice of a survivor, drained of any shadow of a shadow of a posturer.
 - ii. So too his observations regarding his and others' survivals
 - iii. Core basis of logotherapy from camp experiences, pp 65-66 *MSFM*
 - b. Logotherapy
 - i. Frankl observed that those who were able to survive the experience typically found some meaning in it, such as a task that they needed to fulfill.
 - ii. There are three main components that are at the heart of the Franklian philosophy:
 1. Each person has a healthy core.
 2. The primary focus is to enlighten a person to their own internal resources and provide them with the tools to use their inner core.
 3. Life offers you purpose and meaning; it does not owe you a sense of fulfillment or happiness.
 - iii. Logotherapy is based on the premise that humans are driven to find a sense of meaning and purpose in life.
 1. According to Frankl, life's meaning can be discovered in three different ways:
 - a. By creating a work or accomplishing some task
 - b. By experiencing something fully or loving somebody
 - c. By the attitude that one adopts toward unavoidable suffering
 2. Additionally, people can find meaning in their lives by identifying the unique roles that only they can fulfill.
 - a. pp 79-80, *MSFM*, "When the impossibility of replacing a person is realized..."
 - b. For example, when a man consulted with Frankl due to severe depression following the death of his wife, Frankl asked him to consider what would have happened if he had died first and his wife had been forced to mourn his death. The man was able to recognize that his own suffering spared his wife from having that experience, which served as a curative factor and helped relieve his depression.

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4. Logotherapy and Restorative practices
 - a. The third way to find life's meaning is why Logotherapy, I believe, goes hand in hand with Restorative practices.
 - i. Frankl believed that suffering is a part of life, and that man's ultimate freedom is his ability to choose how to respond to any set of given circumstances, even the most painful ones.
 - ii. Restorative practices facilitators can bring the same awareness when dealing with victims of crime
 1. Offering suitable RJ models/practices (when appropriate!) as means to find possible meaning to the suffering they have experienced as victims of criminal activity
 2. As with all RJ models, victim's needs (and not offenders) will drive decision for victim to pursue RJ model.
Sujatha Baliga of Impact Justice, Oakland, CA
 - iii. Same holds true for offenders
 1. All attack is a call for help. *Conversations with God*, book 1, chap. 4, page 90.
 - b. My "ping" moments with Logotherapy
 - i. First ping, reading Kushner's forward in *MSFM* regarding Logotherapy as 3rd school of Viennese Psychology
 - ii. Traditional punitive "justice" practices rely premised on adversarial relationships between stakeholders in an offense
 1. In line, imho, with underlying premises of Freudian and Adlerian conceptions of human psychology—"ping" moment of awareness
 - a. I am not a psychologist and cannot explain why this is and/or is not so in psychological terms
 - b. I intuitively sense this to be true. Living, ultimately, for pleasure or power sets man against man. Punishment directly diminishes one's pleasure and one's power.
 - iii. RJ practices (versus traditional punitive justice models) offer greatest possibility for victims and offenders in finding meaning in event in which they are involved
 1. Help victims become aware of mentality of offender
 - a. concerning awareness of their actions at the time of committing the offense
 - b. what he/she has thought about since then
 - c. who s/he thinks has been affected and how
 - d. what s/he thinks s/he needs to do to make things right

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2. Help offenders to realize impact of their actions and lead better lives
 - a. Via 4 restorative practices questions
3. Second ping, page 110 in *MSFM*:
 - a. "Logotherapy is neither teaching nor preaching. It is as far removed from logical reasoning as it is from moral exhortation. To put it figuratively, the role played by a logotherapist is that of an eye specialist rather than a painter. A painter tries to convey to us a picture of the world as he sees it; an ophthalmologist tries to enable us to see the world as it really is. The logotherapist's role consists of widening and broadening the visual field of the patient so that the whole spectrum of potential meaning becomes conscious and visible to him."
4. Quotes relating to RJ and practices from *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*; Frankl, Viktor E. (2014-06-24). *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*; Penguin Publishing Group.
 - a. "After all, it is not the function of logotherapy to give answers. Its actual function is that of a catalyst."
 - b. "It is true that we logotherapists are convinced, and if need be, persuade our patients, that there is a meaning to fulfill. But we do not pretend to know WHAT the meaning is."
 - c. "Logotherapy does not cross the boundary between psychotherapy and religion. But it leaves the door open to religion and it leaves it to the patient whether or not to pass the door."
 - d. "A purely technological approach to psychotherapy may block its therapeutic effect. Some time ago I was invited to lecture at an American university before a team of psychiatrists who had been assigned the care of the evacuees after a hurricane. I not only accepted this invitation but even selected the title, "Techniques and Dynamics of Survival," a title that obviously pleased the sponsors of my lecture. But when I started this lecture I frankly told them that as long as we actually interpret our task merely in terms of techniques and dynamics we have missed the point— and we

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have missed the hearts of those to whom we wish to offer mental first aid. Approaching human beings merely in terms of techniques necessarily implies manipulating them, and approaching them merely in terms of dynamics implies reifying them, making human beings into mere things. And these human beings immediately feel and notice the manipulative quality of our approach and our tendency to reify them. I would say, reification has become the original sin of psychotherapy. But a human being is no thing. This *no-thingness, rather than nothingness, is the lesson to learn from existentialism.*"

5. Criticism of Logotherapy

- a. One of the primary criticisms of logotherapy comes from Rollo May, who is considered to be the founder of the existential movement in the United States.
- b. May argued that logotherapy is authoritarian, in that it suggests that there are clear solutions to all problems and that Frankl provides people who utilize this therapy with meaning if they are unable to find their own.
- c. Frankl was aware of May's criticism and refuted the idea that logotherapy takes responsibility away from the individual; He maintained that logotherapy actually educates the person in therapy about his or her own responsibility.

Internet Sources:

<http://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/logotherapy> ;
<http://www.viktorfrankl.org/e/chronology.html>;