



## **Philosophy and Logotherapy in Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl is an autobiographical book. It narrates the terrible experiments of Viktor during his imprisonment for three years in Nazi concentration camp. His story or his experiments gives the readers about how life should be looked at in a positive way even in a deadly situation. It gives the philosophical thoughts on life and logotherapy. It can be considered as the one of the best life changing novels in the English literature.

**Key Words:** Philosophy, Logotherapy, Imprisonment, Life experiences.

Philosophy is thinking and the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. The word Philosophy has its origin from the Greek word Philosophia which means 'love of wisdom'. It is important to have some knowledge regarding the philosophy because we are living a life with principles which has been founded for certain purposes. Philosophy helps us to solve our problems and it helps us make better decisions during the critical period of time.

The novel "Man's Search for Meaning" commences with the narration of Viktor from being arrested by the Nazi force. He is a well-known Viennese psychiatrist. The core of his philosophy is that a man's deepest desire is to find meaning of life amidst this brutality. The first half of the book is about the description and interpretation of the concentration camp of the Nazis during the World Wars. He observed many prisoners who have been suffering to survive. Many died out of fear and though some of the prisoners had the desire to live they too died. Viktor felt confused so he goes deep into himself to find how he survived and got released from the camp. Viktor narrates the life that he had inside the camp, he endured hunger, cold and brutality first in Auschwitz then in Dachau, he himself was under constant threat of going to the gas ovens. He lost every physical belonging on his first day in the camps.

*"He who has a WHY to live can bear with almost any How"*

-Nietzsche

This is the famous and favorite quote of Viktor. From this quote we can easily understand what he is trying to express to his readers regarding the philosophy of life. We all may undergo tough times at any part of our life and we may also be pushed towards the depression and that lead to thing us why we are living or what is the purpose of our terrible suffering. The saddest bits of this classic are Viktor's recollection of the thoughts that gave him the will to live. Mental images of his wife is the only light in the dark of the concentration camp and there is a beautiful scene when he is thinking of his wife with such intensity that when a bird hops onto a mound in front of him. It appears to be her living embodiment and he also imagined himself after liberation in lecture halls. He also observed that the men actually comforted others. It is one of the best examples of '*humanity*'. Humanity is also a philosophy of life because it is a feeling that arises from the deepest part of a human. During the havoc that a society undergoes every human join hands and they work together to eradicate the struggle which destroys them.

In the concentration camp they even shared their food with the other prisoners who are nobody to them. They proved that life can take almost everything from them but cannot change their attitude towards in any situation. The life in the camp was not an only influence but also the prisoners who lacked a strong inner control on their ethical selves. The prisoners who became victorious of the sufferings and harsh experiences eventually turned them into a triumph of the self. Viktor shares with us about the three psychological reactions which the inmates experienced to a great extent. Firstly, they were shocked after going through the preliminary phase of admission in the camp. Secondly, they became numb after becoming used to the life in camp where the inmate values only the thing which helped them to survive. Finally, reactions of reification, resentment, moral disfigurement and disenchantment from life. The amazing element in this novel is that the experiences they caused him to live out the ideas which as a doctor before the outbreak of the WW II.

Logotherapy is a term that comes from the Greek word logos which is defined as "meaning". It is a type of psychology that focuses on helping the patients to find meaning in their lives. Viktor is the founder of the logotherapy and he says that search for meaning is the fundamental motivating force in a human's life. It helps the therapist to help their patients to deal with mental problems by encouraging them to think about their futures and help them to accomplish their goals in a meaning way.

*"Live as if you were living already for the second time and if you had acted as wrongly the first time as you are about to act now"*

-Viktor E.Frankl (Man's Search for Meaning)

This is the perfect quote to explain the logotherapy. It tries to take the person out of their confined mind and see their life in a broader perspective. This analysis focuses on the will to pleasure and sees the prime motivating force in human beings to be a will to meaning. This therapy sees the mental health in the tension between what one is and what one could become. The source or meaning of life varies from person to person, it can be creating a work or doing a deed, experiencing something or encountering someone, the attitude we take to unavoidable suffering. Happiness is a by-product of forgetting ourselves which draws on all our imagination and talents. To the people who say life is meaningless because it is transitory, only the unfulfilled potential is meaningless not life itself. Another important element that he has mentioned in his book is the holocaust. Holocaust is also known as Shoah was the genocide of European Jews during the WW II and they have murdered six million Jews across German occupied Europe. This type of cruel activities of human against the people of other country or religion showcases their intolerance and they all need the logotherapy and psychiatric counseling. To impair someone is not the tendency of the humanity.

*"I wanted to wake the poor man. Suddenly I drew back the hand which was ready to shake him, frightened at the thing I was about to do. At that moment I became intensely conscious of the fact that no dream, no matter how horrible, could be as bad as the reality of the camp which surrounded us, and to which I was about to recall him".*

-Viktor E.Frankl

The circumstances were horrible, but he realized that he was free mentally from the Nazis. Despite the persecution he could decide what to think and how to react. He didn't have the power to walk away from the camp, but he had the power to master it. He also discovered that even in the most horrible of circumstances human beings have choices. And those choices will give us the power to control a situation. Thus this gives a meaning at any tough situation of our life where one that might have lost the hope and purpose.

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