

DEPRESSION AND LOSS OF VALUES VIKTOR FRANKL AND MOOD DISORDERS

(SUMMARY)

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The oeuvre of Viktor Frankl does not contain the modern terms that are now used from the classification system of the DSM-IV and the ICD-10. This article attempts to summarise the six decennia of his work concerning the topic depression, especially focussing on how and where he used the term. Frankl's main concern is the meaning of existence, and this is evinced by the name of his own psychotherapy: Logotherapy. This therapy focuses on the meaning of human existence as the strife towards such meaning, which is, according to Logotherapy, the primary motivation of human beings. Other connotations that the Greek word Logos carries are: belonging, accountability, taking into account, account for or motivate, motive, etc. We can consider each of these connotations for the term Logos, and Frankl also creates an opening for theological and philosophical perspectives on Logos. It all commences with the question for meaning by the unique human being. If the meaning of existence is lost to the unique person, then interpersonal relations and metaphysical concepts no longer function as coherently. Part and parcel of Frankl's psychopathology is the underlying aforementioned anthropology that is lacking in the classification system of the DSM-IV and ICD-10. The anthropological notion of Frankl is, in this sense, timeless and applicable today.

It is indeed a daunting task to compare the nomenclature of the 20th century, being heavily biased towards psychotherapeutic schools, to the more recent and relatively objective diagnostic criteria of the DSM-IV. For example, Frankl uses the rather outdated term endogenous depression as referring to a depression that is solely physiological in nature. Nowadays, the once somatic concept of depression has become much broader to include bio-psycho-social aspects. During the course of this article it will become clear that Frankl uses old-fashioned terminology relating to particular psychotherapeutic schools. However, this is not to say that Logotherapy has limited itself in the past to endogenous depression or solely medical or psychiatric psychopathology; in fact, Logotherapy can still be used today to approach, in an open and personal way, the existential questions of life. In this sense it is no different from the "mother-school" of Logotherapy, i.e. Psychoanalysis, in

that this particular form of analysis not only aims to ameliorate symptoms, but also to induce character reformations, that is to say, the shift from *Es* to *Ich* psychology (Leo Stone, *The Psychoanalytical situation*, 1961, Charles Brenner, Heinz Kohut, Otto Kernberg etc.).

Viktor Frankl distinguishes between the medical and general forms of Logotherapy. A psychiatrist or at least a medically trained logotherapist may only perform the former as it entails both the prescriptions of medication and therapeutic dialogue. It is important, nowadays, to discern the various dimensions of depression as described by Frankl. The caveat must be placed that any sound treatment of depression must include a medical anamnesis and diagnosis, and this especially pertains to a non-medically trained logotherapist. It is, therefore, important for the therapist to remain in contact with a GP or psychiatrist, even when no medication is given. For the existential dimension of depression, Logotherapy is indicated as it can respond adequately to such issues.

In modern times the name Logotherapy has been altered to existential-analytical psychotherapy. The practical reason for this alteration is that the term Logos spurs more confusion than clarity, as less and less people are familiar with the classic languages of ancient times. Moreover, Logotherapy, as a name, may carry too many theological and philosophical connotations that are not necessarily relevant to the work of the therapy itself. The title existential-analytical psychotherapy alludes to the fact that Logotherapy is rooted in the Psychoanalytical tradition, and that it is uniquely focused upon existential issues without losing the framework of the psychotherapeutic context. Logotherapy or rather existential-analytical psychotherapy does not differ from other approaches as it also uses the modern day diagnostic criteria. However, what is uniquely emphasised is the positive anthropology of Frankl, wherein the human being has the personal response-ability towards his or her fate, i.e. the freedom to uniquely actualise values in accordance with the particular situation. In this sense there is a greater affinity to the more modern neo-psychoanalytical schools of Kernberg and Kohut rather than the more orthodox approach of Stone.

Existential-analysis has repeatedly demonstrated that a lack of meaning or a lack of recognition of such a meaning increases the risk for depression. The close relationship between a person's perspective on life and mental health or strength has been confirmed many a time. This has led to the accreditation of Logotherapy or Existential Analysis has a

clinically validated approach in various countries. Whole batteries of existential oriented tests have been designed, such as: the Logos-test of Lukas; the Purpose in Life (PIL); SONG; Life Purpose Questionary (Hablas); Sence of Coherence (Antonovsky); The Existential Vacuum Screening Scale (EVS) (Duplessis), etc. In the Netherlands diagnostic tests also have been developed, such as the SCL-90 (Arindell & Ettema) and the CES-D-scale (Ensel). The Developmental Profile of Abraham is of particular interest as it helps reveal not only the developmental vulnerabilities of the personality, but also the strengths and potentials. It, moreover, illuminates the life or existential perspective of the personality. The application of test for depression and existential issues deserves further study, although Abraham explicitly warns using his test for depressive patients.