



Spirituality in logotherapy and existential analysis by Viktor Emil Frankl¹

<https://doi.org/10.34766/fer.v60i4.1326>

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Abstract: A proper image of man forms the basis of all kinds of practice – educational, medical, pastoral – including psychotherapeutic practice. What, then, constitutes the constitutive element of this image? In search of the answer to this question, Logotherapy, created by Viktor Emil Frankl, was examined. The key dimension of human existence in Logotherapy is the spiritual dimension. Starting with a general characteristic of Logotherapy as a psychotherapeutic approach, a detailed analysis of the spiritual dimension in this context was conducted, outlining its various manifestations against the backdrop of broader philosophical assumptions on which Frankl constructed the foundations of his theory. The theoretical aspects were related to examples from case studies described by Frankl and his contemporary followers. The aspect of spiritual unconsciousness, distinct from the unconscious in the psychoanalytic sense, was also discussed. Based on the analyses conducted, it was concluded that the spiritual dimension of human existence constitutes an inalienable and fundamental way of being, even if that dimension is unconscious or, to use Frankl's terminology, even if it is "walled off," for example, due to mental illness. The spiritual dimension itself is not subject to illness, which creates a hopeful area for psychotherapeutic work and serves as a source of resources manifested, for instance, in the so-called "power of the spirit's resistance." The extraordinary potential of Logotherapy lies in the connection between the spiritual dimension and meaning, which, according to Frankl, is the strongest motivating factor. The spiritual dimension directs us to something greater than ourselves – to the meaning that awaits realization. The more the spiritual dimension is a governing dimension, the more a person is integrated around this dimension, the easier it is for them to perceive the unique call to meaning that permeates all life circumstances and continually offers itself anew.

Keywords: spirituality, Logotherapy, psychotherapy, meaning

*Struggles for the spiritual content of life (...) are, in fact, something (...)
the most human, that distinguishes man as such.*

V.E. Frankl

1. Logotherapy as a psychotherapeutic approach

True happiness, even if only for a brief moment, can be experienced even by a person in a concentration camp, through contemplation of what they love most
(Frankl, 2017a, p. 69).

These words by Viktor Emil Frankl indicate the special role of the spiritual dimension in human life, especially in the face of extreme situations when

the question of meaning becomes particularly vivid. Frankl (1905-1997), a world-renowned psychiatrist, neurologist, philosopher, and prisoner of four concentration camps, is the founder of Logotherapy, also known as the third Viennese school of psychotherapy. Giambattista Torello once stated that Logotherapy is the last complete system in the history of psychotherapy. By "complete", he meant that Logotherapy, as a therapeutic approach, is based on a well-developed concept of man and the world (after: Lukas, 2020).

Currently, this approach is experiencing a kind of renaissance, also in Poland, where around 150 people are being trained within the framework of a four-year

¹ Article in polish language: https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/60P_Horn.pdf

School of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis and in three-semester postgraduate studies in Personalism and Logotherapy in teaching and upbringing.

The combination of the Greek words *logos* (gr. *λόγος* – word, meaning, explanation) and *therapeuo* (gr. *θεραπεύω* – I care for, I look after, I heal) expresses the essence of this therapy (Konieczna, 2003) – caring for meaning and explaining life, as well as healing by helping to find meaning, which, according to Frankl, is the strongest motivating factor (Szcukiewicz, Szcukiewicz, 2018). While according to psychoanalysis, human existence is governed by the pleasure principle, and from the perspective of individual psychology, it is shaped by the will to power, from the perspective of existential analysis, it is permeated by the will to meaning. Human life is a field of struggle to extract meaning in the context of various circumstances. According to Frankl, “in psychotherapy, it is ultimately not about transforming the dynamics of affects or the energy of drives, but about existential change” (Frankl, 2017a, p. 264).

The novelty that Logotherapy has brought to psychotherapy includes methods engaging the spiritual dimension of man (also called the noetic dimension). This dimension is specifically human. Logotherapy is a practical application of existential analysis, which represents an anthropology that takes into account all dimensions of man (spiritual, psychological, and physical) and the resulting theory of personality (Wolicki, 2001).

In addition to many non-specific methods, Logotherapy employs methods typical for it, such as attitude modulation, dereflection, or paradoxical intention, which are highly effective in treating various types of mental disorders. The paradoxical intention method was used by Frankl as early as 1929 and was first mentioned by him in 1939, with further refinement occurring post-war between 1953 and 1960 (after: Galarowicz, 2024). Paradoxical intention is especially used in working with individuals suffering from anxiety neurosis. Its essence lies in the patient wanting what evokes their anxiety. Logotherapeutic methods appeal to specifically human qualities such as responsibility, self-transcendence, conscience as an organ of meaning, discovering duties, and making choices. Any manipulative, reductionist,

or dehumanizing methods are excluded. It should be noted that in Logotherapy, it is not so much the methods and techniques employed by the therapist that matter, but primarily the spirit in which they are applied (Wolicki, 2010).

One of the fundamental principles of Logotherapy reminds us that every person's life possesses unconditional meaning, which is not lost or reducible even in the face of extremely difficult circumstances. Frankl attested to the truth of this principle not only in his professional life as a doctor and psychotherapist but also by saying “yes” to life in the face of the hell of the concentration camps through which he passed (Lukas, 2019). Frankl describes his experiences in concentration camps as “*experimentum crucis*”. For the Logotherapeutic concept, the foundations of which were laid even before the war and described in a manuscript lost on the first day of his stay in Auschwitz, the camp experiences became a kind of verifier for significant tenets of Logotherapy, such as the assertion of human capacity for self-transcendence and self-distance: “the specifically human fundamental ability for self-transcendence and self-distance (...) was existentially verified and confirmed in the concentration camp” (Frankl, 2023, p. 149). Frankl experienced the legitimacy of what Logotherapy proclaims on his own body and soul (Frankl, 2021). The works he left behind, which also contain guidelines for those professionally involved in helping others through Logotherapy, are thus particularly credible, though this comes at a high price – as Frankl says: “It is not easy to write with one's own blood. But it is easy to write well with it” (Frankl, 2023, p. 10).

2. The spiritual dimension in Frankl's perspective

When referring to the spiritual dimension of man, Frankl also uses terms such as “spiritual sphere”, “noetic dimension”, “*nous*”, “existential-spiritual person”, “personal axis”, “person”, “spiritual person”. To avoid religious connotations and equating the spiritual dimension with spirituality in a theological sense, Frankl emphasizes that when describing the

spiritual dimension, he refers to the anthropological dimension (after: Galarowicz, 2024). An extensive characterization of the person as a spiritual dimension was conveyed by Frankl in his ten theses on the person, which he formulated for the first time in 1950. A person, by virtue of being a single entity, an indivisible unit, a whole and unity, cannot be split or divided into smaller parts. Therefore, “even in schizophrenia, there is no true splitting of the person”, and it is also correct to replace the previously used term “double consciousness” with “changing consciousness” (Frankl, 2017a, p. 259). The indivisibility of the person is also connected with the impossibility of transferring one’s spiritual existence to another person. Parents can only pass on their child’s organism, to which the spiritual dimension is added. From a purely naturalistic or medical perspective, the emergence of a spiritual person at the moment of conception is inexplicable, remaining something mysterious and enigmatic. The spiritual person, not being born, is immortal. Even in life, we do not have direct access to it; however, indirectly, it is given to us even after death (Frankl, 1984).

Thanks to the spiritual dimension, we are not solely dependent on signals coming from the body or emotions. These often lead us toward what is pleasurable or what provides an opportunity to prove our point or superiority (Freudian pleasure principle or Adlerian will to power). Drives and emotions push us, while meaning and values invite and attract. The spiritual dimension has the power to manage the emotional and drive spheres (Solecki, Rusin, 2024). The dynamism of striving for meaning and the need to refer to values are inscribed in human nature. According to Kazimierz Popielski, regardless of how a person understands and experiences these realities, they are necessary for being and serve existence analogously to breath for the body or expression for the psyche (Popielski, 1996).

A person, being a whole, cannot be reduced to an element of a collective, class, or race, which are impersonal elements (Frankl, 2017a). He assimilates the definition of a person presented by Max Scheler, according to which a person is the bearer and center of spiritual acts. They are the center that organizes what is psychophysical and around which what is

psychophysical concentrates. A person “has” their psychophysical sphere, while they themselves “are” something spiritual, the opposite of the psychophysical organism. What is spiritual is the most characteristic for man (Frankl, 2017a). The person as an existential-spiritual center integrates the bodily, psychological, and spiritual whole of human existence. An individualized human being is only integrated when they concentrate around their spiritual axis, which is the person (nous). However, only all three dimensions taken together constitute the whole person (Frankl, 1984). The existence of man is marked by optionality. Following Karl Jaspers, Frankl calls man an “existentially deciding” being, who constantly determines what they will become in the next moment. Man “exists as their own potential, as a possibility, for which they can either support or oppose” (Frankl, 2017a, p. 263). Here, another characteristic of being human is clearly marked: “being profoundly and ultimately responsible”. This is more than simply being free, because responsibility is accompanied by the justification of freedom, its reason (“for what”), for which man is free, using it for something or against something (Frankl, 2017a). A person can be guided by their drives, but they do not have to be. The freedom of man expressed in taking a stance for or against something is inalienable, always present. Even when a person makes an irresponsible choice that restricts freedom, it is still their free choice (Frankl, 2024c).

Responsibility is an ethically neutral boundary value that psychotherapy should strive to achieve as a valuing action. The psychotherapeutic process can lead the patient to become aware of responsibility as a fundamental feature of their own existence. The consequence of this is a sort of automatic confrontation with evaluative judgments situated in the context of their unique personality and unique space of fate. One of Frankl’s tasks for psychotherapy is to lead the patient to realize their specific responsibility for the tasks that life sets before them. Only by accepting their inner condition and the external circumstances of life (the entire situation in the world) and experiencing them as unique and unrepeatable does one sharpen the awareness of personal responsibility and a specific mission, simultaneously enhancing the

forces needed to overcome difficulties on the path to fulfilling meaningful actions, to realize what “life expects from me” (life as “being asked,” being – as “responding to life”) (Frankl, 2021, p. 13, 19; 2023).

3. Dimensional ontology and psychotherapeutic credo

In characterizing the issue of the multidimensionality and unity of man, Frankl relies on what he called dimensional ontology (Frankl, 2017b). Alexander Batthyány (2023) notes that this model, although rooted in a long tradition of philosophical and anthropological thought from Aristotle to Scheler, constitutes, however, in many respects a specific aspect of Logotherapy (cf also: Leidinger, Rapp, Mosser-Schuöcker, 2022).

Frankl’s dimensional ontology contains two fundamental laws. The first states that “the same object projected from its dimension onto other, lower dimensions reflects in such a way that its two reflections contradict each other”. For example, projecting the image of a three-dimensional glass onto two-dimensional planes toward its base and in the lateral plane will produce a circle in the first case and a rectangle in the second. However, the glass is neither a rectangle nor a circle, nor is it a combination of these two shapes. Another contradiction is that in both projections, closed figures are formed, while the glass is an open figure. Projecting man onto the plane of biology reflects somatic phenomena, while projecting onto the plane of psychology involves mental phenomena. However, this duality does not negate the unity of man. Similarly, looking through the prism of only two dimensions, we will not see the whole person, so they should not be taken as a whole. Only adding a third dimension allows us to see who man is (Frankl, 2017b).

The second law of dimensional ontology states that projecting different objects into the same lower dimension results in reflections that are not mutually contradictory but ambiguous. For example, projecting a cone, cylinder, and sphere in three-dimensional space toward the base will yield a circle in each case, making it impossible to infer from this image what figure is

being projected. The somatic dimension is present in every person, but a person is something more than just that dimension. Frankl did not negate the necessity of projecting man into one dimension when wanting to investigate individual dimensions that may give rise to disorders. However, one must be aware that such a detached way of looking is merely one perspective that does not constitute the whole (Frankl, 2017c).

Within the whole that is man, Frankl distinguishes two phenomena: psychophysical parallelism (the bodily-psyche union) and noetic-psyche antagonism (“bargaining” of the spirit with bodily and psychic aspects). While the first is unavoidable, the second is optional. A doctor or psychotherapist should, however, refer to the noetic-psyche antagonism, which is associated with what Frankl calls “the power of the human spirit’s defiance”. In this context, Frankl formulates his psychotherapeutic credo: within the unity that constitutes the person, the noetic dimension has the possibility to “withdraw” and stand in opposition to the seemingly stronger psychophysicality. It is this characteristic of the person, namely its dynamism, that enables the person to distinguish, reveal, and constitute themselves. The bodily and psychophysical aspects also distinguish themselves in this process when a person confronts and “bargains” with themselves (Frankl, 2017b).

4. Psychiatric credo and pathoplastic

In what Frankl describes in one of his “ten theses on the person” as his psychiatric credo (Frankl, 2024b), he expresses his unwavering belief in the spiritual personality of the psychotic patient. Logotherapy aims to help a person view their life in terms of responsibility while simultaneously making them aware of the vast area of freedom inseparably linked to that responsibility. Even in severe illness, such as endogenous depression (resulting from neurotransmitter dysfunction), a person has the opportunity to shape their fate by adopting a specific attitude toward it. In this context, Frankl speaks of pathoplastic. Unlike the pathogenic element, the pathoplastic factor results from shaping fate in relation to illness. In the case

of a person suffering from endogenous depression, alongside pharmacological treatment, Logotherapy can also be helpful. Its aim is then to change the attitude toward life by bringing out its task-oriented character. The spiritual attitude of a person toward their illness is already contained in the pathoplastic factor. The behavior of a sick person is shaped not only by the consequences resulting from their ailment but is also a manifestation of the spiritual attitude of a person toward the fate that in this case is illness. This attitude is based on freedom and is subject to the requirement of choosing the right direction (becoming a properly directed attitude). One could say that the pathogenic factor learns pathoplastic from the human factor. In this sense, illness represents a kind of test of humanity for a person. Frankl speaks in this context of the “remnant of freedom” that is present even in psychosis. Thanks to this untouched area of freedom, a person struggling with illness can actualize values of attitude toward their fate marked by illness in every situation (Frankl, 2024b). Where medicine or traditional psychoanalytic therapy discovers only psychological or physiological dependencies, Logotherapy uncovers areas of spiritual freedom.

Illness is a certain kind of pathology (from Greek *πάθος*, *pathos* – suffering and *-λογία*, *logia*, literally: “word about suffering”). *Pathos* (suffering) is the key term in this word. As Krzysztof Grzywocz notes, the emergence of illness is not merely something negative and destructive, but it also carries within it a message, a call to fulfill the *logos* that is inscribed in this event. Such a perspective stands in opposition to the approach according to which everything in illness is meaningless: “In every illness, one can find some part of the *logos*, some rescue”. (...) Quick classification of something as sick or healthy can be a form of pathology (...). Similarly, the comprehensive judgment: “This person is sick”, as if the boundary between *logos* and *pathos* did not run in a person – between suffering that hampers life and the *logos* that is hidden in that painful experience” (Grzywocz, 2020).

Personal dignity is equal among all people, regardless of how their life efficiency and ability to act (biological-social utility) are perceived. It remains unchanged and intact even despite the loss of those abilities regarded

as utilitarian values. Personal dignity stands above those deficits, just as the spiritual person remains untouchable by psychophysical processes of illness (Frankl, 1984). Frankl sees the source of confusion between human dignity and mere utility in the erroneous interpretation of concepts arising from contemporary nihilism (which proclaims that everything is meaningless), which is also present in universities and in the training process for therapists (Frankl, 2017a).

The spiritual dimension of man, by definition being free, is not subject to any external conditions, including the conditions of illness (physical or mental). The spiritual personality not only cannot become ill, but even the categories of health and illness do not concern it at all (Frankl, 1984). Frankl agrees here with the views of Karl Jaspers, who claims that the spirit itself cannot become ill, but the *Dasein* that carries it can be subject to illness, thereby influencing the degree to which the spirit can be realized (after: Opoczyńska, 2002). In this context, Frankl uses the metaphor of the musician and the instrument. The relationship between the spiritual person and their psychophysical organism is instrumental; the spirit organizes the psychophysical instrument, making it its tool. A musician playing on a poor or out-of-tune instrument cannot perform a piece in a way that aligns with the artist’s intent but will be subject to limitations arising from the instrument’s dysfunction. If the spiritual person is carried by a sick psychophysical organism, then attempting to express themselves through it, they experience its imperfections. However, these shortcomings do not leave a mark on the spiritual person but make them somewhat “walled off”. Even if the perception of a person is significantly hindered by the foregrounding of pathological processes, they remain unchanged, hidden deep down, although helpless and invisible. The task of the doctor is to sense behind that wall the suffering person who is suffering due to illness, yet does not itself become ill from it (Frankl, 1984). For example, in the case of psychosis, the spiritual person suffers in two ways: due to instrumental paralysis (they are unable to adequately control their instrument, which is psychophysics) and due to expressive invisibility (they cannot express themselves through an organism that functions without disturbances).

This invisibility is intermittently interrupted by single moments in which the “spirit” breaks through the psychophysical layer that separates us from it like a “lightning bolt” (Frankl, 1984).

5. Noo-psychic antagonism

The presence and activity of the spiritual dimension sometimes manifest clearly in the struggles of individuals suffering from schizophrenia, where amidst various manifestations of the weakening spirit, many testimonies of its extraordinary strength can also be observed. In the experiences of individuals with schizophrenia, one often notices an actual excess of what is typically human, particularly relating to the world of meaning and values. In this context, schizophrenia emerges as a particular field of struggle for one’s humanity, where the logotherapeutic noetic-psychic antagonism clearly crystallizes. Thus, as Małgorzata Opoczyńska notes, “the illness that affects the psychophysical organism and threatens its order would turn out to be the place where what is spiritual in a person gains special strength, allowing for detachment from the concreteness of life and the search for Logos, which would give it meaning” (Opoczyńska, 2002, p. 81).

Although illness as such may obstruct the realization of specific values and threaten the psychophysical organism, thus becoming a source of suffering, the discovery of hidden opportunities for the realization of values of attitude within this experience means that illness not only does not negate the chance for a person to fulfill themselves as a person, but provides a special opportunity for this. In this way, illness, which is inherently a negative aspect, is existentially transformed and overcome. This is only possible in the case of an attitude directed toward integrating the painful experience of illness with the rest of life and not trying to forcibly remove what may initially seem completely meaningless and worthless (Opoczyńska, 2002). This attitude assumes hope for finding seemingly non-existent meaning within this experience; it is an expression of unconditional faith in unconditional meaning (Frankl, 2017c). This conviction, supported not only by Frankl’s own

experience but also by the experiences of many of his patients, or the testimony of numerous camp fellow inmates, is expressed in treating every situation as carrying potential meaning waiting to be realized. A person is not responsible for what belongs to the sphere of fate, but they are responsible for their attitude toward how they respond to it (Frankl, 1984). The therapist’s role is to assist the patient in expanding the scope of freedom by creating a distance between the illness and the human dimension in the sick person. The emphasis in this case is not on the symptom, but on the pursuit of changing the attitude toward the symptom, which characterizes personalist psychotherapy (Frankl, 2024b).

According to Piotr Szczukiewicz (2024), the enormous potential of Logotherapy to respond to the needs of people seeking help in the face of disruption or loss of meaning in the context of various life difficulties stems from the fact that the logotherapeutic perspective is focused on what is most human. Based on his professional experience, he notes that this characteristic feature of Logotherapy, which is a proper, integral concept of a person, is an extremely important element of the therapeutic process: “When in my work as a psychologist and psychotherapist I began to encounter various forms of suffering among patients, I could in my own experience confirm that perceiving what ‘makes a person a person’ is as important in counseling and psychotherapy as a multifaceted diagnosis or a good therapeutic relationship” (ibidem, s. 13-14).

6. Spiritual Unconsciousness

The sphere of unconsciousness in the logotherapeutic perspective is much broader than in psychoanalysis. In Logotherapy, the unconscious relates not only to the aspect of drives but also, and even more so, to the spirituality of man (with Frankl making a clear distinction between drive unconsciousness and spiritual unconsciousness): “where the spirit is rooted – precisely in its maternal home, the person is not unconsciously optional but inevitably so”. Within spiritual unconsciousness resides also unconscious piety, unconscious religiosity, which Frankl understands

as an unconscious, often repressed, innate bond of man with transcendence. Situating this unconscious religiosity in the place of unconscious sexuality (the unconscious drive shaped by the 'id') was, according to Frankl, Carl Gustav Jung's mistake. Meanwhile, the spiritual act of faith does not arise because it is pushed towards it by the drive, but is a free stand of man for God. Religiosity is either the domain of the "I" or it does not exist at all (Frankl, 2017b).

Awareness and unconsciousness permeate each other, are interlinked, and mutually interact. According to Rafał Szykuła, in Frankl's concept, one can see the alignment of unconsciousness with consciousness as its component. The same applies to preconsciousness. These three spheres co-create a whole (Szykuła, 2022). Between the psychoanalytic and logotherapeutic perspectives, there is also a qualitative difference in the perception of unconsciousness. The spiritual unconsciousness in Frankl's view is an ally of man (an existing unconsciousness, non-deterministic), because from it arises all of his conscious spirituality. It is a reality that enables the development of spiritual awareness. Marian Wolicki emphasizes that a person should not try to amputate their spiritual unconsciousness, because as long as their existence is rooted in spiritual (noetic) acts, they are free from their drives. A person is somewhat carried by spiritual unconsciousness. Behind it, there lies spiritual depth, which is the space for discovering logos and the place where existential decisions of utmost significance are made (Wolicki, 2008). Therefore, spiritual depth, unconsciousness, preconsciousness, and consciousness are like different parts of the ocean of human inner life, collectively forming a single element with varying degrees of depth (Szykuła, 2022).

7. Spiritual freedom and guilt

Logotherapy teaches that recognizing the spiritual freedom and dignity of a person is a necessary condition for a person to cope with justified feelings of guilt. Seeking justifications for actions committed in circumstances makes any potential reparation of guilt unnecessary. Meanwhile, an adequate sense of guilt can become a stimulus to correct a previously

meaningless action through present meaningful action and thus extract benefit from it, namely – transform it into an impulse toward good. This means that the horizon of meaning can also extend over false actions from the past. Although these actions were meaningless in themselves, a person, through recognizing and realizing the current invitation that meaning directs toward them, can in a sense imbue even their erroneous decisions, which already belong to the past, with meaning. Frankl's student, Elisabeth Lukas, does not hesitate to state that "all good that a person extracts from their guilt (...) gives a certain meaning *ex post* to what was" (Lukas, 2024, p. 174). Every undertaking and actualization of a positive possibility, underpinned by the awareness filled with healthy guilt that previously we responded negatively to the appeal of meaning, causes the ray of meaning to reach even what happened earlier.

In relation to feelings of guilt, the role of the therapist may be, first of all, to jointly reflect with the patient on whether the guilt that burdens them is justified (whether what happened was dependent on them, fell under the area of their responsibility, or whether it depended on external factors over which the patient had no control). Secondly, the therapist can help the patient face justified feelings of guilt. This can only occur through referring to the responsibility and freedom that the patient possesses as a spiritual person (*nous*). This orientation is the opposite of "psychological absolutism," which treats a person as a powerless puppet, whose actions are dictated by unconscious drives, subject to processes that unwittingly control their behavior (Lukas, 2024).

Elisabeth Lukas – a follower of Frankl's thought, describing the subsequent phases of a project conducted from 1977 to 1980 in her counseling center in Munich, acknowledges that the first two concepts employed to assist its recipients proved ineffective. Initially, regular social training was sought, and then efforts were made to teach the project's beneficiaries appropriate strategies and encourage them to implement them in life. The project concerned juvenile delinquents and aimed to reduce recidivism rates. Only the appeal to the logotherapeutic image of man (as a being endowed with the noetic dimension, and thus free and responsible) brought

positive, measurable results. The logotherapist reports the guidelines adopted at that time: “We dared to treat guilt, contrary to all adverse environmental circumstances, as guilt – however, not in the sense of accusation or reproach, but as an impulse for reflection on the age-old human wisdom of the heart that each of these young delinquents carries within them, regardless of their external environment. Guided by the motto: ‘my environment cannot fully shape me, but I can shape myself as much as possible’, we transitioned from the fact of how free they actually were in committing the criminal act to drawing evidence of how free they are now to perform actions in the world with an awareness of responsibility for them. Actions that, by affecting backward, can balance everything that was negative and had settled in their young lives” (Lukas, 2024, p. 70).

Contesting traditional psychodynamic psychotherapy and drawing on her over thirty years of experience working with patients, Lukas draws interesting conclusions regarding the relationship between memory and various types of negative experiences that we may encounter throughout life. She observes that those negative experiences, over which we have no control, over time lose their original sharpness or are completely forgotten (regardless of how this process will be explained – as “repression through defense mechanisms” or otherwise). Conversely, negative experiences that are the consequences of one’s own decisions and behavior do not so easily fade from memory but remind the perpetrator of themselves as an “unsettling remnant”, mobilizing them to repair the harm done or reconcile. Only undertaking such reparative actions has the power to balance and placate these negative memories in some way. Frankl’s student derives from this the conclusion that the very nature of man operates in such a way that “what should be forgotten is what no longer makes sense to remember, while no forgetting should occur where there still lies some meaning waiting to be fulfilled” (Lukas, 2024, p. 70-72). This memory serves as a catalyst for the process of learning and purification, thus protecting against the repetition of mistakes.

Lukas calls the realization of meaning “the elixir of human life”, because “nothing (...) protects against neuroses, depressions, psychosomatic disorders,

anxiety about the future, or crises in relationships with the environment as broadly accepted content of meaning” (E. Lukas, 2024, p. 48). Referring to the statement by Friedrich Nietzsche quoted by Frankl: “He who lives ‘for’ something will endure almost any ‘how’”, she observes that reversing this statement, one could say: “He who does not live ‘for’ something will not be pleased by any ‘how’” (E. Lukas, 2024, p. 83). Piotr Szczukiewicz, examining together with his team the application of logoprofilactics in preventing risky behaviors among youth, points out that “young people often turn to uncertain promises or substitutes for happiness and engage in risky behaviors when they lose the basic orientation toward meaning and values” (Szczukiewicz, Kurcbart, Solecki, 2023). Where the perception of meanings is lacking, there is a flight into mirages of pleasure. In this case, logoprofilactics can serve as a helpful point of reference for the educational process.

Frankl advises that even at an early stage of life, one should develop an “internal skill” of contact with one’s “self,” with one’s most proper essence, even in the face of various losses that life abounds in. This kind of internal formation constitutes an invaluable resource in situations where fate suddenly forces a person to respond to the question of what they see as the source of meaning and value in their life. The lack of this skill increases the risk of falling into a psychological crisis in the face of difficult life circumstances (Frankl, 2023).

As an antidote to various types of destructive behaviour that undermine the value of one’s own life or threaten the lives of others, Lukas points to the ability to see the meaning of life despite difficulties and the awareness of the personal dignity and unconditional value of every human being (Lukas, Schönfeld, 2021).

8. Conscience

Conscience is the voice of transcendence: “through the voice of conscience resounds – per sonat – the voice of some non-human being” (Frankl, 2012, p. 76). The word person (persona) thus acquires a new meaning. In conscience, the transcendent

side of spiritual unconsciousness is revealed. It is an immanent psychological fact that simultaneously possesses transcendent roots, in other words – a part of transcendence entering into the immanence of the psyche: “conscience is only the immanent side of a transcendent whole, emerging from the realm of psychological immanence but surpassing that realm” (Frankl, 1978, p. 49). Thus, projecting conscience from the realm of what is spiritual into the psychological sphere (as various psychological interpretations do) constitutes an unjustified reductionism that undermines what is most human in a person.

The transcendent nature of conscience does not deny that a non-religious person also possesses conscience and is responsible. However, such a person does not ask where conscience comes from, stopping at the fact of conscience as something immanent, recognizing it as the ultimate instance to which they respond. Frankl explains the genesis and function of conscience by comparing it to the navel. Without referring to the prenatal history of a person when they were connected to their mother by the umbilical cord, the human navel would seem meaningless. Only then does its existence become understandable and meaningful when one perceives it as something that points to a reality beyond itself, from which it originates and of which it is a part. Similarly with conscience – its existence can only be considered meaningful when it refers us to its transcendent source. If we attempt to sever a person from these transcendent roots, we will not be able to understand the entirety of their organism. Although existentiality alone suffices to explain human freedom, in order to explain human responsibility, it is necessary to reach the transcendent dimension of conscience. A person can say: “as the master of my will, I am the creator, but as the servant of my conscience, I am created” (Frankl, 1978, p. 46-50).

Conscience as an organ of meaning urges us to choose what is positive and real, even if the path to that is fraught with struggles. The subtle voice of conscience invites us to realize what is most aligned with our authentic desires; thus, by listening to it, the will to meaning ignites, and the heart begins to beat stronger. To hear the voice of conscience, inner peace and silence are needed. Conversely, noise and

agitation disturb its delicate sound. In the latter case, Lukas recommends “spatial-psychological distance from everyday life and a radical retreat into solitude” (Lukas, 2024, p. 190). These measures help regain clear access to the voice of conscience. Its message is full of hope, providing strength and encouragement: “Proceed calmly on your path! If your path involves making constructive changes, embrace it with enthusiasm and energy! If it involves courageously enduring something, take up your cross and go! If it involves stepping into what is new and unknown, do not hesitate! There is enough strength within you to live your life to the fullest. Trust!” (Lukas, 2024, p. 190). In the logotherapeutic interpretation, conscience is a friend of man. It points to the right path on which the fullest realization of meaning is possible.

9. Ultimate meaning

When asking about meaning, Frankl primarily refers to particular meanings related to specific situations in a person’s life. Meaning is also a dynamic reality, differing depending on the situation and the person (*ad personam* and *ad situationem*). However, Frankl does not stop at the question of individual meaning but reaches further, also asking about the meaning of the whole, the ultimate and universal meaning. He also uses other words to describe it: “supersense”, “overarching meaning”, “absolute meaning”, “meaning of fullness”, “meaning of far-reaching scope” (Galarowicz, 2024).

Ultimate meaning is regarded in Logotherapy as a so-called “boundary concept”, as it surpasses the cognitive capabilities of man. While meaning can be discovered and understood, ultimate meaning can be acknowledged and accepted. According to Rafał Szykuła, “the law of psychotherapy is not only to refer to the will of meaning but also to the will of ultimate meaning (...). If Logotherapy as a form of psychotherapy wants to fully assist the patient seeking meaning, it must also find a reference to the ultimate meaning of human existence” (Szykuła, 2022, p. 34).

Distinguishing meaning from ultimate meaning has significant implications for practice. Blurring the line between meaning and ultimate meaning

would preclude the possibility of decision-making and taking responsibility, as then regardless of what one chooses or does, ultimate meaning would triumph anyway. Such an approach would undermine the meaning of human decisions, paralyzing and hindering them. Meanwhile, the appropriate conduct is such that everything depends solely on the action taken or omitted by me, especially since ultimate meaning remains unknowable and is given only “in effect,” not in “intention;” one can only speculate about it retrospectively. In the moment of action, what should determine its direction and illuminate it is meaning, not ultimate meaning. Frankl succinctly expresses this in the following statement: “I can always count ‘on’ ultimate meaning, but I cannot count ‘with’ it” (Frankl, 1984, p. 69). This kind of suspension of faith in ultimate meaning does not equate to its complete elimination. The history in which ultimate meaning is fulfilled can occur with or without my participation, depending on how much I engage in fulfilling the particular meaning addressed to me. Ultimate meaning is characterized by discretion; it does not impose itself and therefore often remains unnoticed. When a person asks about ultimate meaning, they can provide two answers: “absolute nonsense” or “absolute ultimate meaning”. Each of these carries the responsibility of the one providing the answer. Thus, it is about existential decision (commitment), not intellectual speculation (understanding). This decision assumes faith, which Frankl understands as “thinking multiplied by the existentiality of the thinker”; it is not “thinking diminished by the reality of the thought”, because the one who answers and makes a decision thus stakes the weight of their being (Frankl, 1984).

Frankl assumes that the world accessible to man is surpassed by the world that transcends his understanding, simultaneously representing the ultimate meaning of everything that makes up his life (including suffering). Hence, in the last of his “Ten theses on the person”, Frankl formulates the following conclusion: “A person understands themselves only from the perspective of transcendence. Moreover, a person is also a person only to the extent that they perceive themselves from the

standpoint of transcendence – a person is also a person only to the extent that they become one through transcendence: permeated by the call of transcendence. This call of transcendence is heard by man in conscience” (Frankl, 2024b, p. 266). Despite potential associations with what constitutes the sphere of religiosity, from the logotherapeutic point of view, religion remains merely an object and cannot become a position. What legitimizes and justifies the interest of Logotherapy in the phenomenon of faith and engagement with this sphere is the understanding of faith in Logotherapy as faith in meaning. Following Albert Einstein, Frankl interprets being religious as questioning the meaning of life. Thus, faith in meaning or religion constitutes a radicalization of the “will to meaning” in that it concerns the “will for ultimate meaning” (“the will for supersense”) (Frankl, 2024b). Through and thanks to the spiritual dimension, a person is oriented toward meaning and values, remains in a dialogical relationship with others, and is capable of love. An essential element of the spiritual dimension is also conscience (Galarowicz, 2024).

Between the all-encompassing ultimate meaning that transcends the limited framework of human understanding and the meaning personally directed to each individual through specific situations in their life, there exists a relationship that Frankl explains by referring to a certain analogy. Just as a film consists of many single frames that come together to form scenes, each with its own significance. However, it is impossible to grasp the significance of the entire film based solely on these individual fragments until the film comes to an end. Similarly, with human life – at best, its ultimate, holistic meaning may only reveal itself at best on one’s deathbed. However, this could not take place if a person during the individual stages of life did not engage in fulfilling the meaning contained in every moment that comprises it, according to how they interpreted that meaning at that moment (Frankl, 2024a, p. 120). Frankl also considers the concept of ultimate meaning in another sense, relating it to the Absolute, a personal God who is the guarantor and source of ultimate meaning: “the supreme value, ‘ultimate meaning is connected with the ‘transpersonal’” (Frankl, 1984, p. 111).

10. Self-transcendence and autotranscendence as manifestations of the spiritual dimension

Frankl points to the “phenomenon of self-transcendence” as a specifically human trait, which “always signifies an orientation toward something or someone, a dedication to some work we devote ourselves to, a person we love, or God we serve” (Frankl, 2024b, p. 46). Thus, it is precisely through love that humanity reveals itself in a unique way. Love is not only turning to another person as “you,” but also saying “yes” to another person, which is understood as recognizing their uniqueness and individuality and affirming their value. In such an attitude toward another, a person not only affirms who someone is but also employs a way of seeing that anticipates the future and recognizes what someone can still become based on the potential they possess. A person who loves thus has a special kind of insight into the optional nature of the other because they also perceive the potential value of their loved one, the possibilities that can still be realized (Frankl, 2024c). Love, which sees further and deeper, should also be present in the work of the doctor or psychotherapist. As a postulate of his work as a psychiatrist, Frankl indicated that the patient should be reflected in the doctor and be “seen” by them, even beyond the surface of the pathological symptoms noticeable in psychophysics. This profoundly human aspect of contact with the sick is of immense therapeutic significance because what is human in the doctor awakens humanity in the sick, just as what is specifically human in the sick reveals humanity in the doctor (Frankl, 2021). The essence of self-transcendence manifests itself in the fact that “the more one is able to overlook oneself, the more one forgets oneself by devoting oneself to something or to other people, the more one becomes a human being, the more one realizes themselves. Only by forgetting oneself can one lead to sensitivity, and by giving oneself, to creativity” (Frankl, 2024b, p. 103). Logotherapy also recognizes in a person the capacity for autotranscendence. It represents a “lifting force”, with which even expe-

riencing psychophysical enslavement, one can rise to the heights of spiritual freedom (Lukas, Schönfeld, 2019). In this sense, a person is not doomed to the mercy or wrath of their psychophysics, so patients undergoing therapy should be encouraged to transcend their psychophysical sphere.

11. Psychotherapy and faith

The relationship with God was for Frankl something very personal, which should be veiled by a certain kind of mystery and protected by restraint. This is why he spoke rarely about his own faith (Lukas, 2019). Being a person of deep faith, he postulated that one should remember to maintain the independence of psychotherapeutic methods from religion. The topic of faith may arise in therapeutic conversations, but the potential usefulness of psychotherapy for religion can only arise from its autonomy. Only then can the results of psychotherapy constitute a value for theology when obtained through independent inquiries (Frankl, 2012). The goals of psychotherapy and faith also remain distinct – the first is healing, the second is salvation. Each of these two disciplines has its own assumptions and methods that it should adhere to in order to achieve its goals.

Logotherapy should remain neutral in the sense that its arguments and methods should be acceptable and understandable to every person, regardless of their religious beliefs. However, this does not preclude stating that “no one who is honest and takes psychotherapy seriously can avoid confronting it with theology” (Lukas, 2019). The bridge between the two disciplines is the integral anthropology that takes into account the multifaceted dimensions of man. Erroneous ideas about man result in inappropriate methods of treatment. The bridge between psychotherapy and theology is also the concept of the soul – the Greek word *ψυχή* (*psyche*) meaning soul is found in the word “psychotherapy”, while also playing an important role in theology (Lukas, 2019). The dimension of spirituality seems to be important not only in theology and philosophy, but also in medicine, psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy (Szary, 2024). Each perspective, theological

and psychotherapeutic, defines the soul differently, yet this does not preclude the possibility of dialogue between these two modes of support and assistance directed toward man (Lukas, 2019). Such an opening to dialogue also protects against the temptation of anthropocentrism, which Frankl warned against.

James and Melissa Griffith point to the therapeutic potential of spirituality, which psychotherapy should also tap into. According to the American psychotherapists, “spirituality provides a whole range of means and methods for positioning illness in its rightful place, so that it does not affect life more than is necessary due to its biological necessity”. In this context, it is interesting to distinguish in English between two modes of existence of illness: disease – referring to the biomedical understanding of the patient’s condition, and illness – describing how the sick person or their family experience and cope with the symptoms of illness and its repercussions in various aspects of life (physical, psychological, social, spiritual) (Griffith, Griffith, 2008).

Conclusion

The analysis conducted regarding the spiritual dimension of a person from the logotherapeutic perspective leads to the conclusion that this is a specifically human sphere, without which such realities as life, love, forgiveness, suffering, faith, and meaning become incomprehensible. If a person is reduced (“projected”) from the realm of spirit (the only realm in which, by nature, “they exist”) to the plane of exclusively psychological or physical, the entire human dimension suffers, not just one of the dimensions of their existence (Frankl, 2024b). Both diagnosis and therapy should be directed toward the multidimensionality of man, who is a unity despite their diversity. Rooted in the spiritual dimension, human freedom creates the opportunity to provide the most meaningful response in every life situation, while also making them responsible for the answer they choose to give. The particular manifestations of the spiritual dimension are conscience and the person’s ability for self-transcendence and autotranscendence. Despite the differences, including methodological differences, that exist between psychotherapy and faith, Logotherapy remains open to issues concerning faith, also in the process of psychotherapy, due to its non-reductionist nature.

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