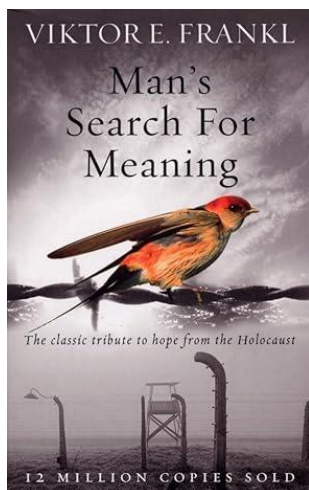


The Will to Meaning: A Review of *Man's Search for Meaning*

P.Antony Maria Jenobhar*  



Publisher : Rider & Co

Original Language : German

Date of Publication (German) : 1946; (English) : 1959

Hardcover : 240 pages

ISBN : 9781846041242

Link : <https://amzn.in/d/12RB8aF>

Keywords: Meaning of Life, Logotherapy, Hope, Purpose

Submitted: 10.03.2025

Accepted: 28.03.2025

Published 30.03.2025

*P.Antony Maria Jenobhar, MA English, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli - 627002, Tamil Nadu, India.

©2025 P.Antony Maria Jenobhar. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction, provided the original author and source are credited.

Man's Search for Meaning: The Classic Tribute to Hope from the Holocaust, a memoir written by an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and holocaust survivor, recounts his harrowing holocaust experience in the concentration camps. Frankl infuses, blends the psychological insights from the brutal reality that he experienced in the Nazi camps. The Author himself developed a form of existential analysis from his experience in the concentration camps including Auschwitz.

This memoir can be classified into two main parts : the first includes the personal narrative of Frankl's internment in the camp and the second expresses an outline of the principles and practice of Logotherapy (The word Logos means Word which has its origin from Greek, the therapy is built on the idea that humans are fundamentally motivated to find purpose in their lives). His keen attention towards that his inmates helped in the invention of Logotherapy. Frankl observed behavioral changes of his camp mates and understands that human choices define who we are, and that really structures the human character, this realization of human behavior became the fundamental aspect of Logotherapy, this therapeutic approach focuses on the search for meaning purpose in life. Still remains as a significant contribution in the field of psychology, in his statement he asserts that pleasure or power never adds any validation to any individual's life whereas the will, the hope and the seeking of purpose, identifying the true self adds the real meaning to anyone's life. He also coins a term called "Will to meaning".

Frankl focuses on the sense of Hope and resilience amidst of chaos, also highlights the importance of spiritual and moral ethics which includes perseverance humanity and overcoming tragic conditions through positive thinking, Frankl's focus on meaning rather than pathology makes logotherapy a hopeful and empowering school of thought. It treats patients not as collections of symptoms, but as people capable of transforming suffering into achievement.

Man's Search for Meaning begins with the reference to the journey of Frankl as a prisoner at Auschwitz. The experience of the selection process that he witnessed, dehumanizing selection process and the crushing realization that many loved ones were sent to the gas chambers they were turned into ashes within hours that sudden approach really shattered him. But never lost the hope for living. Frankl's approach is less concerned with the origin of pain than with how people interpret and respond towards it. He mentions several incidents happened during the isolation, a man grieving the loss of his wife finds healing when he pretends that she is alive. In this reversal, pain is not erased but reframed, this random shift of thoughts gives suffering a new purpose, making it bearable.

Viktor Frankl's ideas influenced the rise of positive psychology, which makes people realise the importance of meaning and purpose in human flourishing. The excellence lies in its balance of pain and hope, despair and courage, memory and meaning. Frankl never promises that life is an easy shift but he that every human can make it as a meaningful one, the book lies between a fine line of encouragement and prescription, by expressing the real time experience he honours

not only the victims of the Holocaust but the potential within each of us to transcend circumstance and become more fully human. He observes that the inmates as prisoners adapts the suffering through emotional detachment, more like a self - defensive mechanism, when suffering is unavoidable it is necessary to take it as an opportunity to enhance your inner-self, when that is done the man himself becomes a powerful weapon to defend himself from the chaotic situation prevails around. The cruelty of the soldiers and warriors, beatings, starvation, and death became routine but even in this state, Frankl noted a profound difference in those who found some kind of inner meaning, a purpose they seek in, those who gave up hope often died soon after, while those who had something to live for no matter how abstract—were more likely to endure.

Frankl also drags major conspiracies and other psychological techniques, his theory Logotherapy serves a counterpoint to Freud's psychoanalysis focusing on the quest for meaning and purpose in life. They both remains as contemporary figures to the world of psychology offering contrasting, complementary insights whereas Freud emphasized the unconscious mind and instinctual drives such as sexuality and human aggressions, Frankl highlighted human resilience, choice, moral responsibility, moralistic approach towards mankind and the existential pursuit of meaning, making both indispensable to understanding the complexities of the human psyche. This contrast enriches the understanding of human nature by addressing the biological and spiritual aspects of life. He believed that no matter how bad life gets, we can still choose how to approach and our attitude towards that situation from the observation he learned, utilized in the concentration camps, people still found ways to stay strong even in times of hardships and terrible imprisonment.

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances" (55). This powerful insight formed the foundation of Logotherapy. While psychoanalysis looks back into one's childhood and unconscious to uncover hidden traumas, Logotherapy looks forward, urging individuals to identify their purpose in life and to take responsibility for their existence.

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl's approach to life is built on three core principles: that life has meaning under all circumstances, that people have a will to find meaning, and that they have the freedom to find that meaning in what they do, experience, or how they face suffering. Unlike Freud, who believed that neurosis often stemmed from internal conflict and unresolved desires, Frankl argued that many of today's psychological issues come from a sense of emptiness—a condition he called the "existential vacuum." This vacuum manifests in boredom, apathy, and a lack of direction, particularly in modern societies where traditional values are fading.

Through Logotherapy, Frankl helps individuals navigate this vacuum by encouraging them to find meaning through three main paths: creating a work or doing a deed, experiencing something or someone (such as love), and by the

attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering. In this way, suffering itself can become meaningful, if it transforms the person into someone stronger, wiser, and more compassionate.

Both Freud and Frankl, though different in their theories, serve as essential voices in the field of psychology. Freud teaches us to explore the hidden parts of our minds, to understand how our past and unconscious desires shape us. Frankl, on the other hand, reminds us that we are not fully bound by our past—that we are capable of rising above our conditions, finding purpose, and living meaningfully.

Frankl's contribution is not only psychological but deeply human. His vision restores hope, affirms dignity, and encourages a life of value. In a world filled with confusion and chaos, his message continues to inspire people to search for meaning—not just in moments of joy but also in times of pain. It is this pursuit of meaning that ultimately gives life its richness and depth.

In this modern world, people find immense pleasure in the form of material comfort meanwhile the self the inner man feels void and hollow, that loots away the true awareness whom we are really were, this materialistic comfort pushes towards a voidic condition and coins that as “Existential Vacuum”. Frankl himself as a future predictor lists the aggression, addiction and feeling despair as a result this emptiness inside people don't have a clear purpose or meaning in life, they often turn to violence, drugs, or feel deep sadness where life feels useless and without direction. He believed that the only way to overcome this is by finding meaning—even in pain and suffering—and by understanding that life always has a purpose, no matter how hard it gets, Frankl empowers individuals to rise above their circumstances, transforming suffering into a source of personal growth and resilience, embracing the glimpses of responsibility by embracing responsibility for their own lives and choosing their attitude toward an unavoidable suffering, people can discover a deeper sense of fulfillment and direction, leads to the path of finding their purpose the journey as life, leading them out of the existential vacuum and into a life of authentic purpose.

Viktor Frankl believed that when people take control of their lives and face their problems directly, they are more likely to discover a deeper reason for living. Instead of running away from pain or difficulty, he encouraged people to look for meaning within those experiences. According to him, even the most painful moments can teach us something important or lead us to grow as human beings. When we understand that suffering can have a purpose, it becomes easier to bear. His philosophy offers hope, especially for those who feel lost, empty, or unsure about their place in the world. He teaches that no matter how bad things may seem, life always has meaning. It might not be clear right away, but by staying strong, being responsible for our choices, and staying open to what life brings, we can find that meaning over time. This way of thinking helps people not only survive difficult moments but also grow stronger and wiser through them. Frankl shows us that the key to a fulfilling life is not about avoiding pain or chasing only happiness. It is

about finding purpose, even in suffering, and using that purpose to live with dignity, courage, and hope. His message is simple but powerful: life is worth living, and each person has the power to make it meaningful.

Reference

Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning: The Classic Tribute to Hope from the Holocaust*. Rider, 2024.