

2. Background

- Frankl was one of the foremost representatives of existential psychology.
- Frankl's ideas developed in Vienna.
 - Worked as professor of Neurology at medical school at University of Vienna & director of Polyclinic for many years.
- Frankl's ideas became highly popular in America & first logotherapy clinic was opened at International University of U.S.A in San Diego in 1970.
- Viktor Frankl foundation founded in S.A. in 1986.
- Frankl's entire life was earmarked by deep contemplation of the meaning & purpose of human existence.
 - At 13, he was opposed to views of his science teacher who contended that human life is ultimately no more than a process of combustion.
 - Efforts to reduce human functioning to sub-human levels & to portray people as mechanisms were opposed by Frankl all his life.
 - At University, he was a student of Sigmund Freud.
 - An assignment of Frankl's was published in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* – 1924.
 - Later Frankl was a student of Alfred Adler.
 - Became disillusioned by teachings of Adler and Freud.
 - Felt Freud placed undue emphasis on *will to pleasure* (need-satisfaction) as driving force of human behaviour.
 - Felt Adler over-accentuated *will to power* (self-esteem needs) as the most important drive for human behaviour.
 - He believed that Freud and Adler portrayed human nature one-sidedly & that humans seek more to life than just pleasure and power.
 - Frankl believed **human beings are primarily motivated by a will to meaning.**
 - Developed his own school of thought – logotherapy which became known as the 'Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy'.
- From 1944 – 45, Frankl (already a well known psychiatrist and neurologist became a Jewish prisoner & inmate of Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz and Dachau.
 - Prisoners were deprived of everything in these camps which contributed to a sense of psychological well-being, dignity and worth.
 - It was in these most adverse conditions that Frankl became convinced of the important role of values in people's lives.
 - Having something to live for was what enabled the prisoners to hold on to the will to live in circumstances that made death seem like a solution.
- Although Frankl is linked with humanists like Abraham Maslow, Frankl should not be classified as a straight-forward humanist.
 - Frankl's transcendental vision of being encompasses more than Maslow's theory of self-actualisation.
- Frankl is an existential psychologist with a positive perspective.
 - Existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre – human beings are victims of their freedom; they are doomed to choice.
 - Freedom to choose is an absurd freedom as people must inevitably confront tragedy and death.
 - Frankl's belief in indestructible significance of life makes his position more positive.
 - Death for Frankl is the boundary which makes life a unique, unrepeatable opportunity.
 - Life is given to us so that we can find meaning, even in suffering.

3. The view of the person underlying the theory

- Frankl's view highlights that as humans we have been given:
 - Freedom to be able to exercise responsibility
 - To live a life beyond mere animal existence
 - To live on a dimension of meaning in realising timeless values as these emanate from a divine or transhuman dimension
 - To live highly personalised lives
 - As we each in our own way, embrace opportunities & fulfil tasks that life presents to each one of us.

3.1. The freedom to be responsible

- **The human person is primarily a spiritual being – a being that has freedom and responsibility.**
 - This view of the person forms the basis of Frankl's view and his description of personality.
 - Person isn't just a highly developed animal shaped by the forces of heredity and the environment.
 - Humans have been given the freedom to be responsible – quality unique to humankind.
 - **Freedom to responsibility** – we constantly face choices and we have the freedom to choose.
 - ∴ We are not compelled to behave in a certain way.
 - Due to our free will, we can be held responsible for our choices.
 - We cannot ascribe our actions to conditioning (influences of the environment) or to a drive.
 - Since we are responsible, we have to bear consequences of our choices ourselves.
 - Freedom to choose represents the spiritual, or according to Frankl, the **noögenic dimension**.
 - Frankl believes this dimension identifies us as human beings.

3.2. A level of being beyond animal existence

- Humans need to find a reason to live – **true fulfilment is hardly possible without a sense of purpose (spiritual direction) in life.**
 - Central issue for people is not the struggle to survive but the struggle to find & experience meaning in life.
 - *'Meaning'* – the opportunity, task or duty presented to and discerned by us through our conscience as something we are to realise or grasp in each and every unique situation of our own personal lives.
 - **Every situation of life contains a unique challenge to live our lives purposefully, with meaning.**
 - Frankl takes a strong stand against the reductionism of psychoanalysts and learning theorists who explain human behaviour on the basis of phenomena that belong to the *sub-human* levels of being, thus denying that there are any differences between human and animal behaviour.
 - Frankl does not completely reject views of psychoanalysts and learning theorists – on a crude psychosocial and physical level we have much in common with animals.
 - **HOWEVER**, as human beings we have properties **not** shared with the animal kingdom.
 - Frankl believes that physical, psychological and social aspects of human life are natural aspects of existence and do not radically distinguish humans from animals.
- **Self-transcendence** is a uniquely human capacity – **we have the freedom to rise above conditions in being able to think and also do something about them.**
 - We can change our environment just as we can change ourselves.

- As human beings, we are primarily geared to find the meaning in life, even if will to meaning is dormant, unprovoked or suppressed.
 - When we achieve psychological and spiritual maturity, will to meaning will be stronger than any other motivation.
- Frankl does not see humans as striving just to maintain a state of homeostasis or need satisfaction; we want to be involved in something outside our skins.
 - We want to know about our humanity; to know why, to know for what reason we have been created.
 - **We want to live our lives purposefully – for a good cause, for some sensible reason.**
 - We will make sacrifices for the sake of a cause to which we have devoted ourselves, or on behalf of people we love and to whom we have dedicated our lives.

3.3. The transhuman dimension

- Frankl's view of the person is embedded in a particular worldview and philosophy of life – **that life has meaning.**
- Freedom without responsibility is senseless and leads to arbitrariness, lawlessness and chaos.
 - The freedom to be able to question life as to its meaning would be senseless if such meaning did not exist.
 - **Meaning is not something we create or invent – it is something that is found.**
 - Meaning exists in an objective sense.
 - The objective existence of meaning of life is phenomenologically proved by the fact that in the manifold situations in life, we feel *addressed* by our conscience, *called upon* to act responsibly.
 - **Conscience is the vehicle through which we detect meaning: the one right thing to do in any particular situation or moment in life.**
 - Conscience, unlike superego, has *transcendent* qualities.
 - To have a conscience means we are able to discern higher values and meanings, grasp their significance and freely embrace them.
 - We are not merely subjected to social restrictions internalised by a punitive superego & that we will succumb to it out of fear of what will happen to us if we don't.
 - Conscience functions on a higher level.
 - It is our link to the Transhuman dimension and our ability to hear the voice of the *transcendent*.
- Outside and beyond our ability to manipulate and destroy, life's meanings and values, emanating from a Transhuman dimension, have universal and timeless importance.
 - Life's meaning can be discovered & experienced by anyone, at any time, under all circumstances – 'Life is unconditionally meaningful'.
 - Experience of unconditional meaningfulness of life is illustrated by the phenomenon of *faith* – the unshakable belief that life has *ultimate meaning*.
 - Subjective experience of objective existence of a Transhuman dimension is graphically contained in the Scriptural description of faith which is defined as '*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*'.
 - **It is the person of faith that can in spite of all say 'yes' to the meaning of life under all conditions and circumstances.**

3.4. A highly personalised (personally accountable) way of being

- Meaning of life cannot be incorporated by any one or specific religious dogma. The dimension of meaning transcends our comprehension of it.
- Each of us must find and experience life's meaning in our own way.

- We all have the right to choose before what or whom we feel accountable.
- Meaning cannot be commanded or prescribed.
 - Something is meaningful only if the person experiences it as such.
- Religion is genuine only where it is existential, where we are not somehow driven to it, but commit ourselves to it by freely choosing to be religious.
 - Genuine religiousness must unfold in its own time. Never can anyone be forced into it.
- Frankl's philosophy of life – **life holds meaning under all circumstances and that meaning can be experienced by anyone at anytime and anywhere.**
 - This is fundamental to Frankl's view of man.
- The human that can question the meaning of life, search for meaning in and, in finding it can realise it in their own life.
 - Without a sense of meaning, a person feels unfulfilled as a human being.

4. The structure of the personality

4.1. The three dimensions of the personality

- Physical level – human described as ‘nothing but a complex biochemical mechanism powered by a combustion system which energizes computers with prodigious storage facilities for retaining encoded information’.
- Psychological level – person has needs and drives similar to those in animals.
- It is the **spiritual/ noögenic dimension** that is **unique to human beings.**
- **If human behaviour is viewed from a sub-human (non-spiritual) level of being, the uniquely human or spiritual aspects of human existence will either be missed or seen in distortion.**
 - A human being resembles a machine on the physical level and an animal on the psychological level.
 - Both are closed systems since there is no indication of free will in either.
 - As human beings we have a body and psyche but we are not just one of the two nor are we a combination of both.
- Due to our spiritual capacities, we are free – **we are open systems, open towards ourselves (we can think about and change ourselves) and towards the world (we can think about and change the world).**
- In **behaviouristic or learning theory** – humans are seen primarily as a mechanism.
 - Human behaviour is shaped by the influences of the human environment.
- In **psychoanalytical theory** – humans are seen animalistically.
 - Humans' behaviour is determined by instincts and drives.
 - In both freedom of will is not included.
- **We have a body and psyche but are essentially spiritual beings, we are free to direct our behaviour: we can use body and soul (psyche) to achieve ends that we have ourselves determined.**
 - The holistic nature of human functioning is explained by Frankl as occurring due to *self-awareness*.
 - Unlike animals, humans intelligently experience their bodily needs and functions.
 - Humans think about themselves, analyse their own motives and behaviour.
 - *We are present in everything that we do and experience.*
 - Human behaviour cannot be understood outside the framework of the experiencing and evaluating person – a person who decides to act one way or another.
- Frankl believes that comprehension of human nature and behaviour is impossible if sight is lost of the spiritual/uniquely human dimension of being.

4.2. The spiritual core of the personality

- Spiritual dimension – *personal ground of being*.
- **The human personality has a spiritual core.**

- From basis of this evaluating and self-determining ground of being, personality is formed.
 - ∴ It is not primarily our genetic make-up, nor our environments shaping our personalities, but what we do with what we have been given in terms of our genetic make-up and how we deal with the situations we are faced with, as well as how we relate to those whom are brought across our paths that determine the kind of personality we develop.

5. The dynamics of the personality

- As spiritual beings, we are different from animals in that our will is free.
 - Our wills are not simply instrumental in satisfying instincts (pleasure) or ensuring self-preservation (power).
 - Human beings are orientated towards meaning.
 - Humans can transcend themselves and their circumstances.
 - They can seek meaning in life and dedicate themselves to this meaning.

5.1. The freedom of will

- **Each of us experiences our own will as free.**
 - We can all admit that we continually face choices and make decisions that determine the future course of events.
 - Even a decision to do nothing, let circumstances take their course, not make anything special of ourselves and talents but to simply allow events to shape our lives, is a decision which represents a specific approach to life.
- *HOWEVER*, we are not absolutely free.
 - We must contend with our limitations and constraints placed upon us by the environment.
 - Our freedom is contained in what we will achieve, despite our limitations, how we will deal with and transcend the constraints imposed upon us by the environment.

5.2. The will to meaning

- **Will to meaning is deeper and more powerful than any other human motivation.**
 - Due to our wills being free, we are not merely propelled and aimlessly driven, as we can think and make decisions – we want to know why, for whom and for what we exist.
- These four observations can be used to prove that our basic motivation is our will to meaning:
 - **1. Will to meaning is manifested in circumstances of destitution as well as in circumstances of plenty.**
 - It does not matter whether circumstances are tragic or favourable, if a person feels that life has no meaning, discovering the meaning to life will become the most important motivation.
 - Even in circumstances of prosperity and success, when all needs for ease and safety have been satisfied, people can feel depressed or feel unhappy if life is perceived as having no meaning.
 - **2. Satisfaction of physical and psychological needs is not the ultimate aim of human striving, rather a means to being free to strive towards spiritual goals.**
 - Due to Frankl's belief that the primary basic need is for meaning in life, he rejects Maslow's theory:
 - Maslow's distinction between higher and lower needs does not take into account that when lower needs are not satisfied, a higher need, such as the will to meaning, may become more urgent.
 - **3. The more a person pursues happiness, the more it eludes them because happiness is the effect of the attainment of meaning and cannot be pursued as an end.**
 - A will to pleasure or need-satisfaction is not the primary tendency of human nature.

- Happiness is experienced as a by-product of completing a tasks or having experienced something of value.
 - If we pursue happiness as a goal in itself, it will evade us.
 - To seek happiness is to miss it precisely as it is the result of something we have achieved or realised in our lives.
 - Similarly, a clear conscience & self-actualisation are all effects which cannot be set as goals themselves.
 - *The more meaning we attain in our lives, the more we will be actualised – just as happiness is the by-product of the discovery of meaning.*
- **4. When the will to pleasure and the will to power are uppermost in our behaviour, this would be a sign that our will to meaning is frustrated.**
 - When the will to pleasure or power is dominant over our behaviour, it is a sign of spiritual emptiness – an existential vacuum exists in our lives.

5.3. The meaning of life

- **Meaning in life can be found in three principle ways: the creative things we do, the uplifting things we experience, and the kind of attitude we have towards situations of unavoidable suffering.**
 - *Creative values:* Values experienced through what we contribute to life, any creative contribution e make allows us to feel meaningfully a part of life.
 - *Experiential values:* Blessings received from life. Experiential values are manifested in what is good, beautiful and true. The greatest experiential value is love.
 - *Attitudinal values:* values experienced through the right attitudes we have towards life, especially towards inescapable suffering.
 - **The tragic triad of human existence** – the three inevitable facts facing us all the time: pain, guilt and death.
- Suffering does not deprive us of our freedom to decide how we will deal with suffering (the attitude we adopt toward our suffering).
 - If a situation cannot be changed and suffering unavoidable, what is retained is the freedom to change ourselves.
 - What then counts and matters is to transform a tragedy into a personal triumph and to turn one’s predicament into achievement.
 - When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.
 - By changing ourselves, by rising above & growing beyond ourselves, we exercise the most creative of all human potentials.
- **The moment suffering has a reason, it loses its unbearable quality and it becomes another of life’s tasks, one which – because it asks so much, offers us the opportunity to achieve moral greatness.**
 - Everything can be taken from man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – *to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.*
 - Suffering has meaning – it offers us the opportunity to transcend adversity. The freedom to live a life of worth and dignity remains, even in suffering.

6 The development of the personality

- The core or spiritual nucleus of the personality is already present at birth.
- Personality (behaviour whereby the individual is recognised) develops throughout the lifespan.
 - At birth, life is given to us with an open possibility – although we have not yet achieved anything, the potential to do so is within us.
 - Only at the end of life are we fully actualised.
- Our personalities are always in the process of becoming and we are the force behind what we will become.
 - Apart from our genetic endowment and the environmental factors that influence us, we are **self-determining**.

- *Biologically we are the work of our parents but spiritually we are our own life's work.*
- Uniquely human characteristics such as self-consciousness, conscience and responsible behaviour are phenomena that emerge during the course of development.
- Frankl believes that the person should be seen as a *Time Gestalt*.
 - Only in maturity are we fully developed and it is then that our uniquely human characteristics (**freedom of will, search for meaning, value realisation**) are fully manifest.

7. Optimal development

- Attainment of optimal development occurs when we function on a spiritual level – the spiritual side of our natures is fully evident.
 - When functioning on this level, we completely exercise our freedom of will & fulfil the basic human motive – **to search for and find meaning in our lives.**
- **Optimally developed people (people who attain full human stature) form a small minority as it requires courage and boldness to be optimally human.**

7.1. Self-determining action

- Mature people realise that they cannot attribute their fate to factors coercing them from the inside (drives and needs) or factors pressuring them from the outside (environment).
- Optimally developed people take a stand concerning themselves & circumstances, and freely decide what they should do and how to act.
- **Schultz** – outside forces can & do change our circumstances but we are free in how we decide to deal with them. We have the freedom to rise above circumstances and fate and must use this freedom to choose how we will behave.

7.2. Realistic perception

- Optimally developed people are able to distance themselves from what's happening to them, ∴ have the ability to view matters objectively and critically.
- They are able to perceive themselves and their circumstances realistically.

7.3. Humour

- Mature people distance themselves from their weaknesses and problems and can laugh at themselves.

7.4. Self-transcendence

- Mature people are outward-looking rather than turned in on themselves.
- They want to be involved in whatever gives their lives meaning and want to be faced with a task, challenged and feel that they have a calling.
- The fulfilled human being is dedicated to values and ideals.
- **Schultz** – we must move beyond the self in order to achieve intimate and productive relationships with the world and others.
- Mature people's own satisfaction and happiness are not the primary goals in life.
 - Healthy people always strive towards goals that give meaning to their lives.

7.5. Future directedness

- Optimally developed people will be actively future directed as they are always reaching out beyond a day-to-day existence, and have goals and a vision for the future.
- Their future-directedness makes every day a unique opportunity & makes their past a rich treasure-house of fulfilled possibilities.
- Death is not a threat to them as it has a meaningful conclusion to their lives.

7.6. Work as a vocation

- Mature people will regard their work or profession as a vocation.

- Their work is an opportunity to make a worthwhile contribution to life.
- Through their work they respond to the demands of responsibility.

7.7. Appreciation of goodness, beauty and truth

- Mature people are receptive to the experiences of the good, beautiful and genuine which life offers them.
- Mature people are open to the new experiences offered to them each day.

7.8. Respect and appreciation for the uniqueness of others

- Mature people's attitudes towards others is characterised by respect and appreciation.
 - They will never make other people objects for their own satisfaction/ use others to achieve their own selfish ends.
- They want to have meaningful encounters with others.
- They are free from prejudice and discrimination in their attitudes towards others.

7.9. Meaning in suffering

- Mature people have accepted the tragic factualities of life and have done so in a way that their meaning of life is actually deepened.
- Meaning can be found in suffering, guilt and death.
- People who discover meaning in suffering have reached the highest point of development.

8. Views on psychopathology

8.1. The noögenic neurosis

- **Most people don't reach optimal development because they lack the courage to respond to the challenge of life to exercise their freedom responsibility.**
 - Responsibility is evaded, avoided, shirked or minimised – their conscience becomes dulled.
 - Seeking pleasure, power and position, they have an *adroit busyness* (type of speed mania) that is symptomatic of the denial of the spiritual side of being human, resulting in the frustration of their basic will to meaning.
 - Life becomes empty and meaningless – an existential vacuum develops and manifests itself in spiritual or **noögenic neurosis**.
- **Noögenic neurosis** is present in people with the following characteristics:
 - **An unplanned, day-to-day existence.**
 - They live aimlessly, have n future goals and no real purpose in life.
 - **A fatalistic attitude towards life.**
 - They see themselves as helpless victims of circumstances and can do little to change their lives.
 - They believe their fate is determined by fate and the environment.
 - **Conformism**
 - To evade the stress of authenticity, people fall into a stream of conformism and do what most other people do.
 - **Totalitarianism.**
 - People prefer to be told what to do, what to believe and how they ought to behave.
 - They prefer to be blind followers.

8.2. The human dignity of the psychiatric patient

- Those diagnosed as psychotic and mentally deficient are persons, just like anyone else. They too have human dignity.
- **An incurably psychotic individual may lose his usefulness but yet retain the dignity of a human being.**

9.2. Psychotherapy

- Frankl’s psychotherapeutic method is referred to as *logotherapy* (Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy).
- **There is no such thing as psychotherapy unconcerned with values, only one that is blind to values. Psychotherapy which not only recognises man’s spirit, but actually starts from it may be termed logotherapy.**
- Logotherapy therapeutic method is intended for people suffering from collective neurosis caused by the inability to find meaning in life – ***noögenic neurosis***.
 - **Goal** – to help people discover or rediscover the meaning in their lives.
- **Essence of logotherapy is to challenge people to become aware of things which require them to be responsible and which demand their love, care or involvement.**
 - Meaning is not prescribed to people, their attention is drawn to it.
 - Done by way of *Socratic dialogue*: a highly challenging and questioning technique evoking critical and creative thought.
 - Through this, people come up with their own answers and come to realise what their lives are requiring of them.
- **Logotherapy is not problem-centred but meaning centred.**
 - People are challenged to consider the meaning of their lives and to discover the responsibilities and duties that they alone can perform.
 - Focus is not on their problems but on the freedom to deal with them.
 - Even in situations that cannot be changed, they have the freedom to make a stand towards those situations by way of the attitudes they choose to adopt.
 - Purpose is to help people view an existing situation differently.
- Other than Socratic dialogue, two other therapeutic techniques, *paradoxical intention* and *dereflection* are used. (especially in the case of people with phobias and obsessive compulsive neuroses characterised by over-anxious expectations and compulsions).
 - ***Paradoxical Intention:***
 - People outsmart the misplaced anxieties of the psyche with a humorous trick.
 - People distance themselves from their problems.
 - Through paradoxical intention, patients ridicule their symptoms rather than trying either to run away from them (phobias) or fight them (obsessive compulsions)
 - ***Dereflection:***
 - Patient is enabled to ignore their neurosis by focusing their attention away from themselves.
 - People are directed away from their problems and are encouraged to reach out towards someone or something other than themselves.
 - Two spiritual abilities (*self-detachment & self-transcendence*) are utilised by the techniques of paradoxical intention and dereflection.
- Patients are liberated from their self-preoccupation and made aware of the fact that they are spiritual beings who have freedom and responsibility resulting in an *existential reorientation*.

9.4. The interpretation and handling of aggression

- Frankl accepts Freudian notion of the unmistakable and pronounced evil inclination evident inhuman nature.
 - Aggression is an inherent part of human make-up.
- Frankl accepts the contention of behaviourists that we are shaped by the kind of society in which we live.
 - **HOWEVER**, Frankl contends that we have the freedom & ability to control our aggressive impulses and also to counteract and overcome them.
 - We can resist the negative pressures and conditioning that a hostile environment exerts upon us – *we can change the environment for the better*.
- *Everything may be taken away from a person but this freedom remains literally until the last moment – the freedom to bear oneself ‘this way or that way’.*
- People are beings who continuously decide what they are: they are beings whom equally harbour the potential to descend to the level of beast or ascend to the life of a saint.
- In terms of handling aggression, it is a question **whether we give impulses free reign or whether we behave according to the dictates of the human conscience.**

- Whether we have aggressive impulses or not, were nurtured in a good environment or not, what we choose to do in the face of aggressive impulses and how we deal with the influences of the environment is what is important.
 - **The nature of our choices will determine what happens to us: whether we grow in moral structure, or whether we lapse into evil-doing and become decadent and violent.**