



Spiritual Psychotherapy: The Search for Lasting Meaning

Maria Marshall, Edward Marshall

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Spiritual psychotherapy is a growing and evolving field of practice with ancient roots. It is a branch of sciences recognizing the multifaceted nature of our existence and interactions in the world. Aside from physical, psychological, and social factors which affect our health and well-being, spiritual psychotherapy recognizes the relevance of the dimension of the human spirit in the search for meaningful goals, relationships, and connections and our interaction with the transcendental dimension (which many people identify as the dimension of the Creator; Superior Being; the Divine; or God). The ancient roots of spiritual psychotherapy can be recognised in the age-old questions echoed in thousands of ways and languages across all cultures and all societies since the dawn of humanity: “Who are we?” and “What is our mission?” or in a personal way: “Who am I?” and “What is my mission?” Viktor E. Frankl’s Logotherapy and Existential Analysis (also known as “The Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy”) was directly derived from such deep-seated humanistic-existentialist concerns. At the root of Frankl’s theory is the conviction that the “Search for Meaning” is the most fundamental human motivating force. His theory, which is called “Logotherapy,” is based on three Pillars, basic assumptions, with profound anthropological, philosophical and psychotherapeutic implications. Existential analysis in Frankl’s practice (Logotherapy) is always more than a historical unfolding of events. Existence is understood in the context of the dynamics of the search for meaning (meaning of the moment) in the context of an Ultimate Meaning (the dimension of the Transcendent; Divine; or God) giving human life unlimited value and dignity. A doctor, a neurologist, a psychiatrist, and a survivor of the Holocaust, Frankl is world-renown for his book “Man’s Search for Meaning.” The work he presents in this book (the principles of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis) has been recognized both as a most significant contribution to psychological thought and movement, and conveying deeply religious thought. The present study employs a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology (qualitative scientific method) to explore the basic tenets of Viktor E. Frankl’s meaning-centered theory and therapy in the light of the Biblical narratives. Old Testament and New Testament writings are used as the context within which humanity’s search for meaning as a fundamental existential quest takes place. This methodology relies on a dialogue, interpretation, and documentation of evolving understanding according to themes. General questions such as “Which are the basic tenets of Frankl’s Meaning-centered therapy?,” “Which are the resources of the human spirit?,” “What is spirituality?,” “What is religion?,” “What can we learn from the Bible about the Transcendental context of our existence?,” and “What are the implications of our findings for current practice principles?” have been selected to guide the research project and gradually unfold to introduce the reader to the narrative (an evolving story of a part in the context of the whole). The reader is invited to join the circle of evolving understanding and journey of discovery.

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