

Man's Search For Meaning – Viktor E. Frankl

Author

Viktor Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist during World War II. Born in Vienna 1905, published more than thirty books on theoretical and clinical psychology. Died in 1997

Summary

Man's search for meaning is a foundational work of survival literature. It explains how humans have the need to have meaning in their life (especially in this modern world). This "higher purpose" enables them to push beyond their normal, physical capacities and endure the worst of atrocities.

He who has a strong enough "why" to live, can endure almost any how.

Life has a potential meaning under any circumstance

Essence

- Meaning can be found under any circumstances and is the primary motivator for humans. Hope for better circumstances is what gives life meaning (as in psycho cybernetics – engagement creates "life force")
- Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind. **The last human freedom is to choose one's attitude (response) in any given set of circumstances (stimulus)**
- Noögenic neuroses (existential depression) are caused by our current absence of traditions and instinct → state of boredom.
 - Conformism = doing as others are doing
 - Totalitarianism = doing as others are telling you to do

"Lack of purpose is the main cause of boredom, addictions, depressions, aggression and even suicide. Purpose gets replaced by will to pleasure (sedation/stimulation vs. "narrow road")

- Life in itself is meaningless – man gives it meaning
- Purpose can be found in;
 - Deed/work
 - Person/event
 - Suffering (return of instinct)
- Optimist vs. pessimist = sad and depressed by shrinking days <-> living for the "remarkable" future. Nothing is lost in the past but irrevocably stored.
- Realistic vs Neurotic fear
- En*theos "GOD – Within" "I am my own creator"
 - Man is ultimately self-defining. What he becomes – within the limits of endowment and environment – he has made of himself
- Your life is FINITE, be responsible. Choose morality, identity and purpose.

"We can decide the choice but not the consequence"

Practical

- Avoid “homeostasis – tensionless state” through noödynamics (existential meaning).
 - [Find your purpose](#)
 - Ask yourself: When I’m 80, would the life I’m living right now be meaningful? (looking back/change perspective)
 - Know how to “suffer” in the present by finding meaning/hope for a future worth living. (I suffer now for a better tomorrow → Stoicism)
- Choose your responses carefully (especially when it is difficult). Be an actor, not a reactor
- Live as if you were living for the second time already and you had lived as wrongfully the first time as you are about to live now.

Recommendation?

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