



# The Role of Ethical Values in the Meaning of Life and Its Impact on Education from the View of Frankl's Approach

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Received 17 Dec 2022

Accepted 22 Jan 2023

Online Published 25 Aug 2023

## Abstract

**Introduction:** No one could give meaning to the other's life, for the meaning of life is a personal not a general affair. Therefore, anyone should look for the meaning of his own life. The main goal of the present research is analyzing the role of ethical values and their contribution in education from the view of Frankl's approach.

**Material & Methods:** The present research with the help of descriptive-analytic, comparative and deductive methods has been written and its information have been collected through the documentary – library searching.

**Conclusion:** The measures and values could help men to find meaning in life to guide him to make better decision. In other words, a meaningful life is equal to valuable life, namely in the case the life could be meaningful that man recognizes the three creative, perceptive and experimental values. One can say that there is an interrelated condition between the values and the meaning. To Frankl the most indicators of spiritual life are magnanimity, accountability to the call of conscience and searching for meaning.

**Keywords:** Ethical values, Meaning of life, Education

**How to Cite:** Poorkami GGH, Fallah V, Salimi L. The Role of Ethical Values in the Meaning of Life and Its Impact on Education from the View of Frankl's Approach, Int J Ethics Soc. 2023;5(2):27-34. doi: [10.22034/5.2.41](https://doi.org/10.22034/5.2.41)

## INTRODUCTION

Talking about the meaning of life is a boundless discourse, because according to the various types of life, there are various meaning for it too and in the realm of existence, life has not evinced its truth for all the people and the successive generations as they step forward in this realm offer a new look at the meaning of life and give it a new meaning. Contemplating on the meaning of life, traces back to the history of man's thoughts, because since the time man learnt to direct his thought, the realm of meaning and the goal of life attracts his attention as an essential issue. The quiddity of life, its termination and the relation between these two, are the fundamental questions which have occupied the man's thought and as long as convincing

answers are not found for these questions, man could not live in the way that deserves him. The purpose of the word of "life" in this essay is the man's life. That is the life of the conscious and free man who contemplates and tries to make his identity. The phrase of the "meaning of life" possesses a close relation with the "goal of life" and "the value of life"; in fact, the meaningful life is the purposeful and valuable life. The meaningful life, is the life of the conscious man who possesses free choice and has defined a meaning and a "goal beyond the chores and unimportant issues of everyday life; as the result he regards life meaningful and precious [1, 2].

Frankl believes any endeavor to find meaning for life is a genuine and fundamental power; which is not the

result of the instinctive urges. He believes searching for meaning is an intrinsic issue and in no case it is compulsory [3]. With a look at the philosophical, psychological, ethical, polemic issues as well as the philosophy of religion and the views of philosophers and men of thoughts like Albert Camus, one could reach to this point that the meaning of life is one of the important issues in the contemporary world and various impairments such as stress, depression, despair, and nihilism, directly relate to the meaning of life. Increasing popularity of psychological difficulties, the impairments and the issues like committing suicide, breaking family bonds, augmentation of addiction to opium and hallucinogens and even juvenile's drop out all and all originate from the bizarre look of men at the meaning of life [4]. To the approach of Frankl, meaning possesses a high position, He regards the will or the freedom of choice which as man's fundamental motivation is focused on the meaning. To him motivation is so strong that could overshadow all man's other motivations; because when the life becomes meaningless, there is no reason to keep it on. Any how the life not only runs for the consciousness but for the exaltation too. Endeavoring for transcendence is the core of life.

Frankl believes that "meaning" is an exclusive affair not a relative one. To him to be exclusive and to be unique is not only the quality of a case, but it is the quality of the life, as a whole, because the life is a chain of exclusive conditions. Therefore, man is an exclusive existence from the view of the gem of existence. The final analysis is that no man could be replaced by the someone else due to his gem of existence and any man's life is so exclusive that no one could make it to stop forever for the sake of the same exclusiveness and giving meaning to it [5].

The main goal of the present research is to analyze the role of ethical values in giving meaning to life and its contribution in education from the view of Frankl's approach.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present research falls in the category of descriptive – analytic researches and has employed the descriptive – analytic, comparative and deductive methods. The method of collecting

the information is documentary and searching in the library.

## DISCUSSION

What differs the Frankl's theory of character from other theories of the character, is his three dimensional structure and careful explanation of its spiritual specifications. To him ethics is the main factor of formation of man's nature and its three determinant factors are: spirituality, freedom and responsibility.

### A. Spirituality

Spirituality refers to the non-material aspects of life which is absolutely differs from the tangible and material affairs. Spirituality means to be in relation to a transcendental existence which is out of our corporal existence, the existence which could grants meaning to the life of man and provides him a definite goal and under the shadow of is meaning he could attain internal comfort and tranquility. That transcendental existence is not God necessarily, on this basis spirituality is something more comprehensive than relation to God. To Frankl, spirituality locates out of the religious realm and merely relates to humane affairs and is out of the reach of other creatures. Spirituality is the humane dimension of human being [6]. Man's spirituality limits to his self. It is impossible to explain it with the non-spiritual affairs; some of the men of thought believe that the definition of spirituality is easy and restrained and it is impossible to define it with worldly expressions; they believe that the origin or the birth place of spirituality is not the worldly affairs, even though it could be impressed by the worldly affairs too [7].

Spiritual phenomena may be conscious or unconscious, nevertheless, the base of man's spiritual existence namely soul, is unconsciousness. This base, as like as retina possesses a blind spot at its beginning point namely where the visual nerve enters into the eye ball. In the same way the soul is blind at its origin and in this stage, it is impossible to see corporal soul and its reaction. In fact, what should define the spiritual existence is conscious or unconscious, is the unconsciousness [5]. To Frankl, spirituality is a path to attain meaningful and the meaningful is a current that comes out from the heart of the man's genuine humanity. Also in his theory, the concept of

spirituality has been employed in a more extensive realm which ethics locate at its heart and pertains merely to the humanistic affairs and other creatures have no share in it.

### **B. Freedom**

Freedom is one of the concepts which have been abused concurrently. Because its definition and its limitation in the long life of history and in the realm of various sciences, have been undergone many changes. Frankl like other existentialists regards freedom as one of the man's specifications and the sign of his humanity and he believes that the psychological and behavioral theories have emphasized upon the role of instincts and environment exaggeratedly. They have ignored the role of power of man's freedom against the internal and external conditions and even against the future events and they have regarded man as an automatic machinery at the service of instincts and outward conditions. While Frankl emphasizes upon the concept of freedom" he does not hesitate to define man's limitations and announces that man is an existence with a defined arena of freedom, he is not free to choose many of conditions and factors, but he is free to choose his own reaction against various conditions [8]. This freedom is not floating in the emptiness, he ceaselessly surrounded by various limitations and each of these limitations is regarded as a platform for his freely flight; essentially it is the nature of freedom that causes limitation [9]. Frankl regards freedom as emancipation from the three factors: 1. Instincts, 2. Habits and accustoms and 3. Environment. Undoubtedly man possesses instincts, but they do not control man and they are not the possessor and owner of man and contrary to what Freud who says man could make freely decide to obey his instinct or to deny it, Frankl in his school of meaning therapy, optimistically looks at the human nature and he emphasizes on the concept of "Freedom", "development" and "man's flourishing" in relation to the manner of his "choosing, through the huge wave of abilities and potentialities which are hidden in man's existence. The issue that which ability should be realized and turns to a never ending reality or which one should be destroyed, is a decision for amelioration or exoneration which man should make decision in any moment and enjoy of his free will. This is the best type of meaning of life [8].

### **C. Accountability**

Freedom is a man's prerogative advantage nevertheless to Frankl freedom is not the end of the word but it is only half of the truth and its negative and positive side is "accountability". Freedom should be placed in the framework of accountability, otherwise it would be placed at the expose of descent and decadence.

For this reason, he suggests in front of the Statue of Liberty at the Eastern coasts of USA. the statute of accountability be installed at the western coast too, because freedom and accountability are the two sides of the same coin. Since man is free to choose, he is responsible against his choices. The school of meaning therapy regards "to be man" means "to be responsible" [6]. "To be responsible" includes the sense of compulsion and commitment. For this reason, anybody possesses a special duty, who is obliged to undertake it and no one else could undertake this duty or task. This duty in man's life is beyond all other duties and according to law is equal to his abilities [9]. psychology of existence strongly emphasizes upon the fact that man is a unique and a peerless creative. Frankl on the basis of this view, regards man as a creature who has not any successor and introduces his accountability exclusively special for him and regards the essence and the gem of man in his responsibility [6].

### **The Ethical Values and The Theory of Semanticism**

To study the ethical values, we should take care to avoid from this inclination to regard ourselves as the main source of values, because logos or meaning is not only something which has been originated from existence, but also it would be placed against it too. If the meaning that man tries to realize was only his values or the projection of his thoughts, these values would be lost its combative and ambitious nature and it becomes void of the ability to push man towards forward or makes him to study somethings. The ethical values should be defined according to the conditions that the society or even the human being should follow it. Possessing the ethical values makes the path smooth to find the meaning of life, because at least in the experienced conditions he is not oblige to make decision. But alas man should pay for such condition because in the exclusive meaning which is

the result of exclusive condition, two values stand against each other and the clash of them, appears in the souls of man in the form of contradiction of values and such clashes terminates to neogenic psychoneurosis. Imagine that the exclusive meanings are as the dots and the ethical values are as circles. Obviously these two values would interact, while this case would not happen for the exclusive meanings. Man is always free to choose or reject the conditions which possess value. The same applies to the hierarchy of values, because the values have been formed and led by the ethical traditions and criteria, nevertheless these values should be evaluated experimentally. This is the examination of conscience unless man denies his conscience and suffocates its call.

#### A. Value Orientation

Believing in individuality and exclusiveness of man's existence, duties, responsibilities, pains and so on terminate to this fact that man's searching for finding meaning is merely a personal issue. As the result the meaning of life would become an exclusive issue. But studying the behaviors and the conducts which are experienced in the similar and equal condition by millions of people offers a common criterion that shows all that common actions and reactions are done in the direction that Frankl has defined these comprehensive and universal values as "Ethical Values". On this basis, value identifies with "meaning", of course not a personal meaning, but a comprehensive and universal concept which has been experienced and abstracted its meaning by many people and rooted in the world beyond the man's world. In the format of this general and comprehensive concept anybody could arrange the program of his life and on its basis could find the partial and exclusive meaning of his life and enrich his humanity. If the ethical values were not but the mental products of a certain man and do not root in the transcendental world and were not beyond the man's thoughts, every moment they would lose their essence and their nature [10].

From the view of Frankl, the meaning of life would be realized through three methods and each of these methods is corresponding to one of the ethical values. In other words, each of these manners could realize a value and flowering it. A healthy character designs his life on the bases of these three ethical values. Frankl

believes these values could help us to find the meaning of life and help us to make decision and the meaningful life is equal to valuable life. Once the man's life would be meaningful that we follow these three bunches of values which are regarded three extensive manners to find the meaning of life. These values as the meaning of life, for every one and every condition is the same. These values are:

1. The creative values
2. The Experimental values
3. The Attitudinal values

#### The Creative Values

To Frankl, creativity rooted in the unconscious of man's spiritual and means adding something to the world by benefitting of talents and self-expression. The conscious and responsible man by creating a work and producing a thought or service to others which needs self-sacrificing, gives meaning to his life. (6) The best method to realize the ethical values is "working" and the best manifestations of working is personal "job" that man through his job finds his exclusive relation with his society and by sharing in the society, experiences satisfaction.

Of course, Frankl remarks it is true that job may flourish ethical values, but necessarily does not terminate to personal satisfaction and no job could be regarded as the only factor of success and happiness [9]. The creative values which are conceived with creative and productive activities, usually originate from a "job" and everyone could show these values in all the grounds of life, in such a way that by practicing a valuable job or activity and by creating a tangible work, an intangible thought or by offering services to others one could give meaning to his life [11].

When the creative values are preceded to duties, their flowering would come along with man's job. As a whole working and activity pave the path to coordinate the individuality of the person with the society and through this way his individuality gains meaning and value and somehow the society in its turn grants meaning to person's singularity and individuality.

#### B. Experimental Values

In this path, man by gaining precious experiences like encountering to the wonders of nature and culture,

facing an exclusive creature; showing attention or loving someone else, namely by the tool of love would conceive the meaning of life [5]. Perceiving the beauties of art and nature and establishing an intimate relation with others could make life thoroughly brimful of meaning, because what is important is the depth and intensity of the joyful experiences not the frequency and their endurance [7]. The man who could deny himself, and is able to cross himself, is apt to forgive and to sacrifice, also he is able to percept the concept of love; when he is loved, it means that he is an exclusive existence and when he loves someone amorously, would turn the beloved to a unique one that no one could replace him. The healthy man could through this spiritual way, namely love, conceive not only the beloved's actual attributions but also her hidden and potential values and helps her to know her talents and realize those talents. He regardless of the beloved's physical and psychological aspects, infiltrate into his spiritual nature, enrich his values, in such a way that one can say love is a metaphysical approach. If the pre-condition for the creative values is endowment and granting to the world, the pre-condition of experimental values is the ability of accepting and receiving from the world. In other words, the creative values are active and the experimental values are passive.

### C. Attitudinal Values

One of the specifications of healthy man is creating attitudinal values in the painful and sorrowful conditions on the basis of wisdom and sagacity. The man's dimension of wisdom which is one of the essential and prerogative advantages of man does not need any explanation. But the issue that how suffering could be one of the man's exclusive specifications which causes development and exaltation is a discourse that Frankl has explained it in his book in detail. Before anything it is necessary to define "pain" and the specifications of "meaningful pain" from his view. To him pain is confronting with an inventible condition or an unchangeable destiny [9]. Man in confrontation with his destiny is free to form or to change it and if he can not to form or to change, he should suffer it bravely. The destiny is sometimes avoidable and sometime unavoidable, Frankl believes: "Suffering makes man to attempt and leads him towards development and maturity. Once endurance

and suffering gains meaning that pushes man towards a better condition and promote his position to "change himself". The change of self, means development and gaining a higher position. Frankl describes the process of his transformation in this way: "Suffering from something causes to take distance from it, we move towards the interior section of our existence in such a way that we make distance between the factors of pain and our character. As long as we are suffering, we are living in a state of tension between what should be and what it exists. In that case, we can play with our dreams and focus upon on our perfectionism.

Suffering, creates an effective tension and deep transformation and in this process, man attains a conscious emotion of what should not be [3]. The change of self, happens through the manner of looking at and approaching towards the problems and enduring the disasters. The healthy man, is the one who regards the motivation and the goal of life to attain the equilibrium, enjoyment and evading from pain and looks for the meaning of life and regards "searching for meaning" the main goal of his humane life, even though he finds "meaning in the pain and suffering". On that case he suffers ardently all the pains, because he believes in any disaster there is an opportunity to prove his merit and to resist against the problem. The manner of accepting the pain and suffering it, would show the man's internal immensity. What changes the man's conditions in difficult affairs is decision making and internal will, not the outward circumstances [12].

Frankl in the sorrowful conditions which is void of not any sign of beauty and any possibility for creativity, looks for changing the despairing condition to meaningful conditions. He believes that "suffering" possesses the most transcendental value and the deepest meaning of life. But what is important is the manner of man's look at the pain.

### The Role of Meaningful Life in Education and Training

Now how this meaning which has been formed of ethical interwoven values, could contribute to the education? With regard to the importance of meaning in the man's life, the role of meaning in education and training is clearly visible [13]. As the result the impact of the concept of such meaning on the education,

would be obviously great, such procedure could be terminated to the following results:

1. Obviously, the student who has found the goal of learning would conduct better than the learner who does not know why he is studying these difficult lessons. The student who knows that whose life is not meaningless always would try to learn various issues and to probe into the core of the affairs. As the result when he knows that his effort is not meaningless, his conduct would be much better than the one who does not know why he is trying to learn.
2. When anyone conceived the meaning of learning, unlike the assumes learning is collecting a mass of senseless information, without any goal, his effort in this field would not be meaningless any more. As the result with the true knowledge of the reason of learning and its necessity, he would keep in mind this fact that his effort is not meaningless and void of purpose; he would try to attain that purpose.
3. Naturally when the learner conceived the right purpose of learning and avoided from the superficial affairs and probe into the cores of the issues, he would come to this result that his knowledge are not merely theoretical issues, but they are an introduction to prepare him to employ this knowledge in practice and in the field of action too.
4. When someone conceives the reasons of learning, his ardor for learning would increase and if he faces with any obstacle, he would never become disappointed and would intensify his effort, because he knows all these obstacles and defeats have no weight against learning and perceiving the truth.
5. Such a man does not fear of blaming and does not retreat, because he knows to attain his goal he should endure many difficulties, he even helps others to overcome their obstacles.
6. In the absence of meaning of life, no one would struggle for his tomorrow because he regards any effort is fruitless, but when he perceives the reason of life, he would find his path in all the stages of life. The student who does not perceive the meaning of life, he would fall in the trap of absurdity and against any obstacle he would lose his courage and drops out of school, because he does not perceive the meaning of life and assumes his life is

meaningless and regards imbecility any attempt for studying [14].

The final goal of education and training is learning the meaning of life and the student could learn that the meaning of life is equal to live honesty, purposeful and ethical. The meaningful life is a type of life that man gains it in relation to transcendental affair and by perceiving it he gains tranquility and conformity in all the dimensions of life. These dimensions are as follows: Contemplation and belief, inclination, choice and conduct. The education and training that moves towards these goals should teach three potentialities of rationalism, ethics and faith. Everybody wishes to develop to a sustainable meaningful life in transcendental form. This is a desire that anybody intrinsically knows it. For realization this desire, man ceaselessly tries to develop. Indeed, the meaningful education and training is a social effort to facilitate and lubricate this struggle and through this struggle, life gains meaning. Therefore, showing attention to the man's existence, evinces the necessity of meaningful training. The importance of meaningful training is justifiable from various aspects:

First of all, the man's existence is an affair which is incline to develop ceaselessly and any valued perfection, comes after his existence. In fact, training is a section of divinely process of creation of ideal man as the successor of God and it is a sacred effort to realize the goal of creation. So, training helps man to complete the incomplete section of man. In this process the meaningful training could be realized by discovering the sources in the man that could grant meaning to his existence and also recognizing, developing and using these sources and on the other hand, identifying the senseless the sources and introducing them to him, helps him to attain easier the meaningful life.

Secondly man is a creature who is at the expose of various internal and external hazards and threats. To help him to choose an appropriate approach against the threatening dangers, like satanic temptation, the implausible desire of corporal soul, the awkward environmental factors, he needs a social procedure as well as the guidance of the reformists in the line of divine edicts to grant him intellectual and emotional helps. By providing appropriate ground such as healthy environment which is relatively free from obstacles that impede the path of development and

growth and also introducing the learned measured compassionate people who help them in a voluntary and consciously manner, they move towards mirthful meaning.

Thirdly; the multidimensional and stable development needs faithful, committed, effective, creative, disciplinary, honest and active people who undertake an essential role in the development of society. Undoubtedly the process of meaningful training, is one of the types of training which possesses a certain reliable method which has been equipped with the possibilities for the multidimensional grow of talents and tuning the balanced emotions of people and leading them towards perfection and exaltation on the basis of the values which is accepted in the society to realize this vital task [15]. The meaningful education and training offer four main processes in the line of understanding the meaning of life to the students, as follows:

1. Motivational process: The education which is in the line of understanding the meaning of life, explains the goal or the goals of life and its requirements and by creating internal mechanism and external motivations pushes the student to this direction. In this phase, the students see himself committed to attain the meaning of learning as well as the meaning of life.
2. Cognitional process: The trainer through making him familiar with life and its relation with himself, with God and all the creatures of the world, leads the student towards the correct meaning of life.
3. Social-Ethical process: Education and training by offering opportunities to students to practice accountability and ethical commitment to himself to God, to the creatures of the world and to the nature makes meaningful his relations.

Emotional process: The training programmers in the line of understanding the meaning of life should provide the conditions that the student learns how to enjoy and evaluate the divinely gifts and how to express his positive emotions to these gifts.

## CONCLUSION

From the view of logotherapy, the ethical values are exactly the same meaning, of course not the personal meaning, but a general and universal concept which has been extracted from the experienced personal meaning of life of various people which rooted in the

world beyond the man's life and every one could explore or adjust the more partial and exactly exclusive meaning of his life through the format of this general concept to enrich his own humanity.

Form the view of Frankl the concept of ethical values are plausible issues, either this concept possesses the divinely philosophy of life or it does not, the concept of value is the result of the realistic and experimental description of an event that man gains through evaluating his own behavior with other people; to Frankl the meanings are exclusive and special, but the ethical views are universal. To conduct according to ethical views man must rely upon his conscience, because his conscience is the only factor that gives power to man to resist against the effects of internal emptiness like inclination to despotism (the man who wishes to do the job that the others ask him) and symbiotic (the man who inclines to do the job that others are doing).

Frankl believes that the ethical values could help us to find the meaning and lead us in decision making. In other words, the meaningful life is equal to the valuable life; that is, in the case the life would be meaningful that man conceives three groups of values which they are as the three extensive approaches to three fundamental disciplinary measures and these measures and values are as the meaning of life for any one or any condition and any event are exclusive, these values are as follows: creative values, attitudinal values and experimental values. To Frankl meaning and value have been interwoven, in such a way wherever we talk of meaning, the ethical values would evince itself too and to him the values are abstractive meanings which turn to the base of experimental meaning of many people.

In the theory of logotherapy, the ethical values or measures are essentially plausible and universal. To Frankl the values are real and actually they exist. For this reason, semanticism does not create illusive values. To him the most indicators of ethical values of spiritual life are: magnanimity, accountability, responding to the call of conscience and seeking for meaning and man on the basis of these indications could respond plausibly to the complicated conditions of life and attain the meaning of life which is exclusive for him. Frankl's teachings are not limited to the training of educational system and in the framework of actions and reactions of students in the educational

environments, but his training teachings in the educational environments is so extensive that cover all the aspects of man's life that include all the man's identity. In education he emphasizes on augmentation of knowledge, man's accountability and individual freedom to choose and to believe and he regards search for meaning as the primary incentive and motivation for man's superiority, he involves the students to deep issues such as love, pain, sin, freedom and conscience and offers them some teachings to explore the meaning of life and finding the reality of his existence and his position in the universe to face the man's issues, before falling in the pit of the emptiness of existence. The course of existential training starts after the conceiving the existential moment and no education and training has been allocated for the pre-existence course, in brief the existential education and training precede to man's quiddity and his quiddity is based upon his existence that covers all the stages and aspects of his life.

Therefore, one can conclude from the view of Frankl that happiness is the product of a correct activity which has formed through searching for meaning and it would be attained through making love, suffering pain and flourishing the talents.

The final goal of meaningful education and training is conceiving the meaning of life and living ethically, honestly and purposefully. The meaningful life is a type of life that man lives in relation to the transcendental affair and by conceiving such a life he would attain tranquility in all the aspects of his existence; these aspects are contemplation, belief, inclination, choice and action. In fact, the meaningful education and training is the one that the axis of its trainings is "the meaning of life" and the experts of education with concentrating upon the principles of such training which is planned and deliberately designed, lead the student towards the meaning of life in the process of searching for meaning and helps him to experience a meaningful life.

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious

satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered by the writers.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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