

Afterword: The De-Psychologization of Logotherapy

Having read this book, I must really recommend it. Edmondson's writing flows smoothly and effortlessly, and the text is a delight to read. I would like especially to highlight the questions at the end of each chapter. Many of them are deeply theological and philosophical and made me reflect on my own researcher's positioning within the fields of philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, and theology. I have to say that it's been so long since I took my courses in exegesis and systematic theology at university that I picked up the Bible again and read it alongside the book. It worked for me, so I urge people like me to try this approach!

Edmondson's book, *Introduction to Pastoral Logotherapy*, is intended as a textbook for pastors, church workers, and students of Pastoral Logotherapy as well as others interested in Pastoral Logotherapy, so his choice of focus was understandably in creating a practical framework of theology and philosophy, and he had to simplify the sometimes complex theoretical framework of Logotherapy. I wouldn't want to change the content of his book in any way, as it does a really good job of connecting the theory of Logo-Philosophy with the practice of Pastoral Logotherapy.

As an academic researcher, my concern is that Logotherapy is often equated with psychology and regarded as a form of psychotherapy. These days, more than ever, it is essential to remember that Logotherapy is *not* and cannot truly be a part of psychotherapies, since psychotherapies¹ are based on the science of psychology, which does not recognize or acknowledge the Noölogical/Noëtic dimension of consciousness — a dimension qualitatively separate from the Psychic dimension — in human consciousness. This dimension of consciousness, separate from the Psychic, is a prerequisite for *human free will*, which in turn is a necessary prerequisite for *the human will to purpose*. Although the human somatic level and the Psychic dimension operate according to the principle of determinism, the Noölogical/Noëtic dimension does not: its operating principle is in accordance with free will. The human being is thus a '*unitas multiplex*' being-in-the-world in accordance with both deterministic and indeterministic principles.

Frankl turned to philosophy precisely because he was frustrated by psychology's deterministic and reductionist view of humanity, and he developed his own holistic perception of humanity, in which he highlighted the Noölogical/Noëtic dimension as the very dimension that makes a person human. As a neurologist and holder of a doctorate in philosophy, Frankl did indeed use the terms "psychotherapy" and "psychology," but only because all forms of discussion (or talk-) therapy, which were just beginning to emerge in his day, were referred to as psychotherapy. Furthermore, psychotherapy developed from the science of psychology, which was still quite young when Frankl developed Logotherapy. Frankl himself was appalled by the fact that human beings and their actions as a whole were being *psychologized* (he called this "psychologism").

¹ E.g. Behavior therapy, Psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapies, Cognitive therapy, Gestalt therapy, Integrative therapy and existential therapy, to name a few (American psychological association, <https://www.apa.org/topics/psychotherapy/approaches>).

Frankl's student Elisabeth Lukas made Logotherapy popular by updating it in light of her own theoretical framework: she applied Logotherapy to psychology, as she was a psychologist and received her Ph.D. in psychology in 1972. Frankl accepted Lukas's new psychological application of Logotherapy, because it brought greater attention to Logotherapy and provided new empirical data on its effectiveness. During the time Lukas developed her understanding of Logotherapy, the science of psychology attained the status it holds today; psychology became the discipline that gained a monopoly on the study, understanding, and explanation of human inner and outer actions. At the same time, Logotherapy's position as part of positive psychology was strengthened. Meanwhile, Frankl's original Logotherapy as a philosophically based therapy – in which the Noölogical/Noëtic dimension, distinct from the Psychic dimension, was the fundamental underlying premise of the entire Logotherapy – faded into obscurity. Instead, the literature reflecting Frankl's own experiences as well as his many interviews, received increasing attention, especially in USA. Logotherapy thus became popularized. Frankl noticed this, and in his view² the popularization of Logotherapy was both a good and a bad thing. On the one hand, making the theory of Logotherapy easier to understand brought it closer to everyday people ("*jedes Mann*"), but on the other hand, the theoretical (i.e. philosophical) basis of Logotherapy was eroded due to excessive simplification.

I understand that, in his day, Frankl did not want to — or did not have the energy to — fight the windmills of psychologism more effectively. Fortunately, however, there are now more and more psychiatrists and researchers in the fields of philosophy, the humanities, and the social sciences who criticize psychology's increasingly biological deterministic and reductionist concept of the human being. We are now in a situation where the setbacks that are part of human life are diagnosed as mental disorders and medicated (i.e., medicalized) whenever possible. Could it be that Frankl would turn in his grave if he saw how far things have gone?

Logotherapy and Pastoral Logotherapy are good examples of how people can receive help without their problems being classified as mental disorders or syndromes requiring – if possible – medical treatment. If the problems do not stem from psychic or somatic causes, Logotherapy and Pastoral Logotherapy are effective methods of providing help, as Edmondson's book verifies. But if Logotherapy and Pastoral Logotherapy are considered part of psychology or seen as forms of psychotherapy, it would be like trying to stand on two ladders at the same time—and eventually falling off them both.

I am confident that Tom Edmondson's book will be very well received in the field of Pastoral Logotherapy, as he has managed to combine theory and practice in an admirable way. This will undoubtedly be evident not only in his work as director of the Atlanta Center for Logotherapy, but also in his role as a counsellor and teacher of Pastoral Logotherapy.

² E.g. Frankl's speech at the First World Congress of Logotherapy in San Diego in 1980: The De-Gurufication of Logotherapy (Frankl 1988: The Will to Meaning, 158-168).

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