

PROJECT SUMMARY

FROM TURMOIL TO TRANSCENDENCE: THE BOOK OF JOB AND THE WILL TO WISDOM

Abstract: This paper accomplishes two distinct tasks. First, it develops Frankl's theory as a defined hermeneutic and situations the resulting logotherapy hermeneutic within the broader field of hermeneutics. Second, it tests the hermeneutic through a reading of the Biblical Book of Job. Key issues emerge through three movements in the book. The first movement addresses the existential vacuum and the rejection of reductionism, nihilism and psychologism. The second movement addresses the dual nature of meaning; an association is revealed between Frankl's understanding of meaning and the Jobian understanding of wisdom. The third movement involves an exploration of ultimate meaning and self-transcendence.

The paper presented here is an abbreviated form of a complete doctoral dissertation recently submitted to the Chicago Theological Seminary.”¹ This paper accomplishes two goals. The first develops logotherapy into a specific and defined hermeneutic. Although a logotherapy interpretation has been offered in the past of Biblical narratives, classical literature and even movies, this paper is the first to formalize key elements of a unique hermeneutic based on logotherapy. The second goal applies the hermeneutic to the Book of Job with resulting new understanding of the Book of Job and of logotherapy.

Specific issues discussed include situating logotherapy within the field of hermeneutics and defining the role of a logotherapy hermeneutic within that field. As

¹ Please note that this is an abbreviated presentation. Consequently, many aspects of the detailed argument are not presented. The full dissertation may become available after final edits are made. Please also note that the Chicago Theological Seminary requires papers to follow *The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). According to the American Psychological Association (APA), this variation is permitted if required by a specific graduate department for papers not submitted to an APA journal. See *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition*. (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2001), 332.

Frankl contrasted logotherapy with psychoanalysis and individual psychology, the dominant views in psychiatry at the time, so this paper contrasts a logotherapy hermeneutic with Biblical criticism, the dominant view in Biblical Studies at the present time. Following this, the Book of Job is read through the lens of the logotherapy hermeneutic. Three movements emerge. The first deals with Job's loss and resulting existential vacuum. Job describes his vacuum through the use of the Hebrew word meaning "turmoil." From the prologue of the book through the dialogue with the friends, Job confronts reductionism, nihilism and psychologism. The next movement begins with the Hymn to Wisdom (chapter 28) and concludes with the Elihu monologue. Through this section, we discover that "wisdom" in the Book of Job functions much like "meaning" in logotherapy. Characteristics of a "Will to Wisdom" are discovered and associated with the "Will to Meaning." Finally, with the appearance of God and with Job's restoration, we explore issues of ultimate meaning and self-transcendence.

Logotherapy and Hermeneutics

Frankl identifies logotherapy as "existential" and "phenomenological."² The use of these terms have converged within psychiatry and psychology where they apply to those theories that emphasize human experience over natural-scientific approaches.³ An understanding of how this relates to hermeneutics can be gained by turning to the

² Viktor E. Frankl. *The Will to Meaning*. (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1969), 5-7; Viktor E. Frankl. *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 29; Viktor E. Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy*. Edited and with an Introduction by Alexander Batthyany (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), 108.

³ Steen Halling and Judy Dearborn Nill, "A Brief History of Existential-Phenomenological Psychiatry and Psychotherapy," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 26 (1995): 1-2; Herbert Spiegelberg. *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), xxvii-xxix.

“common ancestors” of both logotherapy and postmodern hermeneutics: Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl. From here two paths emerge. One path is that of psychiatry as influenced by the contributions of Medard Boss, Ludwig Binswanger and Max Scheler. The other path is that of hermeneutics as influenced especially by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. Both paths move in parallel toward a position that overcomes psychologism.⁴ A logotherapy hermeneutic will combine the two paths, developing a postmodern hermeneutic with the specific insights of Frankl’s logotherapy.

Within David Klemm’s classification system, a logotherapy hermeneutic will fall within the realm of practical philosophy. The warrant for this conclusion comes from Frankl himself. He identifies the psychotherapeutic method of choice in any given case by the following equation: $\Psi = x + y$. The treatment of choice - the psychotherapeutic method or techniques recommended to the client - represented by Ψ is the sum of the unique personalities of the client and the therapist (x and y).⁵ A logotherapy hermeneutic can likewise claim the formula: $L = x + y$. Here the logotherapy hermeneutic (L) is the outcome of an interaction, or dialogue, between the reader and the text (x and y).

A logotherapy hermeneutic, therefore, does not seek an absolute understanding of what the text meant to the original author, nor is it free to impose a meaning solely because of its position as logotherapy (hermeneutics as theory of interpretation and hermeneutics as speculative ontology, respectively).⁶ Rather, a logotherapy hermeneutic will set a text in dialogue with a system of psychology that asserts that meaning is unique for every person in every situation. When applied to the Book of Job, a logotherapy

⁴ Viktor E. Frankl. *Recollections: An Autobiography*. Translated by Joseph Fabry and Judith Fabry (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 59-60.

⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 109.

⁶ David E. Klemm. *Hermeneutical Inquiry Volume I: The Interpretation of Texts*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 34, 37.

hermeneutic will set a text dealing with unjust suffering in dialogue with logotherapy that asserts that meaning can be found even in a situation of unavoidable suffering.

For purposes of clarification, Frankl finds it helpful to compare logotherapy to the (then) dominant schools of thought in psychiatry.⁷ Therefore, it may be helpful to a logotherapy hermeneutic to consider the ways in which it differs from the historical-critical approach, the current dominant view in Biblical Studies. John Barton identifies four characteristics of the historical-critical approach: genetic questioning, original meaning, historical reconstruction and disinterested scholarship.⁸ The Book of Job may have, and almost certainly does have, many layers of composition. While this historical-critical matter will inform a logotherapy hermeneutic, it is not the focus of a logotherapy hermeneutic; a logotherapy hermeneutic will be based on how a reader informed by logotherapy discovers meaning in the text as it now exists. This parallels the relationship between logotherapy and the empirical sciences. Just as logotherapy may be informed by a finding of biology, it retains its focus on the personal discovery of meaning. Likewise, a logotherapy hermeneutic does not attempt to reconstruct what the original authors or redactors meant. Rather, we read about Job's experience of human suffering after having been exposed to Frankl's view of meaning in the face of unavoidable suffering.

A logotherapy hermeneutic will avoid reductionism and seek to realize its insights in the living understanding of the text. This means that it will be true to the existential-

⁷ A current issue in the field of logotherapy is the recognition that psychoanalysis has been replaced by neuropsychiatry as the dominant model in the field. While Viktor Frankl's books critically address psychoanalysis, future logotherapists must be prepared to address the reductionism inherent within neuropsychiatry with the same vigor. For a review of the current status of the discipline and themes that have emerged regarding its future, see Marshall H. Lewis, "Congress Vienna 2012: The Future of Logotherapy," *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 35 (2013): in press.

⁸ John Barton. "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*. Edited by John Barton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 9-12.

phenomenological tradition that Frankl uses to develop logotherapy. A logotherapy hermeneutic will be practical philosophy in the sense described by Klemm, one based on the defined position of logotherapy, and will remain true to the concept of dialogue between the reader and the text. It will not reduce the text to the mere illustration of a point.

A logotherapy hermeneutic will avoid psychologism in that it will not try to guess at an author's intention. A world presented by a text will be seen as similar to a human social world; both offer possibilities for understanding, but not a static structure to be dissected. An attempt to reduce either to a closed system is to lose rather than to gain understanding.⁹ Thus, a logotherapy hermeneutic is an enactment of meaning for the reader; it is a concrete phenomenon that occurs in space and time between the logotherapy reader and the text. Unlike logotherapy, other forms of existential analysis derived from the existential-phenomenological tradition lack this concrete application that logotherapy makes possible.

A logotherapy hermeneutic, moreover, will make use of the distinction between literal discourse and figurative discourse. The former carries a single meaning; empirical scientific discourse is the premier example. The latter carries multiple meanings and may create new meanings. Poetry, such as found in the Book of Job, is an example of the latter.¹⁰ For instance, Job 28:3 reads "Men put an end to darkness and to every farthest limit. They search out ore in gloom and deep darkness." A logotherapy hermeneutic will read this verse from the wisdom tradition not as referring to physical darkness and physical ore, but to a manner of being that can only be expressed through the multiple

⁹ David E. Klemm. *Hermeneutical Inquiry Volume II: The Interpretation of Texts*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 91.

¹⁰ Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry Volume I*, 229.

meanings of these poetic words. Indeed, along with Paul Ricoeur, a logotherapy hermeneutic asserts that hermeneutics is properly defined by those expressions that carry a double meaning. Interpretation is the work of discovering the hidden meaning within the literal meaning.¹¹

Just as Frankl freed himself from the preconceived patterns of other systems of psychology, a logotherapy hermeneutic enables discovered meaning to be unique.¹² In doing so, a logotherapy hermeneutic will employ the framework of logotherapy that Frankl derived from listening to his patients. This means it will listen for expressions of the loss of meaning that Frankl calls the existential vacuum. It will be sensitive to expressions of Frankl's primary assumptions, such as the will to meaning, reflected in the way the text seeks to overcome the existential vacuum. It will look for examples of the categorical values – the creative, experiential, or attitudinal ways in which meaning is actively discovered. A logotherapy hermeneutic will explore the meaning of freedom and responsibility as the reader challenges her own existential vacuum through engaging in dialogue with the text. When applied to the Book of Job, a logotherapy hermeneutic uses Frankl's vocabulary of suffering – a vocabulary that many suffering persons understand – to explore a text concerned with suffering.

One Sample of the Logotherapy Hermeneutic from the First Movement:

The Turmoil of Job

“I am not at ease nor am I quiet. I have no rest, but turmoil comes.” In 3:26, Job names his psychological state רגז - a noun that means turmoil, agitation, raging, wrath.

¹¹ Paul Ricoeur. "Existence and Hermeneutics," in Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry Volume II*, 192-193.

¹² Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry Volume II*, 61-62.

The root verb means to quiver or quake. John Hartley notes that the word is set in opposition to נַחֵתִי , a word with the connotation of mental rest; it can, therefore, be understood as describing “the agitated state that results from complete lack of peace.”¹³ Carol Newsom notes that the word means shaking when applied to inanimate objects, and when applied to living beings refers to “intense emotional agitation.”¹⁴ The word carries more weight when considered within the overall context of chapter 3, as we will see. This is because, as Newsom notes, that turmoil “is to the order of lived experience as chaos is to the cosmic order.”¹⁵

In logotherapy, such a state of emotional turmoil is called noogenic neurosis when it is the result of existential vacuum; that is to say, when it is based on a sense of meaninglessness.¹⁶ As a system of psychology, logotherapy recognizes that mental distress may also be the result of other mental or physical factors. As a hermeneutic, logotherapy asserts that Job’s turmoil is intended to be understood as the result of existential vacuum rather than as the result of mental or physical distress. The reason for this is that Job is left in a state of suffering after having passed both of the satan’s tests. He did not abandon himself to nihilism; he retained meaning through the exercise of the attitudinal value. Yet, his suffering continues. It is described by God in 2:3 as suffering הַנֵּחַ . This word expresses the sense of meaninglessness. It is often translated as “in vain,” “for nothing,” or “for no purpose.” Therefore, the turmoil that results from such suffering is understood by logotherapy to be the result of existential vacuum.

¹³ John E. Hartley. *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 100.

¹⁴ Carol A. Newsom. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 94.

¹⁵ Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 94.

¹⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 85; Viktor E. Frankl. *On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*. (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), 161-162.

According to Frankl, the existential vacuum is a loss of meaning orientation, a loss of recognized meaning and purpose. This may come about when previous values, be they creative or experiential, no longer provide a sense of meaning.¹⁷ Frankl describes the existential vacuum not only as “the expression of a sense of meaninglessness, or of that inner emptiness and void,” but also as an “abyss-experience.”¹⁸ Job expresses the depth of this abyss-experience in 3:20-26. “Why is light given to him that is in misery,” Job asks in verses 20-21, “and life to those bitter in soul who long for death but it does not come, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures?” Further evidence of Job’s experience of the existential vacuum is found throughout chapter 3.¹⁹

Chapter 3 begins, “After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed his day.” The word used for “and cursed” is ויקלל . Different from ברך , the euphemistic word used in the prologue that literally means “bless,” Dermot Cox points out that this word for curse is typically used against a person, especially a person in authority, and not typically used against a thing or event, such as a day.²⁰ It carries a sense of trifling. From our logotherapy perspective, we suggest the use of the earlier word is avoided so that there will be no misunderstanding. Job is still not cursing God. However, there is a hint that he might, for Job curses his day, taken to be the day of his birth, in language that could more readily be directed toward God.

¹⁷ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 84; Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, 61.

¹⁸ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 59, 83.

¹⁹ We are not alone in asserting that verses 20-26 describe a condition that can be understood in terms of the existential vacuum, a notion based on Heideggerian *Angst*. To support her position that these verses describe an existence characterized by “the inability of the person to plan or carry out purposeful action,” and that, “what is lost is not simply the capacity to act but the meaningfulness of action,” Newsom references Philippe Nemo and describes his book as one that understands Job’s situation through the concept of Heideggerian *Angst* (Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 96). See Philippe Nemo. *Job and the Excess of Evil*. Translated by Michael Kigel (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998) in which Job and Heidegger are discussed.

²⁰ Dermot Cox. *The Triumph of Impotence: Job and the Tradition of the Absurd* (Rome: Universita Gregoriana Editrice, 1978), 38-39.

We cannot help but notice the similarity of material found in chapter 3 and Frankl's historic placement of logotherapy. For Job, both the pleasure of human contact and the exercise of power are found to be sources of frustration. Likewise, Frankl sees the will to pleasure and the will to power as inferior expressions. He calls both "mere derivatives of man's primary concern, that is, the will to meaning."²¹ For logotherapy, the will to meaning, or the basic desire of the human person to find and fulfill meaning, completes the sequence. With Job, however, the sequence in chapter 3 ends without the will to meaning. Job is left in turmoil.

As an example of the pleasure of human contact (the will to pleasure), we read in 3:7, "O, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry come in it." Newsom describes the verse as "a barren night, when no child is conceived, when there is no cry of sexual pleasure."²² Other fundamental examples of human contact include Job's grief that his mother's lap and breasts were able to receive him, such that he did not die shortly after birth.²³ As an example of the will to power, we find the kings and counselors of the earth described in 3:14b as those "who are building ruins for themselves." Newsom comments that the section describes "the turmoil of existence ... that derives from the exercise of power."²⁴

Both Jeffery Boss and Cox provide further support for our notion that chapter 3 represents the existential vacuum. Because Job has successfully passed the tests of the prologue, Boss asserts that chapter 3 is the beginning of an existential discussion, though Boss understands the meaning of that discussion somewhat differently than does

²¹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 35.

²² Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 94.

²³ Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 95.

²⁴ Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 95.

logotherapy. Boss reflects that Job sees the totality of his life as having been ruined and wishes to have never been born.²⁵ In essence, Boss states the inverse of logotherapy's position when he says, "The need for life's meaning must be the need for the meaning of life as a whole. If life has at one time meaning, and then none, the loss of meaning must be the loss of meaning for life before the loss as well as after."²⁶ Although both Boss and Frankl would agree that life as a whole either has meaning or it does not, logotherapy asserts that meaning can never be taken away from a life once it is realized.²⁷

Therefore, we must pause and consider what Job is lacking. What is missing that makes for a vacuum? As we have seen, Job has exercised the attitudinal value, a significant source of meaning in logotherapy. Specifically, he has held on to his integrity, rejected nihilism and reductionism, and has refused to curse God. He has retained his humanity despite suffering; this is something logotherapy insists is a human achievement. Frankl writes, "Once an individual's search for meaning has been successful, it renders him not only happy but also gives him the capability to cope with suffering."²⁸ Concerning the attitudinal value in particular, Frankl says that "even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation, facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself, and by doing so change himself. He may turn a personal tragedy into a triumph."²⁹ Yet Job wishes he was never born.

The key to understanding this inconsistency can be found, our hermeneutic suggests, in the frustration Job expresses with human contact and with the exercise of

²⁵ Jeffrey Boss. *Human Consciousness of God in the Book of Job: A Theological and Psychological Commentary* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 35-36, 38.

²⁶ Boss, *Human Consciousness of God*, 41.

²⁷ Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, 100 and Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959, 1984, 2006), 150.

²⁸ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 139.

²⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 146.

power. No expression of the value of his attitude can be found in chapter 3 despite the fact that his characteristic wholeness and integrity are accorded great value in the prologue. For this reason, according to a logotherapy reading, what might otherwise be an occasion to recognize the experiential value (his mother lovingly receiving a newborn infant), or an occasion to recognize the creative value (kings and counselors engaged in the act of building), become nothing more than inferior expressions of a frustrated will to meaning.

Moreover, Job expands the scope of the existential vacuum and curses not only his own birth, but the birth of creation itself. He curses his day in terms of day and night, light and darkness, essentially wishing that the light be deprived and the darkness prolonged to eternity. In other words, Job is wishing for the reversal of creation wherein light is never called into being, order is never brought out of chaos. Verses 7-10 elaborate on this idea by associating the night with the womb. Just as Job wishes for light to never have come to the night, so he wishes for fertility to never have come to the womb.³⁰

This idea is further developed in 3:8, wherein Job calls upon those “who are skilled in rousing Leviathan.” Our hermeneutic understands Leviathan as a symbol of the primordial chaos out of which God created the world. Norman Habel notes that reference to Leviathan as a violent sea monster is found in Canaanite mythology; Baal battles it. Yahweh also overcomes Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1 and Psalm 74:13-14 where Yahweh is said to crush its heads.³¹ (Leviathan is depicted as a serpent-dragon with seven heads in an Akkadian cylinder seal).³² Cox points out that Psalm 74 sees crushing Leviathan as

³⁰ Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence*, 40-42.

³¹ Norman C. Habel. *The Book of Job, A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 108.

³² T. H. Gaster. “Leviathan” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 3*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962, 116.

one of the first works of God in the establishment of night and day. While Cox acknowledges that many authors see Job as calling on professional magicians and astrologers in 3:8, he believes that such professionals, though they may offer a formal curse, would not be properly described as “skilled in rousing Leviathan.” He asserts that “rousing Leviathan” is much more than a wish to have never been born. “Those who are prepared to do it are reckless beyond measure,” he writes, for “rousing Leviathan” is an undoing of the work of creation itself.³³

These images of creation, and of Leviathan in particular, are understood by our logotherapy hermeneutic to be symbolic of ultimate meaning. Ultimate meaning is meaning that cannot be known; it is beyond the capacity of the human person to understand. Frankl calls it “a world beyond man’s world.”³⁴ Certainly, Leviathan is beyond the human world! It is also the only world in which the meaning of human suffering can be found. This means, as Frankl writes, “Man is incapable of understanding the *ultimate* meaning of human suffering.”³⁵ By expanding the scope of his existential turmoil to include the cosmic dimension, our hermeneutic finds that Job is wedding his sense of meaning to something about which he can have no knowledge, namely, ultimate meaning. This makes Job’s existential vacuum inevitable. For logotherapy, the solution is to separate ultimate meaning from the meaning of the moment – that is, meaning that can be realized through *experiencing, doing and choosing*. It remains to be seen if Job discovers a similar solution.

³³ Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence*, 42.

³⁴ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 145.

³⁵ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 145. My italics.

One Sample of the Logotherapy Hermeneutic from the Second Movement:

The Will to Wisdom

Meaning in logotherapy functions in the same way that wisdom does in the Book of Job. The section that we now explore, chapters 28 -37, begins and ends with wisdom poetry. Both meaning and wisdom refer to the highest aspirations of the human person. For Frankl, this highest aspiration is “that which most deeply inspires man; ... the innate desire to give as much meaning as possible to one’s life, to actualize as many values as possible.”³⁶ For Job, “Silver cannot be weighed as its price, nor can it be valued in the gold of Ophir” (28:15b–16a). It is something that is present and must be found. For Frankl, as we have seen, meaning must be discovered. For Job, wisdom must be sought. While both ultimate meaning and wisdom cannot be known in a certain sense, both, paradoxically, can be lived. Frankl makes this clear through the realization of his creative, experiential, and attitudinal values. As we will see, a similar realization of values concludes chapter 28. James Crenshaw’s definition of wisdom also contains striking parallels to Frankl’s categorical values. He defines wisdom as “the quest for self-understanding in terms of relationships with things (nature wisdom), people (juridical and practical wisdom), and the Creator (theological wisdom).”³⁷ Habel says “wisdom is apparently the deep and mysterious principle behind all other laws, principles, and designs of the cosmos.”³⁸ Paraphrasing logotherapy, we may even describe this section as demonstrating Job’s will to wisdom.

³⁶ Viktor E. Frankl. *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1955, 1980, 1986), xvi.

³⁷ James L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon Historical Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969), 132.

³⁸ Norman C. Habel. “Wisdom in the Book of Job,” in Roy B. Zuck, ed., *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 306.

One Sample of the Logotherapy Hermeneutic from the Third Movement:

Job's Final Response

Job's response of 42:5-6 is the most important statement in the book for our logotherapy hermeneutic. Strangely, if not ironically, it is also one of the most difficult to translate and understand. According to B. Lynne Newell, scholars have historically agreed that Job either repents, relents, or changes his attitude. This remains the case even among scholars who believe that Job could not have repented based on his statements in the dialogue. It has, therefore, been seen by some as a later addition, or even as hypocritical.³⁹ A new view was advanced by John B. Curtis in 1979, who translated the verse as a rejection of God. His translation reads, "Therefore I feel loathing contempt and revulsion (toward you, O God); and I am sorry for frail man."⁴⁰ Curtis's view informed Walter Michel's translation that omits an object in favor of an ellipsis.⁴¹ Our logotherapy hermeneutic sees these verses as the third response of Job. The first two responses, we may recall, occurred after the two tests of the prologue. Job's response in

³⁹ B. Lynne Newell. "Job: Repentant or Rebellious?," in Zuck, *Sitting with Job*, 441.

⁴⁰ John B. Curtis, "On Job's Response to Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979); 497-511. The crux of the translation problem, according to Curtis, lies in the phrase על כן אמאס which is a Qual imperfect that lacks an object. According to Curtis, previous scholars supplied an object for the verb, even if the object was Job's own "self" or "life." Curtis's approach is that what is being rejected instead is all that has gone before the statement. Curtis, "On Job's Response," 501-502.

⁴¹ Walter L. Michel, "Did Job or God Repent? Job 42:5-6: Ellipses and Janus Parallelism in Job's Final Response to an Abusive God and the Message of the Book of Job" (paper presented at the joint meeting of the midwest region of the Society of Biblical Literature, February 16-18, 1997), 5. Borrowing from Ugaritic, Michel also considers a possible translation of the final sentence, על עפר ואפר, as "a suckling of Dust-and-Dirt." Michel's translation is a particularly interesting choice to inform a logotherapy hermeneutic. As an Austrian teen, he was forced into a *Fuhrer-ertuchtigungs-lager*. He later became the Hebrew professor of the author. As a result of the war, the young man became obsessed with learning the truth. As part of this pursuit, he took a course in *Logotherapie* taught by Viktor Frankl at the University of Vienna in 1953. Dr. Michel informs the author that "the thing I remember most is that Viktor Frankl made most sense when he spoke about the divine – none of my theology professors made sense not then nor now. I began to prefer philosophy to theology – actually I began to dislike theology very much" (Walter L. Michel, personal communication, October 25, 2008).

1:21 is “Yahweh has given and Yahweh has seized; the Name of Yahweh be blessed.”

The second response is in 2:10: “We have been receiving good from Elohim, but shall we not receive evil?” Our translation for Job’s third response is:

By the hearing of the ear, I had heard of לשמע אזן שמעתין

you.

And now my eye has seen you. ועתה עיני ראתן

Therefore, I reject ... על כן אמאס

And I pity ונחמתי

Upon dust and ashes. על עפר ואפר

As Newsom notes, “Since the adversary’s challenge, the reader has been waiting to see if Job will indeed curse God to God’s face. What had been a figure of speech now becomes a literal possibility.”⁴² The difference between the first two responses and the final response is that Job now has knowledge of an ultimate meaning, of a world beyond his own. For logotherapy this demands responsibility. Job has become conscious of his freedom and his purpose. Our logotherapy hermeneutic asserts that it is Job’s purpose to put this freedom to the reader. The question is not will Job curse God, the real question is whether the reader will curse God in light of all that has just been read.⁴³ To pose the question otherwise is to fall into the trap of the friends, namely, the trap of psychologism that it is the task of logotherapy to avoid. What will the reader choose?

⁴² Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 237.

⁴³ Of course, all that has just been read is in no way a unified voice. As was pointed out earlier, a reader is likely to find voices that she resonates with and other voices that she does not. What has happened through the literary device of the speeches of God, however, is to serve to collapse the various human voices over against what we have called ultimate meaning. The reader is, thus, challenged to find her own human voice in choosing how to read the ellipsis. This position is similar, though not identical, to Newsom’s view. The difference is that Newsom sees the monologue of Job as representing the human position vis-à-vis the divine position presented in the God speeches. Our hermeneutic sees the human position as including all the prior positions, collapsed to such an extent that their differences seem insignificant compared to the ultimate. See Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 238-239 for a clarification of her viewpoint.

Max Scheler's "stratification of the emotional life" is highly significant to a logotherapy hermeneutic at this point. Scheler proposes levels of feeling based on the degree to which they can be influenced by outside forces or stimuli. The deepest of the feelings and "the least 'reactive' feelings are ... the *bliss and despair* of the person himself"⁴⁴ What Scheler means is that a basic attitude toward life is characteristic of a given person independent of events in the external world. As Scheler puts it: "For it is the *being and the self-value of the person himself* that is the 'foundation' of bliss and despair."⁴⁵ He elaborates, "Just as in despair there lies at the core of our personal experience and world an emotional 'No!' without our 'person' becoming a mere object of reflection, so also in 'bliss,' at the deepest level of the feeling of happiness, there lies an emotional 'Yes!' Bliss and despair appear to be the correlates of the moral value of our personal being."⁴⁶

This comes from the book that Frankl carried with him "like a bible."⁴⁷ It is, therefore, not coincidental that the original title of Frankl's book describing life in the concentration camps is *Trotzdem Ja Zum Leben Sagen: Ein Psychologe Erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (*Saying Yes to Life in Spite of Everything: A Psychologist Experiences the Concentration Camp*).⁴⁸ In commenting on the original title, Frankl explains that it "presupposes that life is potentially meaningful under any conditions,

⁴⁴ Max Scheler. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*. Translated by Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 337. Italics original.

⁴⁵ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 344. Italics original.

⁴⁶ Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics*, 343.

⁴⁷ Frankl, *Recollections*, 62.

⁴⁸ Viktor Frankl. *Trotzdem Ja Zum Leben Sagen: Ein Psychologe Erlebt das Konzentrationslager*. (Vienna: Verlag für Jugend und Volk, 1946). This book was first translated into English as *From Death-Camp to Existentialism. A Psychiatrist's Path to a New Therapy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959) and later republished in English under the title *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy. A revised and enlarged edition of From Death Camp to Existentialism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962).

even those which are most miserable. And this in turn presupposes the human capacity to creatively turn life's negative aspects into something positive or constructive."⁴⁹ In other words, Frankl recognizes that blessing and cursing, or bliss and despair, are interpretive rather than objective.

Of Frankl's three categorical values (the creative, the experiential and the attitudinal), the attitudinal value is the greatest. This is the value similar to Scheler's deep emotional attitude of bliss or despair. Frankl said "yes to life" in what he calls "perhaps the deepest experience I had in the concentration camp."⁵⁰ Frankl's clothes had been taken, including his coat that contained the manuscript for the first book on logotherapy that was hidden in the lining. Frankl began to realize that perhaps nothing would survive him – no family (the experiential value of love) and no work (the creative value of his book). In place of his own clothes, he "inherited the worn-out rags of an inmate who had already been sent to the gas chamber." Frankl goes on to report, "Instead of the many pages of my manuscript, I found in a pocket of the newly acquired coat one single page torn out of a Hebrew prayer book, containing the most important Jewish prayer, *Shema Yisrael*."⁵¹ This discovery became a turning point for Frankl. Lacking the ability to fulfill meaning through the creative or experiential values, he fulfilled it through the attitudinal value. He writes, "How should I have interpreted such a 'coincidence' other than as a challenge to *live* my thoughts instead of merely putting them on paper?"⁵²

⁴⁹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 137.

⁵⁰ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 114.

⁵¹ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 115.

⁵² Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 115. Italics original.

Frankl tells us, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”⁵³ This resonates well with what Newsom has noted. For her, the verses in question serve as a Bakhtinian loophole. That is to say, it “reserves the possibility of a word yet to be spoken.”⁵⁴ She writes, “The disconnect between Job’s framing of issues and God’s reply ... seems to create a sort of hermeneutical synaptic space.”⁵⁵ In logotherapy, this “hermeneutical synaptic space,” this space between stimulus and response, is where freedom of choice lies.

Unlike other commentators who see Job repenting, relenting, or rejecting, our logotherapy hermeneutic sees Job’s response as deliberately unfinished, deliberately left open. The reader must choose to complete the ellipsis, or not. The choice must be made even if “he has cast me into the mire and I have become like dust and ashes” (30:19), a condition not forgotten in Job’s response. Logotherapy’s dust and ashes, the tragic triad of pain, guilt and death, remain as unavoidable in human life as ever. The reader must now choose – does the reader choose to curse God and die, or choose to refrain, to choose life despite its inevitable tragedy. Our logotherapy hermeneutic does not choose for the reader. “Meaning cannot be given arbitrarily,” Frankl writes, “but must be found responsibly.”⁵⁶

Frankl writes, “After all, it is not the function of logotherapy to give answers. Its actual function is rather that of a catalyst.”⁵⁷ To serve this catalytic function, our

⁵³ Viktor E. Frankl, *The Harvard Lectures*, 1961, archive reference 19612, Viktor Frankl Archives (Vienna, Austria).

⁵⁴ Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 234.

⁵⁵ Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 235.

⁵⁶ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 63.

⁵⁷ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 45.

logotherapy hermeneutic restates Frankl's categorical imperative as: Live as if you were already living for the second time, and are now able to bring the experience of Job to your present choice.⁵⁸ To say yes to life means to realize the meaning of the moment through the categorical values simply because one makes the choice to do so. To say the same thing in the language of the Book of Job, it means to fear God and turn from evil, to choose disinterested piety. Cox comes to a similar conclusion: "Man can be righteous in two ways: by keeping the commandments and the covenant, which is the common level of righteousness; and on a higher level by rejoicing in the will of Yahweh ... by recognizing that there is a divine purpose."⁵⁹ In this sense, we affirm our thesis that Job's final response represents an existential challenge to reader that is nothing less than the existential challenge of life itself.

While our logotherapy hermeneutic affirms the existence of ultimate meaning, we nevertheless gain some insight here as to why Frankl insisted on a rigid boundary between the noetic dimension and the dimensions of mind and body. "The line between the spiritual and the instinctual cannot be drawn sharply enough," Frankl writes.⁶⁰ The human person can never experience ultimate meaning, just as Job never experienced cosmic creation, the foundations of the world. Newsom makes this point when she draws our attention to depiction of the boundaries of creation - the sea, the dawn, the storehouses of light and darkness. Only God can have a relationship with what is on

⁵⁸ Frankl's categorical imperative is: "Live as if you were already living for the second time and had acted as wrongly the first time as you are about to act now." Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, 89.

⁵⁹ Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence*, 143.

⁶⁰ Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, 32. For Frankl, this boundary serves to separate ultimate meaning from the meaning of the moment, the spiritual unconscious from the instinctual unconscious, and logotherapy from religion.

either side of the boundary.⁶¹ “Job and Leviathan emerge as paired opposites,” she writes, “neither representing the full image.”⁶² Neither, therefore, is able to comprehend the whole.

Summary and Conclusion

Key issues for a logotherapy hermeneutic become evident through this dialogue. When reading the prologue and the dialogue, Frankl’s concept of the existential vacuum and logotherapy’s related rejection of reductionism, nihilism and psychologism are central to a logotherapy understanding. Frankl’s concepts of the categorical values – the ways that meaning can be discovered through doing, experiencing, and choosing – come to the foreground when the wisdom poetry and Job’s monologue are read. The God speeches are understood through a logotherapy optic to involve the resolution of the existential vacuum by positing a difference between ultimate meaning and the meaning of the moment. Frankl’s notion of self-transcendence concludes the key elements when the epilogue is read.

The first movement in the Book of Job, as a logotherapy hermeneutic sees it, is the overcoming of reductionism, nihilism and psychologism. A logotherapy hermeneutic sees reductionism as represented by the satan, who asserts that Job’s choices are neither authentic nor free. Rather, his choices are determined by the hedge of protection God has put around him, caused, in the vocabulary of psychology, by the environment. Job’s refusal to curse God in his first two responses dismisses this argument. A variation of it appears, however, in the character of Job’s wife who recommends death and who,

⁶¹ Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 244, 252.

⁶² Newsom, *The Book of Job*, 252.

therefore, represents nihilism in our hermeneutic. This position, too, is rejected. Job nevertheless falls into turmoil, a state of noogenic neurosis, as the result of existential vacuum, a sense of meaninglessness. His friends represent psychologism in their attempt to give Job a meaning for his suffering. Although logotherapy resonates with many of their points, logotherapy understands that meaning cannot be given but can only be discovered responsibly by the sufferer. In rejecting the arguments of the friends, Job rejects psychologism and moves toward the discovery of his own meaning, even if the meaning he discovers is contrary to the teachings of society.⁶³

In the second movement, Job reignites his will to meaning through meditation on wisdom. The poetry of the section speaks to the meaning of the moment through the creative, experiential and attitudinal values. Job engages in an existential self-analysis and returns to consciousness previous meanings responsibly fulfilled. Through the use of the categorical values, logotherapy provides a hermeneutic that is able to hold both the beauty of nature and the pain of suffering together as avenues for the discovery of meaning. Frankl writes, “In camp, too, a man might draw the attention of a comrade working next to him to a nice view of the setting sun shining through the tall trees of the Bavarian woods (as in the famous watercolor by Dürer), the same woods in which we had built an enormous, hidden munitions plant.”⁶⁴ Job remains unsatisfied, however. He

⁶³ The close agreement between logotherapy and the psychologism of the friends of Job is worrisome from the point of view of clinical practice. A logotherapy hermeneutic serves as a warning to logotherapists to avoid reducing any sufferer to the simple understanding offered by any psychological theory, even if that theory is logotherapy itself. Just as Frankl did when developing logotherapy, current and future logotherapists must be willing to authentically hear their clients; they must be sensitive to hearing the will to meaning that is expressed, even if that will to meaning runs counter to the framework of logotherapy.

⁶⁴ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 40. On the same page, Frankl gives another example: “One evening, when we were already resting on the floor of our hut, dead tired, soup bowls in hand, a fellow prisoner rushed in and asked us to run out to the assembly grounds to see the wonderful sunset. Standing outside we saw sinister clouds glowing in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel blue to blood red. The desolate grey mud huts provided a sharp contrast,

perceives that meaning in life is in some way dependent upon an ultimate meaning, but has no way to separate his immediate, local experience (the meaning of the moment) from that of ultimate meaning.

The third movement provides this realization. God questions Job as life questions the reader. Images of the foundation of creation come to Job from out of the existential vacuum. He comes to acknowledge that an ultimate reality, an ultimate meaning, is real, although beyond his comprehension. This disconnection between God's world and Job's world leaves Job, and the reader, free to choose a response. As Frankl himself discovered, one is always free to say yes or no to life, or, in the language of the Book of Job, to curse God and die, or not, despite circumstances. "To be sure, a human being is a finite thing," Frankl writes, "and his freedom is restricted. It is not freedom from conditions, but it *is* freedom to take a stand toward conditions."⁶⁵ A space is presented to the reader to consider her choice. This is the attitudinal value. Once Job has found meaning through the attitudinal value, that is to say, in his freedom to choose his response, he then is capable of self-transcendence; he becomes responsible in a meaningful way toward the very friends who sought to reduce him.⁶⁶

Cox provides some additional support for this conclusion. He explains, first, that Job's "basic premise was correct: the cosmos is, in man's experience, irrational and at times mindlessly cruel."⁶⁷ Second, however, Job learns that some ultimate order does

while the puddles on the muddy ground reflected the glowing sky. Then, after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said to another, "How beautiful the world *could* be!" (Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 40, italics original).

⁶⁵ Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 130. Italics original.

⁶⁶ Boss, also, concludes that Job has gone through three different psychological stages. Our logotherapy reading differs from Boss's more general psychological reading in that it offers a theoretically consistent framework from which to understand these three states. See Boss, *Human Consciousness of Job*, 198.

⁶⁷ Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence*, 152.

exist. In the words of Cox, “Yahweh is not a God who takes away pain, or who carefully correlates the elements of existence so as to exhibit a pattern.”⁶⁸ He continues, “He is essentially the ‘something outside’ that gives meaning to an absurd existence by the hope that there is an ultimate meaning, an ultimate plan. He does not show man the plan, for man could not comprehend it if he saw it.”⁶⁹ Frankl agrees.

Logotherapy goes further than this, however, inasmuch as it provides a rationale for disinterested piety, the original challenge offered up by the satan. By separating ultimate meaning from the meaning of the moment, one is always able to discover meaning despite the lack knowledge. “What is demanded of man is not, as some existential philosophers teach, to endure the meaninglessness of life, but rather to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms,” Frankl writes.⁷⁰ Indeed, from the viewpoint of logotherapy, meaning is unconditional and always available. Frankl says that “the meaning of life always changes, but that it never ceases to be.”⁷¹ By being responsible to his friends, Job has discovered meaning in the moment despite his inability to understand the ultimate meaning that spoke to him from out of the tempest. In other words, in the epilogue, Job’s piety becomes one of choice in the moment rather than one based on future expectation as in the monologue.

Frankl’s tragic triad of pain, guilt and death are universal human experiences. They are reflected in the lives of all human beings, all of whom are sufferers in some way, and are central themes in much of the world’s great sacred and classic literature. Not only does the voice of Viktor Frankl deserve to be heard in dialogue with these great

⁶⁸ Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence*, 153.

⁶⁹ Cox, *The Triumph of Impotence*, 153-154.

⁷⁰ Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 118.

⁷¹ Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 111.

works, his logotherapy and existential analysis provides a hermeneutic viewpoint for which there can be no substitute. If Frankl could speak to Job, I think he would say, “Bear your suffering with such integrity and wholeness that God may, in fact, someday answer you.”⁷²

⁷² The warrant for this speculation comes from Frankl’s case study of the rabbi who had lost his children as told in Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 119-120.