

A Critical Study On William Shakespeare's Soliloquies In Hamlet: Logotherapeutic Perspective

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ABSTRACT: A critical analysis of William Shakespeare's soliloquies in Hamlet is presented in this article. The study uses Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, which is a theoretical combination of the three most significant tenets or pillars that form the basis of logotherapy. There are three fundamental assumptions of logotherapy, according to Frankl. Viktor Frankl's theory is used to analyze Hamlet's first soliloquy, emphasizing on "existential frustration" and its positive impact. Frankl asserts that there are three different meanings associated with the term "existential." The first one is to existence itself, which is the human way of being. Finding tangible significance in one's own life, or will to meaning, is the third meaning, while the second meaning relates to the meaning of existence (Frankl 106). Thus, from the perspective of logotherapy, Hamlet's soliloquies acquire a new significance. Furthermore, a fresh perspective on the analysis of William Shakespeare's soliloquies in Hamlet is a cherry on top of Shakespeare's brainchild, which is universal across all languages and civilizations and is born anew in every generation

Keywords: Viktor E. Frankl, Logotherapy, Soliloquies, Will to Meaning, Existential Frustration

1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article, "Logotherapy: A Critical Study on William Shakespeare's Soliloquies in *Hamlet*," is to examine how Viktor Frankl's ideas of logotherapy are incorporated into the soliloquies. Shakespeare's soliloquies are well known around the world, and there are many different interpretations of them. However, the soliloquies are like a flowing stream that produces new and innovative ideas from researchers all around the world. Here, the researcher has recognized the ideas of logotherapy that reshape Prince Hamlet's perspective toward a meaningful life rather than one of "existential frustration" and transcend the lines of soliloquies. This article merely scratches the surface of what can be discovered by applying the ideas of logotherapy to the soliloquies of Hamlet. Here, Viktor Frankl's logotherapy—which takes a positive perspective to offer meaning even in the face of the most dire circumstances—is used to interpret the soliloquies. Thus, soliloquies are an instrument to let out the complex mental state and provide relief to the mind.

11. VIKTOR E.FRANKL

Viktor Emil Frankl was born on (March 26, 1905, Vienna, Austria—died September 2, 1997, Vienna). Frankl was born as the fourth child to Gabriel Frankl, a civil servant in the Ministry of Social Service and his mother Elsa. He belongs to a Jewish family in Vienna, then the Austro – Hungarian Empire. Gabriel Frankl was self-disciplined, hot tempered, possessed positive attitude and he was a perfectionist. On the other hand Elsa his mother was kind hearted and a pious woman. Gabriel Frankl prayed every morning and his father's prayer life left a deep impression on his son. Frankl had an older brother named Walter and his younger sister Stella (Redsand 2006). Viktor Frankl was fascinated by psychology even as a young student and as a teenager he began corresponding with Sigmund Freud. Viktor Frankl had been trained as a physician and he got specialization in psychiatry and neurology before being taken into concentration camps. He was a professor o/f neurology and psychiatry at the University of Vienna Medical School. He was a philosopher, author, and Holocaust survivor. For twenty –five years he was head of the Vienna Neurological Policlinic. He developed a psychological approach well known as "Logotherapy". It is popularly known as the "third school" of Viennese Psychotherapy after the "first school" of Sigmund Freud and the "second school" of Alfred Adler. Viktor Emil Frankl's book *Man's Search for meaning* the writer gives a gigantic view of "everyday life in a concentration camp" (Frankl, 2004). "The basis of Frankl's theory was that the primary motivation of an individual is the search for meaning in life and that the primary purpose of psychotherapy should be to help the individual find that meaning" (Britannica, 2023). His terrible experience and suffering in various concentration camps taught him the ultimate meaning of life and that each individual is earnestly thirsting for meaning in life and not a quest for power or pleasure. Each bitter experience in the camps did not break his spirit but elevated his spirit with hope and courage to live each day. During World War 11 Frankl spent three years at Auschwitz, Dachau and other concentration camps. Experiences in the concentration camps and bodily torture did not imprison his thoughts or as he calls "barbed wire sickness" could not affect his mind. Frankl got accustomed to terrible and immense horror of seeing each day 'watch towers, search lights and long columns of ragged human figures.' Sweet memories of the past, thoughts about his wife and life out of the concentration camps kept alive his hope. He held professorships at Harvard, Stanford, Dallas, and Pittsburgh, and was Distinguished Professor of Logotherapy at the U.S. International University of Vienna. Frankl's thirty-nine books appeared in forty languages. His book *Man's Search for Meaning* has sold millions of copies and has been listed among "the ten most influential books in America" according to a survey conducted by the Book of the Month Club and the

Library of Congress. Honorary doctoral degrees were conferred upon him by twenty-nine universities and he was a guest lecturer at universities throughout the world (Frankl, 2004).

111. LOGOTHERAPY

During one of Frankl's public lectures in Germany, he used the word '*logotherapy*' for the first time. It was the unique term used to describe the approach to a humanistic form of psychotherapy. The following is the true statement of Frankl himself:

Logos is a Greek word which denotes "meaning." Logotherapy, or, as it has been called by some authors, The Third Viennese School of psychotherapy, focuses on the meaning of human existence as well as on man's search for such a meaning. According to Logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a *will to meaning* in contrast to the pleasure principle (or, as we could also term it, the *will to pleasure*) on which the Freudian psychoanalysis is centered, as well as in contrast to the *will to power* on which Adlerian psychology, using the term striving for superiority, is focused (Frankl, 2008, p.104)

According to Dickson (1975) Logotherapy, "Is the process of emotional growth through the discovery of meaning."

Logotherapy is "therapy through meaning," guiding people towards understanding themselves as they are and could be and their place in the totality of living. Logotherapy is an existential therapy based on actual experiences. It help us have a fresh look at ourselves, our limitations and potentials, failures and visions our total experiences, with people to encounter, disappointments to overcome, hopes to realize and tasks to fulfill (Fabry, 1980, P. xiii- xiv)

According to Joseph Fabry the definition of logotherapy is: "Logotherapy is a method to help persons whose life has become empty and meaningless to lead a fuller existence. Lack of meaning may be experienced as frustration, doubt, confusion, unhappiness, a sense of failure, of being trapped, of having been betrayed by life, of not living up to one's potential" (Fabry et.al.1978 p.12).

Logotherapy varies from psychoanalysis as its main concern consists in fulfilling meaning rather than mere gratification and satisfaction of drives or in merely reconciling the conflicting claims of 'id', 'ego' and 'superego' or in adapting and adjusting to society and environment. According to Frankl there are three Basic Assumptions of Logotherapy. Logotherapy is founded on the following principles:-

- Life has meaning under all circumstances.
- People have a will to meaning.
- People have freedom under all circumstances to activate the will to meaning and to find meaning. (Freedom of Will) (Frankl).

The Latin words "solus," which means alone, and "loqui," which means to talk, are the roots of the English word soliloquy (Merriam, 1828). It is a solitary conversation with oneself. Self-talk and soliloquies reveal the innermost thoughts. One's complex ideas, feelings, guilt, attitudes, motivations, delight, doubts, worries, wrath, and mental and emotional states are all revealed. It brings out mind's good and negative attitudes. It gives insight into a person's personality. It serves as a tool for comprehending one's inner peace or conflict. It is the clear sight of the heart and intellect that opens a person's psychological state. It is a person's mental key and window. Self-talk and soliloquies are a way to express both good and negative thoughts. Other terms for self-talk include soliloquy, inner dialogue, and private communication. We hear this inner voice in our heads. Negative self-talk can undoubtedly cause addictions and other forms of devastation. Frustration, hatred, suicide, mental illness, despair, spiritual conflict, and unhealthy habits like smoking and drunkenness are all consequences of it. In a similar vein, positive self-talk can energize and uplift the passion and spirit that gives purpose of life, happiness, success, tranquility, and growth in positive relationships with others and oneself. In a drama, the audience listens to the soliloquy, which reveals the audience's mental condition; yet, the individual's self-talk is concealed within the mind of a person; and there lies everything good or bad. A negative attitude is like a volcano that moves itself within, destroying mental peace. The most effective conversation one can have with oneself is self-talk. Our self-concept is shaped by our self-talk. It is normal for most individuals to focus on the negative aspects of emotions that can undermine a calm and healthy life instead of the positive ideas and attitudes that make us better (Jensen, 2012). Talking to oneself, either silently or out loud, is known as soliloquy. It refers to the practice of a character speaking out loud when alone on stage in drama. This technique has been employed by playwrights as a practical means of elucidating the motivations and emotional states of characters, as well as for expositional purposes and occasionally to direct the audience's reactions and judgments (Abrams, 2005, P. 299).

1V.WILL to MEANING

Frankl in his book *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism* explains the will to meaning:

In the terminology of modern psychology the will to meaning has "survival value." This was the lesson I had to learn in three years spent in Auschwitz and Dachau, those most apt to survive the camps were those oriented towards the future – towards a task or a person waiting for them in future, toward a meaning to be fulfilled by them in the future (Frankl, 1978, p.34).

The will to meaning is actually the basic quest of human beings to find meaning and attain the goal of life. Human beings are able to transcend their immediate circumstances to something, someone else or something higher (Antony, 2003).

Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* defines the will to meaning:

Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning... Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values! (Frankl 2008 p.105).

V.EXISTENTIAL FRUSTRATION

The focus of Frankl's logotherapy theory is "existential frustration." He asserts that there are three different meanings associated with the term "existential." The first one is to existence itself, which is the human way of being. Finding tangible significance in one's own life, or will to meaning, is the third meaning, while the second meaning relates to the meaning of existence (Frankl 106). The opening soliloquy of Hamlet clearly illustrates each of the three levels of meaning to which Frankl alludes in his theory are visibly portrayed in the first soliloquy of Hamlet:

O, that this too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd

His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God! (*Hamlet 1.2. 132-135*).

Hamlet wants his flesh to melt and vanish into the cosmos because his desire for purpose is so unfulfilled. He is unable to bear the pain, suffering, and weight he feels inside. Therefore, his only desire is to cease to exist or to permanently disappear from this world. Hamlet's metaphor of "resolve itself into dew!" alludes to the pointlessness of existence and vanishing completely. However, he is abruptly reminded of God's prohibition against "self-slaughter" and may be punishment. Hamlet exclaims, "O God! God!" because he knows that God is his only solace and who alone can free his heart. "Come to me, all of you who are tired of carrying heavy burdens, and I will grant you rest," said Jesus. Matthew 11:28. "Hamlet's name, speeches, and sayings are merely the poet's idle jargon." Are they not real, then? They are just as genuine as our own ideas. The reader imagines their reality. We are Hamlet, after all (Clapp 105).

Only after William Shakespeare's death did notable thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, and Arthur Schopenhauer develop their views of existentialist. Shakespeare, however, was able to convey profound ideas through his brainchild, Hamlet. His topics are so timeless that they captivate audiences worldwide and continue to do so now (Clapp iii).

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world!

Fie on't ! O, fie, fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,

That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature (*Hamlet 1.2. 136-139*).

Hamlet understands the vanity of all earthly possessions and goods. He finds a complete meaningless world around him that it becomes an "unweeded garden," which grows unattended. He experiences a terrible misery of his mind on account of death of his father and the remarriage of his mother with a "wicked speed".

Frankl in his book *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy* states that "... The Freudian pleasure principal is the guiding principal of the small child, the Adlerian power principal is that of the adolescent, and the will to meaning is the guiding principal of the mature adult" (Frankl 2014,p.25). The result of the frustration of the will to meaning is nothing but, existential vacuum. Hamlet's experience of "solid flesh" melting is the result of existential vacuum. Hamlet is sick at heart, but not a 'mental disease'. According to Frankl "existential frustration" resulting in neuroses and in logotherapy it is called "noogenic neuroses" (from the Greek noos meaning mind) which means "anything pertaining to the specifically human dimension" (Frankl 106).

Possess it merely. That it should come to this!

But two months dead! - nay, not so much, not two:

So excellent a king; that was, to this,

Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,

That he might not beteem the winds of heaven (*Hamlet 1.2. 140- 144*).

"Hamlet's soliloquies are seven sessions with the audience as psychiatrist, counselor, and analyst," according to Ralph Berry (quoted in Maher, p. xxi). Indeed, every person is different, and so are their capacities for perception and interpretation. Hamlet, a superb illustration of how the human race has evolved over the ages and is still pointing to the future, is constantly coming up with new concepts. Hamlet's grief over losing his father, whom he likens to "Hyperion," is too great. The Titan god of heavenly light, one of the sons of Ouranos (Uranus, Heaven) and Gaia (Gaea, Earth) and the father of the light of heaven ("Mythology"). Whereas Claudius is compared to "satyr" – lustful drunken woodland gods (Oxford), with whom his mother got remarried. It is this unbearable sorrow is the cause of Hamlet's "existential frustration".

Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
 Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
 As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on: and yet, within a month,-
 Let me not think on't, - Frailty, thy name is woman!-
 A little month; ...for I must hold my tongue! (*Hamlet* 1.2. 145- 162).

The double-edged sword that pierces Hamlet's heart is reminiscent of Simeon the prophet's warning to Mother Mary that "a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:35). The death of his father and his mother's quick marriage had completely destroyed Hamlet's mind. "A little month; or ere those shoes were old," referring to the shoes she wore at her husband's funeral. Hamlet finds it so repulsive that he loses his mind and exclaims, "Frailty, your name is woman!" He uses Niobe, the grieving mother who wept uncontrollably for her killed children, as an example (Britannica). Even the animals, who have no explanation, would have "mourned longer." She sobbed "most unrighteous tears," which are crocodile tears, at her husband's funeral. Hamlet does not want to disclose his innermost emotions with anyone, yet he finds it intolerable that she married: "O, most wicked speed." The mere thought of it breaks his heart.

According to Frankl's theory despair and tension of Hamlet is normal and healthy. Though, Hamlet wanted to extinguish himself from this earth by committing suicide, he does not do it. It is only the result of an "inner tension" and "search for meaning". Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*: declares that: "To be sure, man's search for meaning may arouse inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. However, precisely such tension is an indispensable prerequisite of mental health. There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life" (Frankl 109). Hamlet soliloquies are an attempt to search for purpose and meaning in life and not for committing suicide. Therefore, each soliloquy is a growth and development in *Will to Meaning*. "Self-talk with positive contents can help with promoting positive psychological states and regulating cognitions" (Kim, Junhyung, et al.)

VI.CONCLUSION

Hamlet does not commit suicide, despite his desire to end his life on this planet. All his feelings and turmoil is only the result of an "inner tension" and "search for meaning". Frankl in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*: declares that: "To be sure, man's search for meaning may arouse inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. But just this kind of tension is a necessary precondition for mental well-being. I dare assert that nothing in the world could help someone endure even the most trying circumstances as much as knowing that their existence has purpose (Frankl 109). In actuality, Hamlet's soliloquies do not result in his suicide; rather, they represent an attempt to find meaning and purpose in life. "It would be unfair to condemn Hamlet for the time he takes to achieve his revenge. He is merely all too aware of and analytical about the possible implications of any taking of action in the predicament in which he finds himself" (Oliven 71). Every soliloquy represents a step forward in Will to Meaning. Hamlet feels a spiritual energy moving within him even though he goes through mental conflict, tension and turmoil, "That capability and godlike reason" makes us different from the animal world. All seven of his major soliloquies reveal this fact. At the play's conclusion, Hamlet demonstrates how he fulfills man's search for meaning.

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