

## ABSTRACT

# **VIKTOR EMILE FRANKL'S MEANING PARADIGM: LOGOTHERAPY AS A MODEL FOR MEANING-CENTERED PASTORAL MINISTRY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SINGAPOREAN CONTEXT**

Peter Wong Keen Mun

This dissertation examined Viktor Frankl's works published in English and assessed logotherapy as a model for meaning-centered pastoral ministry in the contemporary Singaporean context. The project explored four composite case studies portraying experiences observed in Singapore. Each case study was constructed from a composite of personalities and a matrix of events and drew from my knowledge of actual persons and experience of real-life scenarios.

The studies were analyzed using logotherapy in a pastoral ministry setting. The cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes anticipated demonstrated the suitability of logotherapy as a model of meaning-centered pastoral ministry in the contemporary Singaporean context.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled  
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MINISTRY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SINGAPOREAN CONTEXT

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Doctor of Ministry

by

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM OF MEANINGLESSNESS

#### The Sense of Meaninglessness

From 1993 to 2003, I was a pastor in the local church in the Trinity Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Singapore. During this time, I encountered people who asked what the meaning of life was. They were dissatisfied with their lives. They did not find meaning in their work, nor could they get to the things that really mattered to them. Others, while seeming to enjoy the good life, really did not feel fulfilled. Many found themselves under stress, in misery, and empty inside.

I have not been exempt from such struggles. I also ask about the meaning of my life. Becoming a committed Christian in 1986 gave me the one guiding light—the principle of faith—to live by. Supporting this central principle are practical approaches to meaningful living. These practical approaches interest me a great deal and are the subject of this dissertation.

#### What is Meaninglessness?

If meaninglessness is easily recognizable, it is less easily defined. The New International Version of the Bible (NIV) makes just thirty-one references to the word “meaningless.” Twenty-eight out of the thirty references in the Old Testament (OT) are found in the book of Ecclesiastes. While recognizing the sort of angst that pronounces, “Everything is meaningless!” no outright definitions are given. I will return to specific segments in Ecclesiastes to explore the theological underpinnings of this study.

From the broader literature, meaninglessness is a subtle sense of ennui, absurdity, of having nothing for which to live (or die), and having no future. In short,

meaninglessness is a void (Naylor, Willimon and Naylor 47). Another take on meaninglessness links it to something more tangible, albeit undesirable. It is the outbreak of stress in modern day living. Gregg Easterbrook, Economics Fellow at the Brookings Institution, notes that many in the United States and Europe have acquired the living circumstances, reasonable comfort, and decent health for which previous generations yearned. Still, they feel stressed, are no happier, and hunger for yet more comfort and meaning. He observes that a “transition from material want to meaning want is in progress on an historically unprecedented scale—involving hundreds of millions of people—and may eventually be recognized as a principal cultural development of our age” (211).

Despite the apparent contradiction, meaninglessness can serve a purpose. Something good can come out of void and stress. For Thomas H. Naylor, William H. Willimon and Magdalena R. Naylor, “The threat of nothingness compels us to make something of our lives” (47). Easterbrook equally believes that meaning can be found. “Meaning may be divinely conferred. If not, we can create meaning by living decent and admirable lives” (211). Finding meaning to deepen Christian discipleship is, by God’s grace, the larger goal of this study.

### **Searching for Meaning**

Asking questions about the meaning of life is nothing new. For example, Ernest Becker writes, “The basic question the person wants to ask and answer is ‘Who am I?’ ‘What is the meaning of my life?’ ‘What value does it have?’” (70). Becker goes on to observe that the entire humanization process is “one in which we exchange a natural, animal sense of our basic worth, for a contrived, symbolic one. Then we are constantly

forced to harangue others to establish who we are, because we no longer belong to ourselves” (71).

What is perhaps new about the question of meaning is the diversity of voices currently revisiting it. One voice comes from an unexpected quarter—the marketplace. Usually more focused on bottom lines, the marketplace is preempting for its own purposes the question more commonly posed by philosophers and theologians. Rich Karlgaard, publisher of the influential Forbes Magazine, says there is a “Great Awakening” in American culture. He exhorts, “If we sell or market products or manage people, we'd better pay heed to this trend.” He goes on to say that an ever-growing number will feel an inner pang on the question of whether their lives have purpose. Business success will depend on whether it can meet this need for meaning, purpose, and deep life experience. “Use whatever word or phrase you like, but know that consumer desire for these qualities is on the rise. Remember your Abraham Maslow and your Viktor Frankl. Bet your business on it.”

The next voice comes from an equally unusual quarter, one more concerned with matters that are, literally, out of this world. P. M. H. Atwater is an astrologer, numerologist, dream and symbol interpreter, and considers herself an authority on near-death states. The point she makes from astrology is that the world has moved from what she calls “the Age of Information” to the “Age of Meaning.” She even cites dates and reasons: “It happened on March 10, 2003, when the planet Uranus, astrologically, entered the sign of Pisces.” The unresolved issues and unfinished business of the last two thousand years is surfacing now:

The quest at hand is a search for meaning. Making meaning will require all of us to step back, take a deep breath, and seek a different answer. Energy merges and diffuses in the sign of Pisces: borders, boundaries, laws, rules, even traditions lose definition. (Atwater)



She sees the Age of Meaning returning humanity to “the legitimacy and importance of the arts, spiritual technologies, and all things sacred and true.” While Christians may differ sharply with her worldview, the concerns she raises are pertinent.

A third voice comes from a familiar quarter, one competent to address the question of meaning. Treating the biblical point of view, Michael V. Fox, Weinstein-Bascom Professor in Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, says in his commentary on Ecclesiastes that the ancient writer’s main complaint is “the collapse of meaning” (133). The Qohelet’s well-known laments on the brevity of life, the futility of work, the pervasiveness of injustice, or the vanity of worldly goods and pleasures “are secondary to the failure of meaning” (133). Treating the issue existentially, Os Guinness also addresses the question of meaning. He reports interactions in “living rooms, classrooms, cafes, pubs, airplanes, and trains across the world” and how he has discovered people who long for “something more” out of life (2). Many are “haunted by having too much to live with and too little to live for” (2). Guinness believes that having a fulfilled life is rooted in a deep sense of life’s meaning (2). Next, Naylor, Willimon, and Naylor authored The Search for Meaning after conducting a fourteen-week seminar class at Duke University on the subject. They hold the view that the individual American’s obligation is to construct a plausible self, to build a raft of identity as “a wandering pilgrim who goes forth on a perpetual quest” (7). As such, this search for meaning is “the most important pilgrimage” of one’s life and is “perhaps the central problem of modern people” (7). The authors go on to draw up a life matrix that illuminates the choices available to the individual searching for meaning and sorts out the choices and evaluates their spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physiological consequences (16). Finally, Thomas H. West, Professor of Theology at the College of St.

Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota, approaches the search for meaning from an educational perspective. He explores the quest for meaning as a springboard to the interpretation of the Christian faith. While his main purpose is to educate his students of theology—he covers topics such as God, Christ, spirit, church, sacraments, faith, love, and hope—he also addresses a wider audience about the quest for meaning. Of this audience he says, “They are not sure what they believe in, but they know they have a hunger for something larger and deeper” (xi-xii). He makes an interesting observation: “The quest for meaning is in fact a contemporary American obsession” (1).

Obsession or not, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) housed in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research project entitled “Spirituality in Higher Education: A National Study of College Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose” to track the spiritual growth of students during their college years. This empirical study maps, measures, and applies insights related to the search for meaning and purpose. HERI’s Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Annual Survey of Entering Freshman initiated in 1966 is a widely used source of information about colleges and college students in the United States. A National Advisory Board of eleven academics including renowned authorities like James W. Fowler, C. H. Candler Professor of Theology and Human Development, Emory University, and William H. Willimon, Professor of Christian Ministry, Duke University and a United Methodist Bishop, oversees this Study (“HERI”).

### **Theological Foundations**

The appropriate place to situate the question of meaning biblically is in the book

of Ecclesiastes. The writer, Qohelet, essentially asks what is worthwhile living for and describes the great lengths to which humanity has gone in search of the answer:

I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man. (Eccles. 2:3b-8)

Ecclesiastes 2:3b is a biblical expression of the existential search for significance and meaning, and 2:4-8 lists the activities ancient kings undertook in their ambitious quests. Old Testament scholar Seow Choon Leong points out that Qohelet wants literally to “see good,” that he is led by wisdom (and not folly) until he in fact finds what is good. Qohelet also does not deny the validity of pleasure as if it is some youthful folly. To him enjoyment is good, if fleeting (150). From the word translated “parks” in 2:5 the English word “paradise” is derived, while the reference to fruit trees allows readers to connect with the biblical paradise account in Genesis 1. Old Testament commentator Milton P. Horne says that this litany of projects is an attempt to recreate an enduring paradise (405-06). As Qohelet goes on to report, “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun” (Eccles. 2:11). The phrase translated “chasing after the wind” is Qohelet’s hallmark statement in Ecclesiastes on futility and is derived from the Aramaic root meaning “to desire.” It connotes a person pursuing a goal vigorously, putting in great exertion for little more than a breath of wind in return (Horne 398). All the accumulation, building, and pleasure-seeking is not enough to make life meaningful

(408). In fact one discerns Qohelet's existential conclusion, that "[a] man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?" (Eccles. 2:24-5). The solution, therefore, is to "find satisfaction in his work" because toil is all that is left. In the knowledge that one has no control over the future, the only thing left is the present. The ability to enjoy the present is indeed a gift of God (Horne 420). Here then the book of Ecclesiastes draws its theological conclusion, that in the midst of a seemingly meaningless life, God-given meaning can be found.

Even as the writer of Ecclesiastes seeks out meaning in the routine seasons of life, the presence of evil in the world manifests to cause suffering to innocent individuals, groups of people, and whole societies. Burton Z. Cooper finds that evil can come through the destructive powers of nature, through the ill will that human beings inflict on each other, and through the damage that arises out of human negligence, ignorance, or apathy (3-4). The human experience of evil finds painful echoes in Job's suffering recorded in the Old Testament. This darker side was harshly felt in the tsunamis that devastated South Asia on 26 December 2004. The questions that demand answers are age-old ones: Where is God the Comforter? How can I bear this suffering? How will I ever affirm life again? (15). As Cooper says, "The answers, I discovered, come very slowly. They have to wait upon life and thought" (15). The philosopher John Hick further observes that the whole being is involved in this life-long rumination process:

[T]he characteristic elements of human suffering are such relatively complex and high-level modes of consciousness as regret and remorse; anxiety and despair; guilt, shame, and embarrassment; the loss of someone loved; the sense of rejection, of frustrated wishes, and of failure. These all differ from physical pain in that they refer beyond the present moment. To be miserable is to be aware of a larger context of existence than one's

immediate physical sensations, and to be overcome by the anguished wish that this wider situation were other than it is. (318-19)

The evil and pain received is compounded by the suffering and misery perceived. In addition, a single impact often leads to multiple effects, which Hick refers to as “other elements in the situation” (320):

[T]he greater part of human misery transcends physical pain. What makes illness, for example, an experience of suffering is very often not pain as such but other elements in the situation: fear of permanent disability or of death; anxiety about one's family, or finances, or career; the frustration of one's plans; or the humiliation of helplessness and of dependence upon others. And what often renders miserable the hard existence of the peasant scratching a bare subsistence from the soil must be a constant nagging anxiety about the future, with its ever-impending threat of starvation. And what darkens the lives of so many in the richly affluent societies of the United States and Europe, and causes them to be desperately unhappy amid abundance—so that the richest nations in the world have the highest rates of suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, divorce, and juvenile delinquency—is not material lack but a morally paralysing sense of meaninglessness in life as a whole. And again, it is not usually sheer unendurable physical pain that drives men to take their own lives, but such more complex spiritual causes as anxiety, fear, remorse, failure in personal relationships, or a terrible, engulfing inner emptiness and despair. (320-21)

From the experience of pain, suffering, and its spreading effects, Hick draws the connecting line to the sense of meaninglessness, returning full circle to the concerns this study started out with. Here I wish however to qualify that addressing the problem of evil and suffering in relation to a good and powerful God is in itself a huge theological endeavor in the area of theodicy and lies well beyond the scope of this study. The same limitation applies to an extended discussion of Job's sufferings or an extended exegesis of Ecclesiastes. These pastorally relevant and intriguing connections must be deferred to another time. My purpose in calling attention to these theological issues is to locate a point of entry into Viktor Frankl's theory and provide the broad basis for Frankl's creative and experiential meaning paradigms as ways of addressing the existential

dimension of meaning (and meaninglessness) and his attitudinal paradigm as a method of helping people face the conundrum of evil and suffering.

### **Viktor Emile Frankl, the Search for Meaning, and the Singaporean Context**

The search for meaning is definitely relevant in the Singaporean context, and the concerns, studies, and research noted above definitely resonate with many Singaporeans. The fact that the question of meaningful living has important implications for Singaporean society was expressed by Lee Hsien Loong when he was the deputy prime minister of Singapore. In an interview in May 2001 with the American Public Broadcasting Service in the Commanding Heights series, he observed that Singapore did not have “an ancient history starting with a long line of generals and kings. We [are] 35 years old as a country and still trying to build a national identity at a time when identities are in flux and in question.” He said these identities “are the reason why we exist. *If we did not have a sense of who we were, how we got here, why we want to achieve something ... then you wouldn't succeed; then you would just evaporate* [emphasis mine].... [Y]ou would be off to Palo Alto or to Perth or to London” (“Maintaining a Singaporean Identity”). This train of thought bears directly on the meaning of being a Singaporean and the meaning of life as a Singaporean.

My thesis is that the thinking of Viktor Emile Frankl is directly relevant to the question of meaning for the Singaporean context. Frankl did much work integrating the individual’s search for meaning into a system of psychotherapy. He was a psychiatrist and neurologist who lived from 1905 to 1997 and endured the Nazi Holocaust in four concentration camps over four years. Through the horror of his experiences, he was forced to rethink the meaning of his own life. His insights were timely. Not long after

World War II, the world plunged into the Cold War, including the Korean and Vietnam wars. The ideas he presented in 1946 through his book Man's Search for Meaning were not only useful for those troubled times; they continue to transcend time, personalities, and cultures within their own niche called logotherapy. This dissertation examines Frankl's meaning paradigm and its application through logotherapy. Frankl's theory is then applied to a meaning-centered pastoral ministry within the Singaporean context. For the purpose of this dissertation, Frankl's meaning paradigm is defined as the threefold meaning actualized when an individual either (1) creates something, (2) experiences something or relates to someone, or (3) has a positive attitude toward a challenge, suffering, or fate that cannot be changed. These three aspects of meaning will also be referred to as Frankl's creative, experiential, and attitudinal paradigms respectively. They will be applied to the broader sociohistorical setting of Singapore.

Singapore's development after independence from Britain is a chronicle of the rise from chaos to success. This dissertation organizes Singapore's modern history into three phases and discovers a fascinating connection between these phases and Frankl's theory. The first phase of political survival, paramount in the first three decades after independence from British colonialism in 1965, gradually gave way to a second phase where social issues such as national values, social cohesion, and what being a Singaporean means became important. This second phase, characterized by greater stability (and prosperity) occupied the decade of the 1990s. The third phase, marked by fresh challenges brought on by the twenty-first century, is to surpass earlier achievements and benchmarks.

Singapore is currently led by its third prime minister. The terms of office of the

three prime ministers of Singapore provide excellent vantage points to examine the three historical phases of Singapore's development with the three components of Frankl's meaning paradigm. The period from 1965 to 1990 under founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew can be characterized as the phase of survival and understood with reference to Frankl's attitudinal paradigm. The period from 1990 to 2004 under former prime minister Goh Chok Tong, characterized by a phase of stability, can primarily be assessed with Frankl's experiencing paradigm. The future of the nation under the present prime minister Lee Hsien Loong is motivated by the striving to surpass existing benchmarks. This phase can be treated within the framework of Frankl's creative paradigm.

While the first two meaning paradigms that relate to the first two historical phases serve to establish the broad relevance of Frankl's theory to the Singaporean context, the emphasis in application will be upon Frankl's creative paradigm as it applies to the future of Singapore.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

This dissertation examined Viktor Frankl's works published in English for an overview of logotherapy. The purpose of my study was to explore the use of Viktor Frankl's logotherapy as a model of meaning-centered pastoral ministry in the contemporary Singaporean context. I asked two research questions.

#### **Research Question 1**

Is logotherapy a viable model for pastoral ministry in the Singaporean sociocultural context?

#### **Research Question 2**

In what way is logotherapy applicable to the typical Singaporean individual?



## **Definition of Terms**

Some important terms used in this study are defined below. The terms that relate to logotherapy are also elaborated in greater detail in Chapter 2, while those relating to the Singaporean context are discussed further in Chapter 3.

### **5Cs**

The 5Cs refer to the typical Singaporean's wish for a car, condominium, cash, credit card, and country club respectively.

### **Appealing Technique**

The appealing technique consists of suggestions to direct the client toward new and positive thinking (Lukas, "Four Steps" 101).

### **Attitudinal Paradigm**

The attitudinal paradigm refers to a person's capacity to transcend unavoidable suffering brought about by an unchangeable fate (Frankl, Will to Meaning 70).

### **Creative Paradigm**

The creative paradigm refers to the realm where a person creates a work or performs a deed (Frankl 69).

### **Dereflection**

Dereflection is a logotherapeutic technique that turns attention away from a negative situation to focus on something positive (Kocourek 87).

### **Existential**

Existential refers either to human existence itself, or to the meaning of existence, or to the striving to find concrete meaning in personal existence (Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning 106).

### **Experiential Paradigm**

The experiential paradigm refers to the realm where one experiences a value or encounters someone (Frankl, Will to Meaning 69).

### **Logotherapy**

Logotherapy is a branch of existential psychotherapy that offers therapy through meaning (Smith 697). In the context of this dissertation, it also refers to the aggregate of Frankl's therapeutic theories and techniques.

### **Meaning Paradigms**

Meaning paradigms refer to the creative, experiential, and attitudinal paradigms or values.

### **Noögenic**

Noögenic has to do with the spiritual dimension of human personality (Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning 106).

### **Noödynamics**

Noödynamics refers to the tension between what people have already achieved and what they still ought to accomplish (Frankl 110).

### **Paradoxical Intention**

Paradoxical intention is a logotherapeutic technique by which clients are encouraged to do or wish the very thing they fear (Frankl, Psychotherapy 146).

### **Psychogenic Neuroses**

Psychogenic neuroses refers to the conflict between drives and instincts within the human psyche (Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning 106).

## **Socratic Dialogue**

The Socratic dialogue elicits solutions clients intuitively have by clarifying their feelings, goals and commitments (Lukas, “Four Steps” 97).

## **Methodology**

My study makes use of composite case studies. This methodology draws from two sources. One source is the Harvard Law School case study method of teaching legal principles. The other is the pastoral care case proposed by Donald Capps and Gene Fowler. The practical fusion that integrates the two methodological sources is illustrated in the model of case presentation and analysis used in chapter 5 of Tapiwa N. Mucherera’s Pastoral Care from a Third World Perspective (123-65).

The case study method was pioneered in 1871 by Harvard Law School dean Christopher Columbus Langdell (Capps and Fowler 6). Since then the case study method has been applied in other disciplines, including medicine, nursing, business and clinical pastoral training (10-11). In the case study method, cases are presented so that the relevant facts and legal principles contained in them may be discovered and analyzed (6). The sources used in a case study are varied and can comprise the written opinions of courts, hypothetical situations involving some conflict or dilemma, or incorporate real-life situations drawn from newspapers, magazines, books, or other sources (“Instructions for Case Study”). Eldon Case, Associate Professor of Materials Science and Mechanics at Michigan State University, uses the case study method to teach research ethics. He comments that the material for case studies may be drawn from a variety of resources, including sections of autobiographies, historical cases, or hypothetical situations. The hypothetical case, he says, is especially useful for focusing on a specific issue (3-5).

The pastoral care case is developed by Capps and Fowler and seeks to tell the story of pastoral care even as the pastor actually gives it (29). The method therefore allows students to observe the very thing they will do in practice (30). Pastoral care case writing has two main aspects. First, it reflects ongoing pastoral care in a variety of circumstances and groups (38). Second, the writers draw on various sources, and uses self-reflection, introspection, and memory in presenting their case studies:

Out of this self-reflection, the case writer creates new written discourse that becomes the content of the pastoral care case. This content is not fiction made up out of thin air, as if the only source were the case writer's imagination. Nor is it data in the scientific sense. Rather, it is a religious text about the case writer's pastoral care. (40)

The pastoral care case format has a title, an introduction, provides a congregational setting, describes the characters, and tells what happened either through pastoral care encounter(s) or through a pastoral care situation with events and conversations unfolding over time (43-50). To make the pastoral care case method more effective, Capps and Fowler say the case study writer must consciously reflect theologically on the pastoral experience (126). One “fundamental limitation” however is in the fact that the pastoral care case is written with other readers in mind, and this requirement necessarily influences what gets included in—and excluded from—the text. The parishioner’s confidentiality is often a priority, and the aspects of experience that most systematically get written out are the underlying psychological elements. Pastors often wish the case study could be more “psychological” but it “perhaps cannot be, because of its public nature” (126-27).

This dissertation employed four composite case studies. No actual participants were employed in the study, but each of the composite cases portray persons or situations

I have observed and experienced as a pastor in Singapore and are grounded in the broader Singaporean sociocultural context. My methodology draws on the Harvard Law School case study method in that real life scenarios are incorporated from various sources, including personal communications and media reports. While I have not adopted Capps and Fowler's pastoral care case format in its entirety, I have adopted the essential aspects of their process in my observations, including the use of self-reflection, introspection and memory to derive the composite case studies. I will also say with Capps and Fowler that, while the cases are not scientific data in the strictest sense, neither are they fiction made up out of "thin air" and "imagination" (40).

After presentation, the composite case studies were then analyzed using Frankl's theories, and relevant logotherapeutic interventions and approaches were applied to each situation. The cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes anticipated demonstrate the viability and applicability of logotherapy as a model of meaning-centered pastoral ministry in the contemporary Singaporean context.

### **Validation**

The four composite case studies portrayed typical Singaporeans in different walks and seasons of life. The first is a young working female adult in her mid-twenties, the second a young couple in their thirties (both under therapy), the third a middle-aged couple in their mid-forties (wife under therapy), and finally a couple with grown-up children in their late fifties (husband under therapy). These studies were drawn from situations observed and experienced in Singapore. In all the case studies, the subjects had a Christian background or at least some Christian influence. The composite studies were submitted to a dissertation reflection team for special audit at two levels. The first level

involved Dr. Alfried Längle, a psychotherapist from Austria who has worked extensively with Viktor Frankl, and Professor Paul Wong of Trinity Western University, who screened the composite case studies through a logotherapeutic filter. Both offered advice and feedback on the extent to which logotherapy was indicated in each of the four case studies. The second level of audit involved Dr. Roland Chia, a lecturer at Trinity Theological College (TTC), Rev. Dr. Symond Kock, also a lecturer at TTC and a senior pastor in the Presbyterian Church in Singapore, and Miss Helen Hee, a Methodist lay person. They screened the case studies for the overall authenticity and realism of the Singaporean setting portrayed.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

By virtue of the use of composite case studies, the identity, confidentiality, and anonymity of particular individuals were ensured.

### **Delimitations and Generalizability**

The limitation of this study was in its use of composite cases and not actual participants. This limitation was, however, ameliorated by submitting the case studies to the dissertation reflection team for the purposes and reasons stated earlier. Through this means, the realism of the profiles was tested from a logotherapeutic perspective and for “Singaporeanness.” As this study related to middle-class Singaporean culture, the results can be generalized with similar scenarios within the same demographic group.

### **Overview of Dissertation**

Chapter 2 presents Viktor Frankl’s logotherapy and relevant developments in the field through the present time. Chapter 3 addresses the issue of logotherapy as a viable model for pastoral counseling in the Singaporean sociocultural context (Research

Question 1) and provides a panoramic sketch of the religious, cultural, and socioeconomic background of contemporary Singapore. The history of modern Singapore is organized into three historical phases from the time of Singapore's independence to the present time. Chapter 4 explores how logotherapy is applicable to the typical Singaporean individual by presenting four composite case studies and analyzing these using Frankl's principles (Research Question 2). Chapter 5 highlights other relevant works and studies that can be integrated with Frankl's meaning paradigm in a pastoral ministry setting and suggests further directions for exploration and research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

#### Overview

This chapter reviews Viktor E. Frankl's works published in English and outlines his theoretical framework for meaningful living known as logotherapy. This literature review is integral to the review of the socioeconomic, psychosocial background of Singapore in Chapter 3 and is intended to be read with it to advance the thesis that logotherapy is a suitable model for meaning-centered pastoral ministry in the Singaporean context.

#### The Search for Meaning

Frankl wrote, "Man is always reaching out for meaning, always setting out on his search for meaning" (Unheard Cry 29). Unfortunately, humankind also experiences the existential vacuum.

#### Experiencing the Existential Vacuum

Frankl believed that the fundamental problem of humanity was the existential vacuum, the sense that life is meaninglessness.

**Meaningless life.** Frankl found evidence of meaninglessness in daily work and life. He saw it on weekends in the form of "Sunday neurosis"—the depressed state of mind due to lack of content in life once the rush of the week was over (Man's Search for Meaning 112). He saw "the occurrence of despair despite success," where even the successful find themselves mired in an existential vacuum (Will to Meaning 76). Some other common causes of meaninglessness are mentioned by logotherapist Paul R. Welter in his book Counseling and the Search for Meaning: choosing money over meaning,



lacking purpose in the way time and energy is spent, having affluent lifestyles and engaging in the futile pursuit of happiness, the demise of sin, and losing the sense of gratitude and wonder (28-31). Meaninglessness afflicts even the most idyllic life.

**An existential frustration.** As the sense of meaninglessness persists, existential frustration occurs. Frankl applied the term “existential” to human existence, to the meaning of existence, and to the striving to find concrete meaning in personal existence (Man’s Search for Meaning 106). The “frustration” pertained to mind or spirit, which Frankl called “noögenic neuroses,” and contrasted with psychogenic neuroses, the conflict between drives and instincts within the psyche (106).

Frankl believed that a certain amount of existential frustration was healthy. It is a first step towards finding values (Bulka, Quest 52), and therefore should not be “tranquilized” away by medication or avoided through therapy (Man’s Search for Meaning 108). Another term Frankl coined was “noödynamics,” the inner tension within the individual that moves between a meaning that has to be fulfilled and the person who has to fulfill it, between what one has already achieved and what one ought to accomplish, between what one is and who one should become (110). He held to a dictum which he attributed to Nietzsche that “[h]e who has a *why* [original emphasis] to live for can bear almost any *how* [original emphasis]” (109). Hence the goal of mental health was not a tensionless balance or “homeostasis” but a worthwhile meaning (110).

Noögenic neurosis is a significant factor in psychological ill health. German logotherapist Elisabeth Lukas assesses that some 20 percent of all cases of psychological illnesses are caused directly by existential frustration and value conflict, and the remaining 80 percent of cases have indirect or “potential links” to existential frustration

(Meaningful Living 24-25).

**The existential vacuum.** When meaninglessness prevails and existential frustration takes root, people experience the existential vacuum. They feel that life is a nullity, or that they are nonentities. Living in the existential vacuum also makes a person more likely to make irresponsible or immoral choices or to look aimlessly for solutions instead of taking action (Welter, Counseling 32). Frankl referred to such aimlessness as “a feeling of ultimate meaninglessness” (Man’s Search for Meaning 110-11).

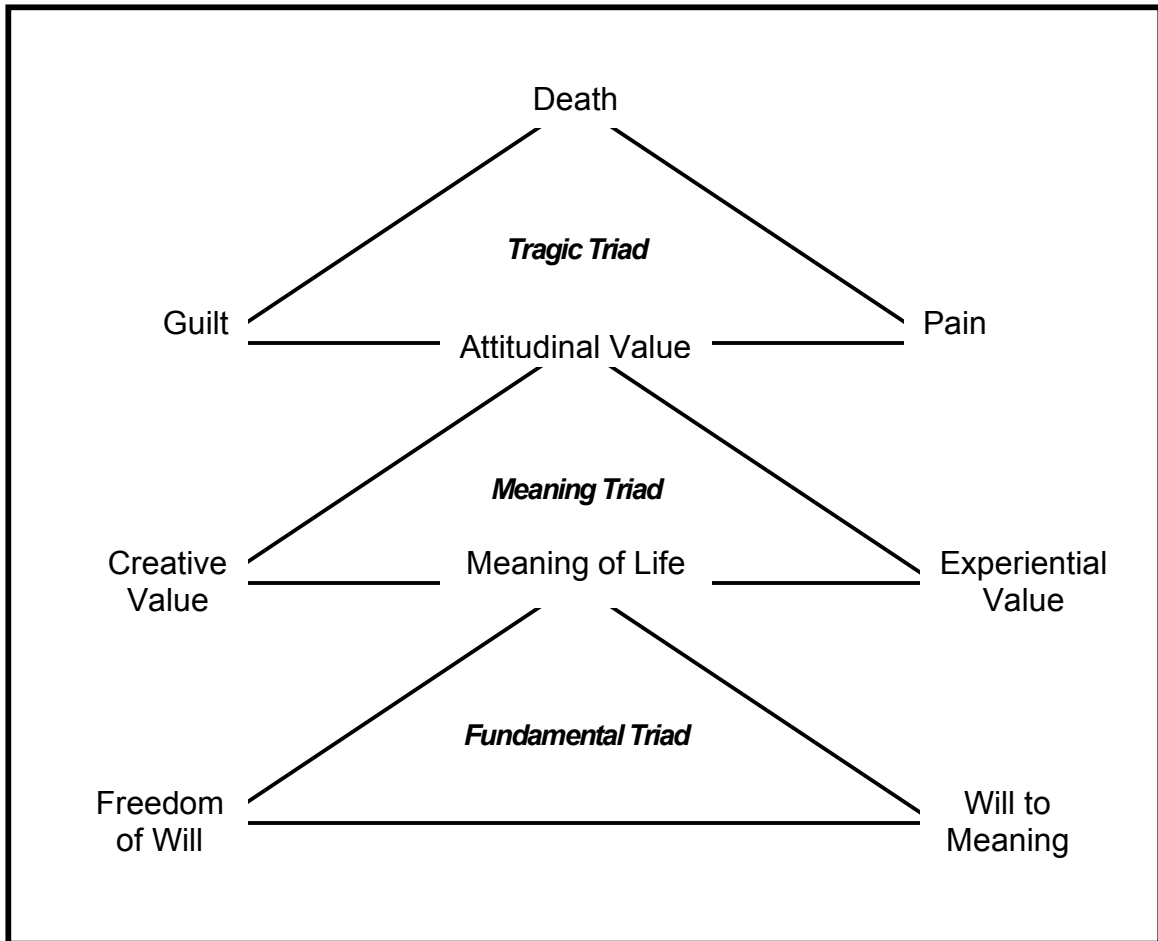
On a wider level, Frankl believed the existential vacuum came about because humankind had lost both its primeval instincts (which tell what to do) and its traditions (which tell what ought to be done). Frankl thought that the crumbling and abandoning of traditions in the twentieth century was especially problematic. Instead of building upon traditions to bring about fresh values and unique meanings, society breaks down the values it once held dear (Will to Meaning 64). The individual is left at the extreme, either to conform to what other people do or be dictated to on what to do (Man’s Search for Meaning 128). Neither position is conducive to personal meaning, but rejecting both does not leave the individual better off either. The individual is left in a philosophical lurch, an existential vacuum. One sign of the existential vacuum is boredom, which Frankl believed to be a dangerous thing. Once the impetus toward meaningful living or will to meaning is crippled, the individual will fill the vacuum either by seeking power through a will to power or by seeking pleasure through a will to pleasure (112). Logotherapist Reuven P. Bulka refers to the undesirable recourse toward compensatory or aberrant thrills (Quest 50).

Joseph B. Fabry, a contemporary of Frankl and an interpreter of his writings,

points out a diametric opposite to the issue of anarchic crumbling traditions. He says, interestingly, elaborate educational, social, and cultural structures in a society can cause an existential vacuum by stifling or drowning the individual's inner voice of meaning (Guideposts 45). Fabry's scenario fits the Singaporean context. The educational system is highly structured, with students being streamed according to academic ability from primary [elementary] school. The cultural environment is status conscious and materialistic. The society as a whole is highly planned by the government to the point of being considered by some to be a nanny state in which the state plans everything. For these reasons the need to instill personal meaning becomes very relevant to Singapore society.

### **Finding Meaning: Frankl's Meaning Triads**

Frankl, in his book The Will to Meaning, conceptualized the search for meaning into three different triads. These interlinked triads form the basis of Frankl's thinking on human personality as it relates to meaning seeking. The first triad, Frankl's fundamental paradigm, comprises (1) the freedom of will, (2) the will to meaning, and (3) the meaning of life. The meaning of life component in the first triad expands into a second triad of values, that is (1) creative values, (2) experiential values, and (3) attitudinal values. The attitudinal aspect of the values triad in turn addresses a third "tragic triad" of (1) pain, (2) guilt, and (3) death. Human suffering is placed within this "tragic triad" (73). The first triad is ontological and relates to being and the freedom to actualize meaning. The second triad is pragmatic and shows the way to meaningful living. The third triad unearths unconditional meaning even in the face of life's hardest moments. I have illustrated Frankl's three triads in Figure 1.



**Figure 2.1. Frankl's meaning triads.**

**Freedom of will.** Frankl saw individuals as autonomous beings not conditioned by needs, drives, reflexes, or the unconscious. Instinct, heredity, and environment do not dictate their final destiny (Bulka, Quest 48). Individuals can and must choose. This freedom of the will makes people cogently able to address the questions posed by life. This freedom is not, however, arbitrary and is balanced by responsibility. People must find responsible answers as they seek out the meanings of their situations (Frankl, Will to Meaning 62). In fact Frankl believed individuals were confronted with the question of meaning (Man's Search for Meaning 104). A religious person could interpret this

confrontation as a question posed by God himself (Bulka, Quest 38).

**The will to meaning.** Frankl believed that the individual's impetus toward meaningful living or the will to meaning is a fundamental motivation (Man's Search for Meaning 121). The will to meaning bridges the individual, the subject, and the world of values, the object (Bulka, Quest 48). The will to meaning is not a secondary offshoot of instinctual drives for gratification and satisfaction (Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning 108), and Frankl distinguished his own thinking from that of Sigmund Freud, who situated man's primary motivation in the will of pleasure, and from Alfred Adler, who situated man's primary motivation in the will to power (104). Whether Frankl was correct in making these distinctions is beyond the scope of this work.

Frankl does not think there is such a thing as a general meaning of life that is applicable to everyone (Man's Search for Meaning 113). The will to meaning must be realized uniquely by an individual involved in his life situation. Meaning differs from person to person, day to day, and can even differ from hour to hour (Will to Meaning 54). Hence, Frankl assumes everyone has a vocation or mission (Man's Search for Meaning 113). Only the individual can fulfill the meaning of his or her unique situation (105). At the same time, the individual must grasp the available opportunities and fulfill their meanings for once these pass they are gone forever (Will to Meaning 55). Specific meanings come from personal ideals and human values (Man's Search for Meaning 105).

**The meaning of life.** Logotherapist Bulka says that meaning is realized when what "I am" is also what "I ought to be" (Quest 50). In The Will to Meaning, Frankl sets out the ways in which individuals find meaning. First, they can create a work or perform a deed—giving to the world their creations. Second, they can experience a value (like

goodness, truth and beauty, nature and culture) or encounter someone (in uniqueness and loving him or her)—taking from the world of experiences and encounters. Third, they can transcend unavoidable suffering brought about by an unchangeable fate. The individual who has been deprived of creating or experiencing opportunities to find meaning rises above that to transmute predicament into achievement, triumph, and heroism (69-70). I will refer to the three meaning values as the creative, the experiential, and the attitudinal paradigms respectively.

In the creative paradigm of meaningful living, the individual finds meaning in life by creating a work or doing a deed. One issue Frankl addresses here is life's transitory nature, and on this he takes a very redemptive view of life:

[T]he only really transitory aspects of life are the potentialities; but as soon as they are actualized, they are rendered realities at that very moment; they are saved and delivered into the past, wherein they are rescued and preserved from transitoriness. For in the past, nothing is irretrievably lost, but everything is irretrievably stored.... Nothing can be undone, and nothing can be done away with.... "*[H]aving been* [original emphasis] is the surest kind of being." So long as we choose out of our present potentialities and act on them, nothing is lost. But if we do nothing, we will relegate that which we do not act on to "nonbeing." (Man's Search for Meaning 123-24)

When individuals act responsibly upon the opportunities presented them, the results will be preserved in the past for them. Only then will what they create be rescued from futility or oblivion.

In the experiential paradigm, individuals find meaning because they experience or encounter something or someone. This form of appropriating meaning can be seen as a gift or grace, for the experience or person simply comes their way. Instead of creating something, they savor who or what is already here.

In the attitudinal paradigm, individuals actively seek meaning during times of

unavoidable suffering. They are faced with an absurd situation, and the least they can do is take the right attitude toward it. Frankl could believe in the unconditional meaningfulness of life because he had been through the worst. He could say that life has meaning in spite of all conditions and in all situations, including cruelty, suffering, and death. Bulka calls this an “objective value world” outside and beyond the subjective (suffering) situation that is filled with meaning (Quest 36-37). Of course the person who is suffering might not think there is unconditional meaningfulness, and while attempts can be made to open up meaning possibilities in the present, the final resolution sometimes lies in the “world beyond the human world” (38). In any event, Frankl did not think individuals could completely understand the meaning of their suffering; thus, he referred to a “super-meaning” or unconditional meaningfulness residing beyond the finite, human intellect (Man’s Search for Meaning 122). All said and done, what suffering individuals need to know is that they have not suffered in vain (123) and that they have somehow been changed by their suffering for the better (Will to Meaning 79). As Frankl and Bulka both have Jewish backgrounds, their views have a definite theological flavor that will be explored in the section on ultimate meaning.

Frankl’s views were definitely influenced by his experience in the Nazi death camps. During his darkest moments, he witnessed the human potential to transform tragedy into triumph and predicament into achievement. Subsequently, the central goal of his logotherapy was to change the patient’s attitude toward a seemingly unalterable fate and help the patient find meaning in the midst of it. Frankl believed such an attitude would blunt the suffering; hence, even an “incurable sufferer” could preserve his or her dignity. In the dire conditions of the death camps, Frankl found that if people could not

find dignity and meaning in the midst of the suffering and dying, they really would not be able to find meaning in surviving and living either (Man's Search for Meaning 116-19). Frankl never, however, deemed suffering to be necessary for people to find meaning in life. If suffering were avoidable, he believed people should do everything to remove its cause: "To suffer unnecessarily is masochistic rather than heroic" (117).

### **Summary**

According to Frankl, the fundamental problem of humanity is the existential vacuum with the accompanying feelings of existential frustration. When people experience meaninglessness for an extended time, they do not know what to live for anymore. Every individual has a freedom of will that makes him or her able to choose responsibly and cogently address the questions posed by life. The individual's fundamental motivation is the will to meaning. The meaning of life is found by creating a work or doing a deed, experiencing and encountering something or someone, and in rising above unavoidable suffering by taking the right attitude toward it.

### **The Search for Ultimate Meaning**

Searching for meaning in life eventually leads one to the search for ultimate meaning. While the two quests are interrelated, what distinguishes the search for ultimate meaning is its emphasis on the human spiritual dimension, the place where the individual seeks religion and God.

### **The Human Spiritual Dimension**

Frankl placed strong emphasis on the human spiritual dimension. He also calls this the "noölogical" or "noetic" dimension, holding that people are primarily spiritual beings and that humanness is rooted in the "noös" or spirit. In using the term "spiritual,"



Frankl does not intend any religious connotation (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 28), which was why he prefers the terms “noölogical” or “noetic” to differentiate the human spiritual dimension from the religious dimension (Bulka, Quest 46-47). I discern from Frankl's writings three distinct elements regarding the human spiritual dimension: (1) the religious sense, (2) the human conscience, and (3) the capacity for self-transcendence. These elements will now be considered in turn.

**Religious sense.** The religious sense is deeply rooted in every person's unconscious. Frankl calls this “the unconscious God” (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 14, 151). This religious sense is present all the time, even under outwardly oppressive circumstances. Frankl gave an account of his student's confinement in a mental hospital. “[W]hen ... I *could not* [original emphasis] call out to Him, He was there. In the solitary darkness of the ‘pit’ where men had abandoned me, *He was there* [original emphasis]. When I did not know His Name, He was there; God was there” (15). In the midst of innermost turmoil, depression, or schizophrenia, Frankl observed an “indestructible and indelible sense of religiousness” (153). This innate religious sense is resistant “to an incredible degree,” and nothing seems to quash it. Frankl once conducted a study correlating the father image with religious development and concluded that not “even the worst father image necessarily prevent[ed] one from establishing a sound religious *Weltanschauung* [worldview]” (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 152). Frankl concluded from this that the religious sense is present in every person “albeit buried, not to say repressed, in the unconscious” (152).

Out of a religious sense, individuals reach out for answers and for God out of their own volition. On this point Frankl disagrees with Carl Jung and does not think that the

idea of God and other religious concepts are already in the human unconscious and that people are driven by religious “instinct” like automatons toward God (Fabry, Pursuit 163). Individuals are free to choose or reject God.

**Conscience.** The second element in the human spiritual dimension is the conscience. Conscience is a prelogical, premoral understanding of meaning. It precedes any understanding of values and is, therefore, not contingent upon morals (Man’s Search for Ultimate Meaning 39). Conscience adjusts the eternal and generally agreed-upon moral law to the concrete situation in which a person is engaged (42). It tells me what I ought to do, and who I ought to be (64); nevertheless, as Fabry points out, conscience must not be confused with extrinsic influences from society:

True conscience is not just what father, or religion, or society tells us. All these forces are indeed real, but at the core of ourselves we still have this strange little device. It plays a central part in our lives: how we listen and how we act upon what we have heard can make our life either meaningful or empty; it can cause happiness and fulfillment, or tension, conflicts, frustration, and mental disease. (Pursuit 69)

Within the spiritual dimension, human conscience builds upon the underlying religious sense by providing substantive content. For example, conscience may reveal to the individual two specific ways in which the religious sense might be applied, say, in thanksgiving and worship. The individual is not acting out of instinct but has turned “to the intuitive voice of his conscience” (Fabry, Pursuit 65).

Frankl holds the human conscience in high regard. For him, conscience is ontological, irreducible; it is a uniquely human attribute (Man’s Search for Ultimate Meaning 63). Fabry says conscience is primary and primordial and is not merely the result of environment, conditioning, or impulse (Pursuit 66-67). Frankl attributes to conscience a “transcendent quality,” and, therefore, individuals should be subservient to their

conscience (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 59). Fabry makes the point that God can speak through the human conscience (Pursuit 66), and Frankl refers to the dialogue with one's conscience (rather than a monologue), showing that conscience is anchored beyond the self and is the "mediator of something other than" oneself (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 60); thus, he believes the conscience leads to the "true summit" hidden in the fog and that the religious person should climb this summit to seek ultimate meaning (62).<sup>1</sup> Despite Frankl's high view of the human conscience, he acknowledges that it is fallible. It can err, and it can be silenced (Fabry, Pursuit 70, 72).

**Self-transcendence.** While the religious sense is the innermost awareness of the divine, and the human conscience is the dialogue that takes place between the individual and something or someone beyond, self-transcendence is the will to act and to reach out. The "self-transcendent" quality in the individual is one that is outward and upward. It is a movement toward a vision, value or ideal—and toward others. Frankl believes an "intrinsically human" characteristic is to relate to something, someone, or even Someone:

[M]an is oriented toward the world out there, and within this world, he is interested in meanings to fulfill, and in other human beings. By virtue of what I would call the pre-reflective ontological self-understanding he knows that he is actualizing himself precisely to the extent to which he is forgetting himself, and he is forgetting himself by giving himself, be it through serving a cause higher than himself, or loving a person other than himself. (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 138)

William Blair Gould sees "self-transcendence" as the part of the individual that goes in active search of meaning. Meaning is discovered and utilized through self-transcendence. Through self-transcendence a person also rises above the biological and psychological features and restrictions of his existence (143).

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<sup>1</sup> Frankl was an avid mountain climber.

## **The Search for Ultimate Meaning**

Frankl discusses ultimate meaning in his book The Unconscious God, which was first published in 1948 in German, then in 1975 in English, and finally republished in English again in 1997 (with an additional chapter) as Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning. The original book was based on a presentation he gave in Vienna in 1947 (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 11).

In Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning, Frankl describes ultimate meaning as something that is “up to heaven.” It is a meaning of the whole or the meaning of one’s life as a whole. Its span is long-range and universal. To illustrate, Frankl uses the analogy of a movie with its many individual pictures. Each picture itself makes sense and has its meaning, but the meaning of the whole film cannot be appropriated until the entire film sequence ends; hence, life’s final meaning is revealed, if ever at all, only on the verge of death. This final meaning also depends on whether or not the potential meaning of each single situation has been actualized to the best of the individual’s knowledge and belief. Fabry describes ultimate meaning as an awareness of a larger order that encompasses the “meaning of the moment,” the meaning potential in each specific moment. Both types of meaning build upon each other. For example, a healthy philosophy of life leads individuals to respond well to the meanings of the moment. Conversely, responding positively to meanings of the moment fosters a healthy philosophy of life (Guideposts 45). Fabry describes how the search for meaning grows incrementally to become a quest for ultimate meaning:

Logotherapy helps to illuminate the way forward, step by step, and not for mankind as a whole, but for the individual. As a therapy, it deals with the individual. It tells him that he cannot change his past, but that he is not its slave either; that he can change his present and influence his future. It tells

him that he has limitations but also great freedom within these, and that the use of this freedom can make the difference between a full and an empty life; that, if not used responsibly, freedom will turn into meaningless arbitrariness. It tells him that he has choices to make, at every moment, and that he must make them in the face of constant uncertainty, that he never can wait until all answers are in. It tells him that each person is alone, yet participates in a reality that far transcends him and his understanding; that success in life does not depend on the obvious; that individual life is geared to ultimate meaning. It tells him that he can never grasp the reality of the Ultimate, whatever name is given to it, but that everything depends on how he responds to its demands. (Pursuit 187)

West describes Fabry's "meanings of the moment" as "penultimate meanings," those meanings immanent in the world and discovered, chosen, and carried out within temporal space and time. These penultimate meanings also lead to an ultimate meaning (12).

Despite the attempts to describe ultimate reality and meaning in existential terms, a veil of mystery still surrounds ultimate meaning. Frankl says, "The more comprehensive the meaning, the less comprehensible it is. And if it comes to ultimate meaning, also, it necessarily is beyond comprehension" (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 143). This seems to be the unfortunate result of humanism's quest for God.

Frankl's movie analogy has been applied to counseling by Welter. He asks his clients to imagine that a movie has been made of their lives from birth to the present moment. Before the film is distributed, the clients must give each a title (Counseling and the Search for Meaning 233). They then imagine their respective movies were box office successes, and each gets the contract for a sequel. The second movie begins from the present moment and continues until the individual's death. He or she will write the script, act in it, and be codirector. Through this device, the individual will explore his or her mission in life. The point is that while individuals have no further control over the first film, the sequel is a "second chance" to determine and carry out their mission in life (234).

## **Finding God**

Frankl views religion as an integral part of the individual's search for ultimate meaning and for God. For him, religion begins with the will to meaning, which fulfills the will to ultimate meaning (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 153). Frankl believes religiousness proceeds within established paths and patterns of development. These paths are not innate, inherited archetypes but cultural molds into which personal religiousness is channeled. These molds are passed down through the world of traditional symbols indigenous to a given culture. Frankl acknowledges a variety of religious forms and believes they await assimilation in an existential way—they are for the individual to own. He gives examples of different religious forms: “the prayers of our fathers, the rites of our churches and synagogues, the revelations of our prophets, and the examples set by saints and zaddiks” (72).

As mentioned, Frankl believes in a spiritual unconscious or religious sense in every person (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 67). This religious sense is the place where “the immanent self” relates with “a transcendent Thou” (68) within the conscience. Frankl also calls God the “unconscious God” because of the individual's hidden relation to God and also because God himself is hidden; thus, he refers to “the hidden God” of the Psalms and the Hellenistic altar to the “unknown God” (68). Frankl clarifies that the phrase “unconscious God” does not imply a pantheistic God, nor does he mean that God is “within us” or “inhabits” the unconscious (68-69). Secondly, the “unconscious God” does not imply an occultism; hence, the unconscious is not omniscient nor does it know better than the conscious self (69). Finally, the “unconscious God” is not some impersonal force operating in man (70).

Frankl's concept of God respects the inscrutability of the divine, and his faith is ultimately expressed in humanistic terms:

[W]hat is "unknowable" need not be unbelievable. In fact, where knowledge gives up, the torch is passed on to faith. True, it is not possible to find out intellectually whether everything is ultimately meaningless or whether there is ultimate meaning behind everything. But if we cannot answer the question intellectually we may well do so existentially. Where an intellectual cognition fails an existential decision is due. (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 146)

The suprahuman transcendent dimension must be accepted by faith because it is presupposed rather than explained, and proof can come only through experiencing the things that escape logical arguments (Fabry, Pursuit 182-84).

Since Frankl articulates a humanistic faith, the interesting question is whether he also has a personal faith (if at all this distinction is necessary). Perhaps one can conclude in the affirmative because of the confidence he expresses:

God is not dead. . . . not even after Auschwitz. . . . For either belief in God is unconditional or it is not belief at all. If it is unconditional it will stand and face the fact that six million died in the Nazi holocaust; if it is not unconditional it will fall away if only a single innocent child has to die. (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 19)

Such sentiments can hardly be pious rhetoric since Frankl was no detached observer of the Holocaust. Besides suffering a great deal, he had lost his parents, his brother, and his first wife (Viktor Frankl Recollections 104). West cites Frankl's very personal sentiments:

Here are two key passages: "In a last violent protest against the hopelessness of imminent death, I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom. I felt it transcend the hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious 'Yes' in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose." "Is it not conceivable that there is still another dimension possible, a world beyond man's world; a world in which the question of an ultimate meaning of human suffering would find an answer?" (13)

Frankl must have a profoundly personal religion in order to perceive a response from the Ultimate Being (Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning 149). He also believes in prayer, where he said one addressed oneself to deity in a "person-to-person call" (150). For him, the key to the "I/Thou" relationship was its dialogical or interpersonal quality, working through inner dialogues. Perhaps his most intimate understanding of the human/divine relationship is best reflected in this passage: "God is the partner of our most intimate soliloquies.... Whenever you are talking to yourself in utmost sincerity and ultimate solitude—he to whom you are addressing yourself may justifiably be called God (151).

### **Summary**

Seeking the meaning of life leads to the search for ultimate meaning. The search for ultimate meaning emphasizes the human spiritual dimension. The three elements of the human spiritual dimension are the religious sense, the human conscience, and the capacity for self-transcendence. The religious sense is the innate, innermost awareness of the divine in the form of an "unconscious God." The human conscience applies the general moral law to the concrete situation of the individual and specifies what ought or ought not be done. Self-transcendence is the will to reach outward and upward, to relate to something, someone, or Someone. The search for ultimate meaning seeks the meaning of life as a whole and is contingent on whether or not the potential meaning of each single situation has been actualized to the best of the individual's knowledge and belief. The search for ultimate meaning also leads to confrontation of the mystery of human existence and the divine and to appropriation of this mystery existentially and by faith.

### **Meaning and the Logotherapeutic Method**

Logotherapy was introduced to the English-speaking world through Frankl's



famous book Man's Search for Meaning just after World War II and constitutes his core testimony, philosophy, and psychotherapy. This work also contains his basic thinking on the search for meaning. Many have found logotherapy appealing because it stresses the humanness of the person, avoids applying psychotherapeutic techniques in a manner that depersonalizes or manipulates individuals. The logotherapist/patient relationship is premised upon compassion and care and is therefore appropriate for pastoral ministry.

### **Definition of Logotherapy**

The term “logotherapy” is derived from two Greek words, “logos” (meaning “word” and “meaning”) and “therapeia” (“healing”). Logotherapy can, therefore, be defined as providing or experiencing healing through meaning (Smith 697). It is the primary treatment for neuroses that result from an existential vacuum. It is also an important therapeutic method for issues related to the human spiritual dimension (Lukas, Meaningful Living 45). The main premise of logotherapy is that life has unconditional meaning under all circumstances, even in times of suffering or death (Bulka, “Logotherapy” 71). As part of a larger discipline, logotherapy can be placed under existential humanistic psychology (71). Almost a decade after Frankl’s death, logotherapy is gradually finding a niche for itself within mainstream psychotherapy. It is usually applied as an adjunct therapy where other therapeutic methods are used but not sufficient (Lukas, Meaningful Living 41).

The primary motivation in human behavior is the will to meaning—ideals and values that an individual pursues through his life. The goal of logotherapy is to help the individual be self-determining and make choices based on these values and ideals and in the process transcend “environmental” factors—be they biological, psychological, or

sociological—to discover the meaning and destiny of his life (Smith 697).

The techniques employed in logotherapy leverage the individual's will to meaning. For example, “dereflection” helps a person who is hyperintended or fixated on a particular matter, and “paradoxical intention” addresses phobias and obsessive-compulsive situations by pointing patients to meanings beyond themselves. Logotherapy also mobilizes what Frankl terms the “defiant power of the human spirit” to address the human condition (Bulka, “Logotherapy” 71).

### **The Logotherapeutic Method**

Lukas, a student of Frankl's and head of the South German Institute of Logotherapy, says that the logotherapeutic method is based on one axiom and six premises. The axiom is Frankl's belief that every person has an exclusively human dimension, the human spirit. The six premises include the following:

1. The human being is three-dimensional, embracing body, psyche, and spirit.
2. In each of the three dimensions, dependency on given circumstances is different. Within the bodily, biological dimension (shared with animals and plants) dependency on given circumstances is almost total and can hardly be manipulated. Within the psychological dimension (shared with animals), dependency on given circumstances is flexible and can be highly manipulated. Within the dimension of the spirit (exclusively human) exists the possibility of a free choice of attitude toward given circumstances.
3. The three dimensions form an inseparable unit.
4. No dimension can be disregarded, because the workings of the body, psyche and spirit are interrelated. Patients must have access to professional expertise and wisdom in each of these three areas.

5. The feedback mechanism works differently in each of the three dimensions. Within the bodily, biological dimension, feedback mechanisms bring about automatic processes in the automatic nervous system that help the body adapt to a changed situation. Within the psychological dimension, feedback mechanisms bring about reinforcement processes and lead to changes in behavior. Within the dimension of the spirit, feedback mechanisms bring about changes in self-understanding and lead to a new interpretation of the self.

6. For each of the three dimensions the principle of homeostasis has a different validity. Within the biological dimension the homeostasis principle is always valid. Within the psychological dimension, it is valid most of the time. Within the dimension of the spirit, it is not valid (Meaningful Living 27-28).

**Treatment phases.** The three broad treatment phases in logotherapy are the diagnostic, therapeutic, and follow-up phases. During the diagnostic phase, the counselor identifies the client's problems and the reasons behind them. Counselors look for symptoms and weaknesses, for past disturbances and traumas, for current hardships and troubles (Lukas, Meaning in Suffering 36). The counselor must be aware that anything said or done at this stage can provoke anxiety because some clients already feel that they have a defect or are abnormal (37).

During the therapeutic phase, techniques like paradoxical intention, dereflection, and the modulation of attitudes are employed. Paradoxical intention helps in cases where the client is trapped in a vicious cycle of fears or obsessions, while dereflection aims at reducing unnecessary suffering, and the modulation of attitudes is a tool against inevitable suffering (Lukas, Meaning in Suffering 45). These interventions are discussed in greater detail later.

During the follow-up phase, the counselor steers clients toward a middle course “between excess stress and excess leisure” (Lukas, Meaning in Suffering 54).

Logotherapy deems both stress and leisure to be indispensable for mental health. Healthy stress is future oriented and results from a reaching out beyond the present self toward a self to be attained, meanings to be found, and tasks to be accomplished. Healthy leisure issues from the past. It is a relaxation from a job well done, a resting to gather strength before taking on the next task. From the logotherapeutic view, problems arise when stress has no future and leisure has no past, when people have to work hard without knowing why, or when they live in leisure without the effort that would have made it meaningful. If clients recovering from emotional illnesses are released into a situation of stress, they feel “over-demanded” and may experience a relapse, yet if they are “under-demanded” and are allowed too much leisure, they may “hyperreflect” again about problems they might have avoided, and so reactivate old symptoms (54-55). During the follow-up phase, clients can be encouraged to rediscover their values. They can sustain meaningful living if they can draw from the variety of values offered by their profession, family, hobbies, friendships, interests, fulfilling experiences, individual tasks, religious beliefs, even sufferings to be overcome (60).

### **Logotherapeutic Interventions**

This section outlines Frankl’s logotherapeutic interventions using Lukas’ four-step schema:

1. gaining distance from the symptoms,
2. modification of attitudes,
3. reduction of symptoms, and

4. orientation toward meaning (Lukas, “Four Steps” 96).<sup>2</sup>

These steps are usually followed sequentially.

**Gaining distance from the symptoms.** In the process of breaking patterns related to fears, obsessions, depression, and feelings of inferiority, patients are led outside of themselves to observe their own behavior. They cannot break destructive patterns if they remain trapped inside themselves (Lukas, “Four Steps” 97). The first stage of logotherapy helps the patient achieve a measure of detachment using two separate techniques: (1) paradoxical intention and (2) dereflection.

Paradoxical intention is based on the fact that truth and functionality are sometimes perceived in paradox, so a proposition that seems contradictory or absurd really expresses a truth. For example, a suicidal reaction can actually be a saving one in the way that going along with the direction of a skid instead of fighting it is a rescue mechanism (Bulka, Quest 22). Two conditions treated by paradoxical intention are anticipatory anxiety and hyper-intention. Anticipatory anxiety is a fear that brings about precisely that of which the patient is afraid. In Frankl’s words, “[T]he wish is father to the thought” and, “[T]he fear is mother of the event” (Man’s Search for Meaning 125). The more the client dreads the symptoms and tries to avoid them, the more likely they are to occur (Gerz 76). Hyper-intention, on the other hand, is an excessive intention and observation regarding self-functioning that ironically makes the functioning impossible and frustrates those very wishes. For example, pleasure is spoiled by being made into a goal in itself (Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning 125).

In using paradoxical intention on clients who are afraid something will happen to

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<sup>2</sup> Gould suggests a similar “four-step plan for a ministry humane” comprising dereflection, attitude modulation, openness to change, and the search for meanings (144).

them, the logotherapist purposely encourages the patient to intend or wish for the very thing feared (Frankl, Psychotherapy 146). Such an unusual course not only surprises the client to attain a degree of self-detachment, it also triggers a sense of humor as the client realizes how unwarranted the phobias are (Man's Search for Meaning 126-27).

Paradoxical intention works because the patient stops fleeing from his or her fears, and the feedback mechanism of anticipatory anxiety is broken. The human being also has no control over the involuntary nervous system that regulates emotions such as love, hate, sorrow, and joy or pathological emotions such as phobias, obsessions, and compulsions (the same system controls respiration and heartbeat). By intentionally trying to produce the neurotic symptoms, the client actually finds himself or herself unable and so begins to find the neurosis less threatening (Gerz 76); hence, the motto for paradoxical intention is "if you cannot beat the symptom, join it" (Bulka, Quest 25). Paradoxical intention cannot, however, be administered for all symptoms. People suffering from endogenous depression should not, for example, be "encouraged" through paradoxical intention to commit suicide fifteen times. They might just try it and succeed (27).

Dereflection is a method used to counteract the patient's compulsive inclination to self-fixation or self-observation by leveraging the will to meaning and the capacity for self-transcendence. While the basic need to gratify drives and instincts is natural, the logotherapist also assumes individuals can go beyond themselves toward other persons and meanings; thus the client is "dereflected." While paradoxical intention helps the patient ridicule or cut the symptoms down to size, dereflection helps the patient ignore the condition (Kocourek 87).

Applying dereflection requires improvisation on the part of the therapist. It is less

specific when compared to paradoxical intention. One age-old example or “trick” is counting sheep to fall asleep. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that dereflection works in the subconscious. Kurt Kocourek cites the example of a woman who has been unable to conceive although she has tried to for years. When she finally gives up and adopts a baby, she becomes pregnant soon after. According to the principle of dereflection, her body has been freed from hyperreflexion and is finally able to function properly (91).

Dereflection turns clients from a self-conscious preoccupation with themselves or their problems. Frankl cites the example of a violinist who strove so conscientiously to give the perfect performance that he paid meticulous attention to the most trifling technical details. He had a mental breakdown. Dereflection was applied to eliminate his hyperreflexion, making him realize how musical his spontaneous unconscious was. “Dereflection liberated the creative process from the inhibiting effects of any unnecessary reflection” (Kocourek 93).

The method of dereflection is not to merely distract or take the mind away from the fixated goal. It is a redirection to something positive. In treating insomnia for example, dereflection is a useful technique, yet simply to tell insomniacs to take their mind off sleep is futile. That would only perpetuate the problem. The dereflection from futile efforts to sleep must be redirected toward something else, such as doing something worthwhile or reading a book (Bulka, Quest 29).

Dereflection may also be used to address loss and grief. For example, when a grieving father asks why his eighteen year-old son had to so tragically die, the logotherapist asks him, “How do I respond differently to life because of this son who lived eighteen years with us?” It helps the father discover meaning in his own response to

his son's life, and starts the dereflection process (Welter, Counseling and the Search for Meaning 87).

**Modification of attitudes.** People respond differently to the problems and pains of life. The problem that breaks the spirit of one person may be ignored by another or be taken on as a challenge over which to prevail by a third. In the modification of attitudes, clients are encouraged to change their view of themselves as helpless victims of drives, genes, environment, society, and the past and take control over their limitations and circumstances. This course of therapy is based on certain principles:

1. A person has alternatives;
2. Behavior patterns can be changed;
3. Life has meaning under all circumstances;
4. Something positive can be found in all situations; and,
5. Opportunities can be found even in mistakes, failures, sickness, and

irretrievable losses.

The modification of attitudes focuses on goals, tasks, and values that the client can embrace. It directs attention away from avenues that are blocked and concentrates its efforts on doors that are already open (Fabry, Guideposts 39).

Writing for the International Forum for Logotherapy, Welter applies the principle of modification of attitudes to the moral/spiritual challenge to change. He uses epiphanies to empower or motivate clients toward behavioral change. He says the writing of Frankl and Lukas contains examples of epiphanies, although both do not use the term. These quiet epiphanies, as Welter calls them, provide for compelling experiences, insights and new meanings ("Logotherapy" 65). He thinks the logotherapist can facilitate



opportunities for such epiphanies by

1. Freeing clients from self-centeredness, despair and preoccupation with negative concerns about self by using humor to disarm defensive attitudes;

2. Surprising clients out of their self-centeredness and improvising pathways to their subconscious through music, play, relaxation, and stories;

3. Using maieutic or midwifing questions to birth latent ideas and prompt clients to attend to their consciences, moving clients from knowledge to action;

4. Matching the client with someone older or younger so that intergenerational learning takes place (70-71).

The principal method Frankl developed to change attitudes was through the Socratic dialogue, so named because he elicited solutions that his clients already had intuitively. Through Socratic dialogue, the logotherapist helps the patient clarify feelings, goals, and commitments and get in touch with his healthy core, the spirit, and draw upon its resources (Lukas, "Four Steps" 97).

After putting the patient at ease with a simple relaxation exercise, the Socratic dialogue uses "guideposts" to explore five areas where the client is likely to find meaning: (1) self-discovery, to find the real self behind the masks; (2) choice, to open up more choices for more meaning possibilities; (3) uniqueness, where one is made to realize that he or she is not easily replaced; (4) responsibility, where one takes responsibility for the freedom of choice and disclaims the burden for an unalterable fate; and, (5) self-transcendence, where one reaches outwards toward others (Fabry, Guideposts 9-10).

In the Socratic dialogue, the logotherapist starts where the clients are and

gradually leads them to where they ought to be (Fabry 10). The Socratic dialogue is not, however, just an intellectual discussion or a mirroring of the problems presented. It demands wisdom and discretion, and sometimes improvisation and intuition on the part of the therapist. The discussion may probe a client's unconscious for clues: recalling past meaningful experiences, eliciting dream interpretations of unconscious wishes, having guided and unguided fantasies on some crucial issue, examining the experiences of role models, and recalling meaningful peak experiences (16). Often the logotherapist is sensitive to "logohints," something hopeful in what the client may have unknowingly said which can be turned into options to be pursued (12-13). The client is then encouraged to formulate as many choices as possible, even those that seem impractical at first. Finally, the client decides on the best alternative, not necessarily the most pleasant, remunerative, or prestigious but certainly the most meaningful (14).

Socratic dialogues bring to mind the wise conversations Jesus had and, in this context, especially his interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-26). Here Jesus was able to draw out her intrinsic worth and a capacity to speak joyfully of the kingdom of God she had found (a self-transcendence in Franklian terms). The Socratic method is a useful tool for meaning-centered pastoral ministry.

Another technique Frankl used to modify attitude was the appealing technique, a form of strong suggestion. The appealing technique is not ordinarily the first step undertaken in treatment. It is only used where the clients are too unsophisticated, too young, too old, or too sick to distance themselves from the symptoms through Socratic dialogue alone. Here the therapist is directive, prodding the clients to new attitudes rather than waiting for them to discover these on their own. Unlike paradoxical intention or

dereflection, the appealing technique does not have a lasting effect and must be repeated when needed. The logotherapist may make the suggestions on tape for convenient and consistent repetition and have the patient play it for a specified duration under the general supervision of the therapist (Lukas, "Four Steps" 101).

The suggestions used in the appealing technique are very different from those used in paradoxical intention. Formulations in paradoxical intention are always vastly exaggerated because that is part of the therapeutic effect; they cause the patient to laugh and put distance between self and fears. Suggestions for the appealing technique, on the other hand, are never exaggerated. They are simple, genuine, and strong. Their purpose is to identify the client with new and positive thinking. These techniques strengthen the will, defy negative situations, achieve new attitudes, and guide the client's thoughts in new directions (Lukas, "Four Steps" 102). This logotherapeutic method can be adapted for pastoral ministry to employ biblical principles and Christian goals and is a useful first step in spiritual transformation by the renewing of the mind mentioned in Romans 12:1.

In modifying the attitudes of the individual, the logotherapist generally encourages healthy new attitudes to grow out of the personality of the client; nevertheless, in urgent situations, the therapist will take an interventionist approach by directing the client to the best course of action. These are cases relating to the "tragic triad" of unavoidable suffering, guilt, and death. Time is of the essence, and the therapist has to prevent the clients from being engulfed by the tragic situation or even harming themselves (Lukas, "Four Steps" 98). Treating the tragic triad is a variation of the appealing technique in crisis mode.

**Reduction of symptoms.** In this third stage of logotherapeutic intervention, the

desired outcomes of treatment begin to show. The point is reached where the presenting problem becomes manageable. In cases where something tragic has happened, a newly modified attitude helps the client cope better after the crisis has been resolved. No one can change what has happened, but the logotherapist helps the patient to move on without succumbing to apathy, frustration, or despair. Situations include physiological conditions such as terminal illness or the loss of a limb and psychopathic conditions such as schizophrenia, endogenous depression, and paranoiac abnormality (Lukas, “Four Steps” 98).

**Orientation to meaning.** After treating or containing the symptoms, the goal of logotherapy is to orient the client to potential meanings (Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning 115). Logotherapy uncovers meanings and visions so that the neurosis can be addressed and healthy growth can occur (104, 108). Unless the clients have a “strong ideal” to hold on to, they will falter again (Will to Meaning 50).

What constitutes the orientation to meaning, the search for meaning, and the meaning triads has already been discussed. To sum up, Ann V. Graber’s pointed reflection questions help clients discover meaning experienced:

1. What creative gifts have I offered to others through my talents, my work, deeds done, goals achieved that held meaning for me?
2. What experiences have I received from encountering others in relationships of all kinds, from nature, culture or religion that were deeply meaningful?
3. What attitudinal values have I realized by taking a stance toward situations or blows of fate that was courageous or self-transcending?  
(94)

The interesting feature about existential neurosis and its therapy through meaning is in the fact that the search is itself the therapy. While the process can seem like philosophical meandering, knowing where to place the client in the framework of

creative, experiential, and attitudinal values is half the battle.

### **Summary**

Logotherapy is defined as providing or experiencing healing through meaning and is used for neuroses that result from an existential vacuum. Logotherapy mobilizes the “defiant power of the human spirit” to help the individual address the sense of meaninglessness. The therapeutic techniques in logotherapy leverage the will to meaning. They are paradoxical intention, dereflection, the Socratic dialogue, and the appealing technique, respectively.

In paradoxical intention, the logotherapist intentionally encourages neurotic clients to intend the very thing they fear. The clients try to produce the symptoms, are unable to, and realize how unwarranted the phobias are. Dereflection is used to counteract clients’ compulsive inclination toward self-fixation or self-observation. It leverages the will to meaning and the clients’ capacity to go beyond self and moves clients toward other persons and meanings. In Socratic dialogue, the logotherapist listens for something hopeful in what the clients may have unknowingly said and uses their inner resources to clarify issues and find solutions. Finally, the appealing technique uses the power of strong suggestion to help the client strengthen the will, defy negative situations, and find new attitudes.

### **The Development, Critique, and Application of Logotherapy**

This section discusses the development of Frankl’s thinking, assesses logotherapy from a Christian point of view, and examines general ways in which logotherapy can be applied in the Singaporean context.

## Developments in Logotherapy

Frankl's original thinking has been developed by others. Some logotherapists have conducted empirical research to validate Frankl's theories. Others have extended Frankl's theories. Still others adapt the thinking of other schools of therapy unrelated to logotherapy and add or apply these principles to logotherapeutic concepts. Some therapists have even examined the question of meaning quite independently of Frankl's categories. This section outlines briefly one example of each type of development.

In her empirical research, Lukas validates meaning fulfillment in the creative, experiential, and attitudinal paradigms. She discovered through a poll of one thousand persons, selected at random, what they considered the most important meaning in their present lives. Their diverse answers<sup>3</sup> could be classified without exception within one of Frankl's meaning paradigms: 50 percent were creative, 25 percent experiential, and 25 percent attitudinal (Meaning in Suffering 140).

Paul T. P. Wong of Trinity Western University is a psychologist and logotherapist who has worked closely with both Viktor Frankl and Joseph Fabry. He has developed a model of therapy called meaning-centered counseling therapy (MCCT) that integrates cognitive-behavioral psychology and logotherapy. MCCT is holistic and oriented towards personal growth, and its goals include discovering

1. new meanings of past, present and future,
2. new purposes of life,
3. new understandings of self,
4. new ways of living and relating, and

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<sup>3</sup> The nine categories Lukas classifies are personal well-being (happiness), self-actualization, family and children, career, friendships, interests and hobbies, experiences (of nature), service in a cause, and overcoming distress (hunger, sickness) (Meaningful Living 12).

5. new meaningful roles in society (Wong, “Towards an Integrative Model” 52).

Building upon Frankl’s modification of attitudes, Wong has “change strategies” that are aimed at clarifying the present, reviewing the past, and exploring the future.

A development that integrates work from other schools of therapy centers on Frankl’s “noölogical dimension” or the dimension of the human spirit. Patricia L. Starck, Dean of the University of Texas, School of Nursing, has done research on the basic urges within the human spirit (“Meaning-Centered Leadership” 110). Such exploration opens the way for a broader application of his original theory on the human spiritual dimension.

Naylor, Willimon, and Naylor bring to the general discussion on meaning-centered therapy categories that are independent of Frankl’s theory. Through the life matrix, they examine the effects of meaning (and specifically the lack of it) on the whole human person in four dimensions: the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physiological (17). In addition, they mention two categories of living on the basis of “separation” and “having” (which Frankl subsumed under the existential vacuum). While making no reference to Frankl, the life matrix in fact complements his meaning paradigm (see Appendix A). The fifth column in Appendix A includes my italicized notations on the points of integration (or lack of) between Frankl’s theory and the life matrix and is one example of the direction for further research.

In the development or extension of Frankl’s theories, various tests and measures have also been developed. While a detailed discussion of these test and measures is outside the scope of this dissertation, a brief survey is now offered. Frankl posed a series of questions in his original test for meaningful living, which was improved upon by J. C. Crumbaugh and L. T. Maholick in 1976 as the Purpose in Life test (PIL). The PIL test

estimates the degree of meaning a person has found in life and has been useful with some depressed clients for generating and enhancing a Socratic dialogue about the search for meaning (Welter, Counseling and the Search for Meaning 101-02). Crumbaugh's later Seeking of Noetic Goals test (SONG) may be used in conjunction with the PIL test. The SONG test estimates the motivation a person has toward finding meaning. For example, if clients score low on the PIL and high on the SONG, they are good candidates for counseling. They may lack meaning, but they are motivated to discover it (Welter, Counseling and the Search for Meaning 102). Other tests developed include Patricia L. Starck's Meaning in Suffering Test (MIST), R. R. Hutzell's Life Purpose Questionnaire (LPQ), E. Lukas' and J. Preble's Logotest, and A. Längle's Existence Scale.

### **A Christian Critique of Logotherapy**

The theological themes underpinning the general question of meaning was discussed in Chapter 1. The sections that follow specifically assess logotherapy from a Christian point of view.

**Critique of logotherapy.** Numerous scholars have critiqued the principles of logotherapy in relation to the Christian faith. One is Professor Donald F. Tweedie, Jr., founder of the School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. Tweedie did postdoctoral work at Harvard Divinity School and at the University of Vienna (the latter being Frankl's alma mater) and observes that Frankl's anthropology is consonant with the biblical view of the person. In particular, logotherapy is consistent with the theology that people are spiritual beings made in the image of God and that their religious sense will transmute their search for meaning into the quest for ultimate meaning (163).

Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman serve out a timely reminder that Frankl



was ultimately a religious relativist who subscribed to the notion that all religions are basically the same and that no one religion is any more true than another (207). In this respect, Frankl's thinking runs counter to the New Testament teaching that Jesus Christ is the only path to God. While logotherapy comes well within the dictum that all truth is God's truth wherever it may be found, the Christian counselor or pastor should remember that the final arbiter of truth is in God's revelation in Jesus Christ (208).

On a more general note, the Christian critique of existential therapy by Jones and Butman can also be applied as a critique of logotherapy. On the positive side of the scale, logotherapy grapples with the weighty issues of life such as the transitoriness of life, death, aloneness, choice, meaning, growth, responsibility, and guilt. These issues concern the Christian, too (289). Second, logotherapy takes the question of personal pain and the problem of suffering seriously (292). The issues confronted by logotherapy find definite echoes in the Old Testament books of Ecclesiastes and Job as read in Frankl's autobiographical works, Man's Search for Meaning and Viktor Frankl Recollections. A third point on the plus side is Frankl's profound respect for the spiritual or noölogical dimension of personhood (291). By paying attention to this dimension in therapy, Frankl steers the client back to a basic trust in meaning, ultimate meaning, and God.

On the negative side of the scale, Jones and Butman question if people can really lift themselves up through reflection and meaning-seeking and if this way of thinking is applicable outside of the highly individualistic culture of European-American psychology (295). This point is pertinent when considering logotherapy for pastoral ministry in the Singaporean context. Secondly, logotherapy relies primarily on the will to meaning, yet this will is itself impaired by the fallen and sinful human condition. Pushing this point to

the limit, it might be argued that even if a person could will toward meaning, he or she might simply, sinfully, refuse to will. Logotherapy cannot attempt the impossible. The final point on the negative side is the fact that logotherapy might have been set up for a fall. While logotherapy concerns itself with weighty issues like those discussed above, it may ultimately prove inadequate for the challenge. The power of the human spirit alone is not enough to lift the human being above noögenic neuroses, existential frustration, and neurotic attitudes. Surely none other than the Holy Spirit himself is equal to these weighty tasks.

Ultimately, no form of therapy is without weakness; nevertheless, the promise logotherapy holds for pastoral ministry is in the fact that it images God in two important ways. First, it images the nature God by drawing alongside the clients, by addressing their inner emptiness, and by soothing the unavoidable pain and suffering that is so much a part of life (Jones and Butman 406). Second, logotherapy images the character of God by emphasizing otherness and the value of wisdom. In the principle of self-transcendence, logotherapists believe that meaning is found by reaching out to others, and in the technique of Socratic dialogue, the value of wisdom is emphasized (410-11).

**Meaning for the Christian.** In the search for meaning, Christians can, because of the personal and experiential nature of their faith, agree with Frankl that meaning in life is subjectively and existentially discovered; nevertheless, as Naylor, Willimon, and Naylor rightly argue, meaning in life is also a gift from God and not merely the result of human conjuring. God reveals meaning through Scriptures, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, through the “prodding and support of sisters and brothers in the church”:

Christian meaning is peculiar—tied to the stories, saints, practices and claims called Christian. It is personal— God’s relationship to each of us. It

is cosmic—an experience of the very nature of a created and purposeful universe. It is communal—an intergenerational, communally derived gift of those who have passed this way before us. (Naylor, Willimon, and Naylor 205)

Meaning for a Christian is the embracing of God's gifts.

### **The Application of Logotherapy in Singapore**

Logotherapy has been applied in many countries worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Logotherapy is suitable for meaning-centered pastoral ministry in the Singaporean context, subject to the following considerations.

**Logotherapy as adjunct therapy.** In the North American or European settings, logotherapy is often applied as an adjunct therapy. I anticipate the same in the Singaporean context where it can be used in addition to the prevailing approaches in counseling and therapy. In particular, logotherapy can be used in conjunction with pastoral, Christian, or biblical counseling in church settings or with the family systems approaches commonly used in nonreligious professional counseling.

**Logotherapy as therapy of choice.** When meaninglessness and the existential vacuum are presented or when specific situations call for the use of logotherapeutic techniques such as self-distancing, Socratic dialogue, dereflection, or the orientation to meaning, logotherapy should be the primary form of therapy.

**Logotherapy addressing the spiritual dimension.** One unique application of logotherapy to Singapore's multicultural context is in the Church's ministry to a secular and multireligious audience. Logotherapy's emphasis on meaning makes it suitable for exploring the purpose of work, developing the personal capacity for meaning-seeking,

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<sup>4</sup> The countries include Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Puerto Rico, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, and the U. S. A. ("Institutes and Societies").

and discussing the meaning of aging in secular settings. Logotherapy's emphasis on the human spiritual dimension makes it suitable for initiating ecumenical, multireligious, interfaith, or even secular explorations of the search for ultimate meaning, religion, and God.

### **Summary**

The question of meaning has been researched extensively over the years. Lukas has conducted empirical research that validates Frankl's creative, experiential, and attitudinal paradigms. Wong developed a model known as meaning-centered counseling therapy that integrates cognitive-behavioral psychology and Frankl's logotherapy. Independently of Frankl's thinking, Naylor, Willimon, and Naylor formulated the life matrix that examines the effects of meaning (and the lack of it) on the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physiological dimensions of the individual. Various tests and measures have also been developed around Frankl's theories.

Logotherapy is generally consonant with Christian theology, although a significant divergence lies in Frankl's relativistic thinking. Logotherapy acknowledges the human spiritual dimension and addresses issues such as the transitoriness of life, death, choice, meaning, personal responsibility, and guilt. It also takes the question of personal pain and the problem of suffering seriously. A weakness of logotherapy is that it does not sufficiently address the impairment by sin of the will to meaning.

Logotherapy has been applied in many countries. It can be applied as an adjunct therapy, as a therapy of choice, and as a therapy that specifically addresses the human spiritual dimension.

### **Future Research on Logotherapy for the Singaporean Context**

Three areas for further research can be organized around Frankl's meaning paradigms.

#### **Expanding Frankl's Meaning Paradigms**

While Frankl's three meaning paradigms provide a broad structure for meaning-centered counseling, an elaboration of these general principles into multiple facets helps a counselor or pastor to better understand the client. Paul Wong's Personal Meaning Profile, developed in 1998, provides this elaboration. In the exploratory study, 60 subjects were drawn from different walks of life and included professors, teachers, clergy, secretaries, accountants, physicians, nurses, and salespeople. They were asked to describe their own conceptions of the characteristics of an ideally meaningful life, and the study eventually yielded a list of 102 items (Wong, "Implicit Theories" 112). Some items on the list were mentioned by many respondents while other items were mentioned by only a few. A second study then determined the average ratings of these items as being indicative of an ideally meaningful life. For example, a low average rating on an item showed that most respondents did not consider it an important characteristic of a meaningful life. All respondents were also asked to go through the 102 items and consider if each one characterized them or not. As each of these statements described an ideally meaningful life, the self-ratings gave the researcher an idea of how meaningful the respondents considered their lives to be (115). A third study determined whether people in different age groups had different implicit theories of meaning (116). Based on the first three studies, a prototype structure was obtained to assess personal meaning. Wong used a sample of 335 subjects (153 males and 182 females) and subdivided them into three

groups for a final study. The young adult group was mostly drawn from university populations. The middle age subjects were recruited from universities, hospitals, and the community at large, and the older subjects were solicited from seniors' organizations (120-21). Finally, Wong condensed the 102 items into 57 statements and derived his Personal Meaning Profile (PMP) (see Appendix B).

As I assessed Wong's PMP in relation to Frankl's meaning paradigms, I found that out of the fifty-seven statements listed by Wong, twenty-one correlated with Frankl's creative paradigm, twenty with the experiential paradigm, ten with the attitudinal paradigm, and six corresponded generally with Frankl's thinking on ultimate meaning.

Wong says that one advantage of the PMP is that it provides at least three different indices of meaning seeking—magnitude, breadth, and balance:

The total PMP score is an index of magnitude—the greater the score, the more successful a person is in approximating the ideally meaningful life. The number of sources involved indicates the breadth of meaning seeking; thus, individuals who seek meaning from all the sources of the PMP have a broader basis than other people who derive meaning from only one or two sources. The relative difference in factor scores reflects balance. For example, if individuals score extremely high in achievement, but very low in all other factors, they lack balance in meaning seeking. (“Implicit Theories” 133)

According to Wong, another advantage of the PMP is that it specifies the sources of meaning seeking and indicates the specific domains where individuals seek and experience personal meaning (134). It can therefore be readily used to study the search for meaning in different populations and to investigate how different sources of meaning relate to different psychological constructs.

Wong acknowledges limitations to the PMP, too. He says, for example, that the idealized prototypical structure reported may be culture-specific, as it was formulated

upon the implicit theories of a predominantly white, educated sample in Canada. He says studies of individuals from cultures with different values and assumptions could yield very different prototypical structures of meaning. Another limitation, Wong says, is that the PMP is based on self-ratings of a restricted set of items, and there may be other meaning-laden items that have not even been considered. This limitation, however, is one that affects all standardized questionnaires.

In spite of the limitations, Wong believes that the PMP is a promising instrument for meaning research and clinical diagnosis. He reports that in separate tests, the PMP correlated well with other measures of well-being. Wong also says that his experience in counseling shows that discussing the clients' profiles on the PMP helps them gain a better perspective of the options in their search for meaning (Wong, "Implicit Theories" 134).

Several factors make the PMP potentially suitable for the Singaporean context. First, Wong's instrument was developed out of a study of individuals from different walks of life. This model fits well with the multicultural and urban nature of Singaporean society. Second, the respondents in Wong's study were asked to describe their idea of a meaningful life. The study is therefore representative of real perceptions and needs. Finally, as my study has found Frankl's logotherapy to be suitable for pastoral ministry in the Singaporean context, the extended breadth offered by the fifty-seven categories in the PMP will definitely help clients find their own situation in it. I also foresee using Wong's PMP with my prototype Logotherapeutic Counsel and Techniques Worksheet in Appendix J. A suggested method of integrating the two instruments is discussed in Chapter 4.

### **Deepening the Creative Paradigm**

Chapter 3 argues that Frankl's creative paradigm of meaning is especially relevant for Singapore's future, characterized by challenges for Singaporeans to surpass existing standards. The work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Professor of Psychology at the University of Chicago, gives depth to Frankl's creative paradigm.

Between 1990 and 1995, Csikszentmihalyi and his students at the University of Chicago videotaped interviews with a group of ninety-one exceptionally creative and generative individuals. Csikszentmihalyi's goal was to obtain an in-depth analysis of what creative people are like, how the creative process works, and what conditions encourage or hinder the generation of original ideas. Csikszentmihalyi set three main conditions for selecting such individuals: (1) They had to have made a difference to a major domain of culture—one of the sciences, the arts, business, government, or human well-being in general; (2) They had to be still actively involved in that domain (or a different one); and, (3) They had to be at least 60 years old (with a few exceptions where some respondents were slightly younger). The selection process sought to include equal numbers of men and women and to get as wide a representation of cultural backgrounds as possible (12). The final list included many individuals whose creativity had been widely recognized. Fourteen Nobel prizes are shared among the respondents—four in physics, four in chemistry, two in literature, two in physiology or medicine, and one each in peace and in economics (13). The interviews were conducted in accordance with a common protocol for each respondent. The goal was to get spontaneous and reflective answers and for the conversation to develop around a theme (16).

The interview protocol used in the study covered questions in four broad



categories. The first category was in career and life priorities with questions such as, Of the things you have done in life, of what are you most proud? Has there been a particular project or event that has significantly influenced the direction of your career? How did you initially become involved or interested in your specialty? The second category was in relationships with questions like: Has there been a significant person in your life who has influenced or stimulated your thinking and attitudes about your work? At any time in your life, have your peers been particularly influential in shaping your personal and professional identity? In what ways have your spouse and children influenced your goals and career? The third category was in working habits and insights with questions like: Where do the ideas for your work generally come from? How do you go about developing an idea or project? Have you experienced a paradigm change in your work? The final category was in what Csikszentmihalyi termed “attentional” structures and dynamics with questions like: At present, what task or challenge do you see as the most important for you? Are you planning to make any changes in how actively you work in your area of interest? Have there been some personal goals that have been especially meaningful to you over your career? (393-97).

As Frankl’s creative paradigm is integrated with Csikszentmihalyi’s work with creative and generative individuals, applications can be drawn for the personal growth and development of Singaporean individuals, and for Christians in particular, applications can be developed in the areas of mentoring and spiritual direction.

### **Correlating with Other Paradigms**

One significant area in which Frankl’s work can be further tested, validated and integrated into the pastoral ministry of the church is to enter it into a dialogue with

current Christian thinking. Rick Warren and his popular book The Purpose Driven Life create this dialogue. While Warren did not reference Frankl in the book, interesting correlations may still be made between Frankl's meaning triad and Warren's principles. Recently, Bill Berkowitz pointed out that Warren was taught by the Rev. Robert Schuller and that the latter had revealed in a March 2005 interview with Larry King on CNN that his own "teacher had been Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist-author of a once-famous book called *Man's Search for Meaning*." So Berkowitz concludes that Warren's book, read by 20 million of the Christian faithful, had its origin in Frankl's book, which in turn had its origins in Auschwitz ("Revelations").

First, Frankl's creative paradigm may be compared with Warren's Purpose 4, which states, "You Were Shaped for Serving God" (225). The reflections Warren offers, especially "Accepting Your Assignment," a Day 29 reflection (227), and "Using What God Gave You," a Day 32 reflection (249), bring to mind Frankl's dictum that life challenges persons to make something of the meanings presented them. Secondly, Frankl's experiential paradigm may be compared with Warren's Purpose 2, which states, "You Were Formed for God's Family" (115), and in particular, the sub-purposes stated in Day 17 "A Place to Belong" (130), Day 18 "Experiencing Life Together" (138) and Day 19 "Cultivating Community" (145). Frankl believed that life is meaningful as one experiences others in relationship. Thirdly, Frankl's attitudinal paradigm, finding meaning in suffering may be compared with Warren's Purpose 3, which states that, "You Were Created to Become Like Christ" (169). This correlation may not be fully apparent until one considers the sub-purposes in Day 24 "Transformed By Truth" (185), Day 25 "Transformed By Trouble" (193) and Day 26 "Growing Through Temptation" (201),

which in essence describe the trials and tribulations which the Christian will be unable to avoid. Frankl would say that one has to find meaning amidst unavoidable suffering.

Another connection between the two writers that can be explored further is in what Frankl termed “transitoriness” and in the question Warren poses: What on earth am I here for? In fact, the other considerations that Warren poses under these headings—“You are Not an Accident,” a Day 2 reflection (22); “What Drives Your Life,” a Day 3 reflection (27); “Made To Last Forever,” a Day 4 reflection (36); and “The Reason For Everything,” a Day 7 reflection (53)—brings to mind Frankl’s concern about reductionism, the will to meaning, the idea that life’s actualized meanings are salvaged into the past, and the point that life has unconditional meaning, respectively.

Given the many connections between Frankl and Warren, one might tentatively conclude that they can complement each other—Frankl’s principles apply to the individual, personal dimension, whereas Warren’s brings in the corporate Christian dimension of purposeful living. A Frankl-Warren theoretical hybrid could be used to enter into a comprehensive dialogue with a non-Christian—beginning with Frankl’s meaning paradigm and moving to Warren’s principles to discuss purposeful living from a specifically Christian viewpoint. Certainly more research into these directions is required, but the potential is ready for tapping, especially when Warren also has a following in the Singaporean church through his other popular book, The Purpose Driven Church.

### **Summary**

Three areas for further research can be organized around Frankl’s meaning paradigms. First, the expansion of Frankl’s basic meaning paradigms by Paul Wong’s Personal Meaning Profile can be considered for the Singaporean context. Second, depth

can be added to Frankl's creative paradigm through a study of creative personalities using the methodology of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's research on generative individuals.

Finally, a dialogue with Warren's The Purpose Driven Life can be initiated through a correlation of Frankl's theories and Warren's writing.

Chapter 3 discusses in detail the description of the Singapore context and the application of Viktor Frankl's meaning paradigms and logotherapy to the Singaporean context.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE SEARCH FOR MEANING IN SINGAPORE

#### Overview

This chapter begins by connecting key developments in modern Singapore with Viktor Frankl's meaning paradigms. After this analysis, some panoramic snapshots of Singaporean society are taken. Through this twofold exercise, the case is made for Frankl's logotherapy as a viable model for meaning-centered pastoral ministry in Singapore. Before beginning the discussion, placing Singapore within its broader location in Southeast Asia is helpful (see Figure 3.1).



Source: "Asia."

**Figure 3.1. Singapore in relation to Asia.**

### **Singapore's Development and Frankl's Meaning Paradigm**

Singapore's post-independence development from 1965 till the present can be classified into three phases, and these phases can be analyzed within the framework of Frankl's three meaning paradigms. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the terms of office of the three prime ministers of Singapore provide excellent parameters for this analysis.

The first phase is that of national survival, from independence until 1990. It is characterized by many uncertainties and challenges. The second phase is characterized by greater stability, prosperity, social cohesion, an emergence of national values, and a growing sensitivity to the meaning of being Singaporean. This phase covers the decade of the 1990s. The third phase covers the new millennium and beyond, the goal is to surpass existing benchmarks. Each of these phases can be identified with the three prime ministers of Singapore: the survival phase from 1965 to 1990 with Lee Kuan Yew, the stability phase with Goh Chok Tong from 1990 to 2004, and the surpassing phase from 2004 and beyond with Lee Hsien Loong.

A remarkable correlation can be made linking Singapore's survival, stability, and surpassing phases respectively with Frankl's attitudinal, experiential, and creative paradigms of meaning (see Table 3.1). The correlation takes place in this manner. In times of crisis where survival may be called into question, the attitudinal paradigm operates. Frankl's experience in the concentration camps was an application of this paradigm. Singapore's struggles to establish itself after independence similarly comes within this paradigm. In a time of stability and prosperity, meaning is found in experiencing what society has built up. Finally, in a time when new challenges face a society and call for new ways of seeing or doing things, the creative paradigm can be applied.

I acknowledge that my analysis of Singapore's historical phases in this manner transposes Frankl's meaning paradigm from an individual application (as he originally intended) to a collective, societal model, and this direction can be explored in the future. Meanwhile, this correlation of Frankl's meaning paradigms to Singapore's three historical phases will simply be used to provide the broader background behind the individual cases studied in Chapter 4.

**Table 3.1. Correlating Singapore's Historical Phases with Frankl's Meaning**

<b>Paradigms</b>	
<b>Singapore's Historical Phases</b>	<b>Frankl's Meaning Paradigms</b>
1. Survival/Crisis (1965-1990)	1. Attitudinal
2. Stability/Continuity (1990-2004)	2. Experiential
3. Surpassing/Superiority (2004 - future)	3. Creative

While events occurring within the three historical phases broadly correlate with the three meaning paradigms, the former are not totally discrete. Developments requiring the application of a particular paradigm may intrude upon a historical phase that is operating under a different paradigm. For example, indications of stability (like a growing prosperity in the experiencing paradigm) may occur within the survival phase (the attitudinal paradigm). Conversely, elements requiring a survival stance (the attitudinal paradigm) can also affect an underlying phase of stability (the experiential paradigm), as when the Asian Financial Crisis (AFC) and Severe Acute Respiratory

Syndrome (SARS) crisis struck Singapore in 1997 and 2003 respectively.

### **Phase 1: Surviving with Attitude**

The survival phase spans Singapore's independence in 1965 until the first handover of prime ministers in 1990 and correlates with Frankl's attitudinal paradigm. Here founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew stands as a towering figure in modern Singapore. Born in 1923, Lee grew up during the placid years of British colonial rule. After the calm came the shock of World War II, the cruel years of Japanese occupation, the communist insurrection against the returning British administration, communal riots leading up to the merger with Malaysia, expulsion from the Federation in 1965, and the hardships after independence. Singapore had a difficult history and a rough beginning (K. Y. Lee, Singapore Story 8). He puts the situation across tersely, "Some countries are born independent. Some achieve independence. Singapore had independence thrust upon it" (22).

In the colonial days, Singapore was the administrative and commercial hub of the British Empire in Southeast Asia, which encompassed Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak, and Brunei. For reasons beyond the scope of this work, Singapore was politically separated and forced out of the Federation of Malaysia in August 1965. After that, the Malaysian government restricted Singapore's role as the traditional outlet for imports and exports and as the provider of commercial services. The urgent problem was Singapore's survival without its hinterland and livelihood. Even its water supply came from the Malaysian state of Johor (K. Y. Lee, Singapore Story 22). To compound matters, the Indonesians, who had been in aggressive "Confrontation" against Malaysia since September 1963 through low-level war and economic boycott, now sent



commandos to infiltrate Singapore and set off bombs (23).

Meanwhile, Singapore's strategic value to Britain diminished as the British Empire dissolved. Singapore's economy would be hard hit by the scaling down of the British presence. British military spending in Singapore accounted for about 20 percent of the gross domestic quote (GDP). The British Army employed thirty thousand workers directly and benefited indirectly another ten thousand—more than 10 percent of the work force. Population growth was high at 2.5 percent per annum, which put enormous pressure on the government for jobs, education, health services, and housing (K. Y. Lee, Singapore Story 23).

As Singapore's traditional economy depended on a common market with Malaysia and trade with Indonesia, its unpropitious independence and the confrontation with Indonesia meant entrepôt trade was curtailed. Singapore's options were limited. The domestic market of a population of two million limited the number of products that could be produced to replace imports (K. S. Goh 7). Industrialization would have to be the way forward, and factories were immediately built. In the early years, any industrialist was welcome (K. Y. Lee, From Third World 69). Cars, refrigerators, air conditioners, radios, television sets, and tape recorders were locally assembled. Local businesspeople were encouraged to set up small factories to manufacture vegetable oils, cosmetics, mosquito coils (a repellent), hair cream, joss paper (for traditional Chinese worship), and even mothballs. Hong Kong and Taiwanese investors came to make toys, textiles, and garments (68), but economic progress was slow. The Jurong industrial estate in western Singapore was underutilized despite the vast sums spent on infrastructure (68).

Singapore eventually became the first nation in the region to develop extensive

trade links with Europe, America, and North Asia. Then the multinational corporations (MNCs) came to produce in Singapore and export their products back to the developed countries (K. Y. Lee, From Third World 75). Unlike development economists of the day, Lee did not think that the MNCs were solely out to exploit cheap land, labor, and raw materials the way the colonialists had. Lee believed that if the MNCs could offer Singaporean workers employment and transfer technical, engineering, and managerial skills, they would be more than welcome (76).

Building upon relationships with the MNCs and the developed countries, K. Y. Lee's next strategy was to create a first world oasis in a third world region. He thought that if Singapore could establish first world standards in public and personal security, health, education, telecommunications, transportation, and services, it could become a hub for entrepreneurs, engineers, managers, and other professionals who had business to do in the region. Lee believed reeducating and reorienting Singaporeans toward first world standards was possible through the schools, trade unions, community centers, and social organizations (From Third World 76). Initially, the learning curve was steep, with only one Polytechnic (a technical college), then in its infancy, and one trade school, producing a small number of artisans. The engineering program at the University of Singapore was also in its infancy, producing its first batch of graduates in 1969. The general school system had up to that time only concentrated on the "three Rs" (reading, writing, arithmetic), good enough to produce only clerks and "storemen" (storekeepers) (K. S. Goh 7). The persistent and relentless development of the educational system and infrastructure eventually bore fruit.

**A resilient spirit.** At the time the British forces withdrew from Singapore, K. Y.

Lee resolved that Singapore would not become dependent upon British aid nor bank on the continuing charity of the British. He wanted to nurture a spirit of self-reliance.

Speaking to Parliament on 9 September 1967, he said, “There was a thriving Singapore before the bases were built and manned. If we set about it intelligently and in good heart, there will be a bigger and economically more self-reliant Singapore after the bases have been run down” (From Third World 70). What Singapore did negotiate with the British was the handing over of military facilities for civilian management and the setting up of mutually beneficial civilian industries. Meanwhile Singaporeans were forewarned, “The world does not owe us a living. We cannot live by the begging bowl” (70).

Within days of the oil crisis in October 1973, K. Y. Lee gave a clear signal to the oil companies that the government did not claim any special privilege over oil stocks held in their Singapore refineries. If Singapore had resorted to blocking exports from those stocks, she would have had enough oil for consumption for two years but would have lost all credibility (From Third World 87). This restraint increased international confidence in Singapore as a reliable place for oil and other businesses for the long haul (88).

To overcome the doubts of investors about the quality of Singapore’s workers, Japanese, German, French, and Dutch industrialists were invited to set up centers in Singapore with their own instructors to train technicians. Some centers were government financed; others were jointly formed with corporations like Philips, Rollei, and Tata. After four to six months of training, these workers became familiar with the work systems and cultures of the different nations and were in fact good employees. These training institutes became useful points of reference for investors to see how Singapore workers compared with theirs, and the comparisons were favorable (K. Y. Lee, From

Third World 88). Lee says, “We had one simple guiding principle for survival, that Singapore had to be more rugged, better organised and more efficient than others” (76). In the end, the difficult “policy of survival” began to attract foreign investment through a combination of factors like low taxes, the developing of an efficient infrastructure, cultivating a disciplined workforce, and maintaining strict political control (Brogger 1995). Lee is justifiably proud of the results:

If we were a soft society then we would already have perished. A soft people will vote for those who promised a soft way out, when in truth there is none. There is nothing Singapore gets for free. There will be a throbbing and humming industrial, commercial and communication centre long after the British have gone. (From Third World 70-71)

Frankl’s attitudinal paradigm applies—when unavoidable situations happen, all that can be done is to discover the available options and respond to it. The unavoidable situation in this case is Singapore’s loss of economic hinterland and the response to industrialize and modernize. Significant here is the willingness on the part of the populace to accept change. Frankl’s “defiant power of the spirit” applies to this period of Singapore’s history, and Singaporeans have shown themselves as a people with an attitude to survive and thrive.

### **Phase 2: Experiencing Stability**

The phase of Singapore’s history from 1990 to 2004 under prime minister Goh Chok Tong can be characterized as a phase of stability. This phase corresponds with Frankl’s experiencing paradigm. By the time Goh took over reins from Lee as prime minister, Singapore had become more developed and prosperous. Singaporeans could now refer to their striving for the “five Cs”: car, condominium, cash, credit card, and country club (Brogger 1996). These five Cs are still important symbols of wealth and

status today.

Two snapshots best capture the salient features of this period. The first comprises the bricks and mortar of the Singapore heartland and is the success story of public housing in Singapore. The second is the search for national values and identity in the form of “Singapore 21,” a national vision Goh cast for the nation in 1997 to chart the path “for the year 2000 and beyond.”

**The Housing and Development Board (HDB).** One national institution that has seen the transition from the survival phase into the stability phase of the 1990s is the public-housing authority, the HDB. It is literally the biggest homebuilder for Singaporeans.

The national housing program began humbly in 1961 with rental apartments to meet the housing needs of poorer Singaporeans. After almost three decades of building high-rise public apartments, the late 1980s saw the HDB upgrading older housing estates with structural improvements and facelifts. By the year 2000, the HDB had completed 800,000 apartment units. According to Census 2000, the stock of better housing also improved over the 1990 to 2000 period. Four-room HDB flats made up 51 percent of all HDB flats, compared to 39 percent in 1990 (“Census 2000”).

The government’s housing policy can be interpreted as a form of social engineering designed to foster loyalty to the homeland. One important outcome of the housing policy has been the trickling down of the nation’s wealth and achieving the government’s goal of providing affordable housing for Singaporeans. More than 80 percent of Singaporean households now own the ninety-nine year leasehold (a tenancy created by statute law) from the HDB. Such leases can be traded in the housing market as

commercial transactions. Many households have been able to realize substantial capital gains from these transactions and upgrade to privately built housing developments (Chua 190; Hill and Lian 139).

**National values.** By the 1990s, Singapore had some two decades worth of nation building under its belt. Some semblance of nation identity was taking shape, slowly. The earlier generation still recalls the days when political loyalties were based on ethnicity. Then Singapore had to contend with deep-seated differences between different ethnic groups, the incendiary sentiments of communalists stirring up racial and religious sentiments and race riots where many were killed and injured. Besides communalism, communism wracked Singapore society. Communism was on the rise after the Japanese occupation, when many students in the Chinese language schools became strong supporters of the Malayan Communist Party guerilla movement. When Singapore came under British colonial rule again after the war, some of these students became leaders of Communist United Front activities in the Chinese schools, clan associations, and many Chinese community organizations. The importance of a harmonious society based on a sound and inclusive ideology, therefore, cannot be underestimated.

The notion of national ideology was first introduced by Goh Chok Tong in 1988 while he was the deputy prime minister. Goh observed a shift in values from communitarianism to individualism among younger Singaporeans (Quah 1). This trend, he thought, made the articulation and inculcation of strong values necessary. The question was what values, principles, and conventions would be shared by all Singaporeans regardless of race, language, or religion (2). Later that year, then President Wee Kim Wee of Singapore enunciated four core values in a presentation to Parliament:

(1) community over self; (2) upholding the family as the basic building block of society; (3) resolving major issues through consensus instead of contention; and, (4) stressing racial and religious tolerance and harmony (Quah 91). After some initial public discussion and debate, these thoughts lay fallow for some years. In August 1997, prime minister Goh Chok Tong put forward “Singapore 21” and the five values it enunciated:

1. Every Singaporean matters.
2. Strong families: Our foundation and our future.
3. Opportunities for all.
4. The Singapore Heartbeat: Feeling passionately about Singapore.
5. Active citizenship: Making the difference. (“What is Singapore 21”)

“Singapore 21” is meaningful only because a measure of social stability has been achieved, and the society as a whole is seeking to understand and experience itself. The first value, “every Singaporean matters,” is an optimistic one from the standpoint of its supportiveness to a search for more in life, including meaning. Embedded within this value is also the connotation of personal uniqueness, a value about which Frankl felt passionately. The fourth and fifth values relate to the self-transcendence Frankl spoke of, where individuals go beyond just being concerned about self-preservation and personal ambition. Through “Singapore 21,” Singaporeans are encouraged to participate actively in civic life to build the future they want for the country. Perhaps soul searching is a good way of describing where Singapore society is right now:

Singapore is in between; we need the efficiency, but at the same time we have to keep the national cohesion that says this is not just a place where you work, but a home where you live, and you belong here, and there’s a certain sense of being Singaporeans together.... That’s quite a challenge. (H. L. Lee 17)

The question heard more often today is, “What does it mean to be Singaporean?” One lighthearted list, “Ten Things that Make Us Singaporean,” rings quite true, in my view:

1. We use too many acronyms yet keep creating new ones.
2. We think that \$100,000 is a reasonable price for a Toyota Corolla, and \$1,000,000 is a reasonable price for a bungalow, but \$5 for a plate of fried noodles is a barbarous outrage.
3. We think that everything should be topped up.
4. We wear winter clothes indoors and summer clothes outdoors.
5. In a country where people use smart cards for public transit, we have no problem with construction workers riding in the open backs of pickup trucks.
6. We are not ashamed that the government needs to care if we know how to use a toilet or urinal correctly.
7. We are sure that the best way to change social behaviour is through consistent and comprehensive government-sponsored campaigns that permeate as many aspects of life as possible. And when they don't work, we never speak of them again.
8. We think a bus is incomplete without a TV.
9. Every task we take on and every group we form is incomplete without a mission statement and a cheesy slogan.
10. We understand everything on this list. (qtd. in E. K. Goh 26)

If this constitutes a fair view of what “Singaporeanness” is about, they are obviously a materialistic lot who should look beyond themselves and their stuff to take stock of life’s meaning.

**The mingling of phases.** As mentioned, the three phases of Singapore’s historical development did not proceed in neat, compartmentalized stages. In particular, the attitudinal paradigm becomes relevant time and again when unavoidable events like crises and disasters hit: “The disasters that we grieved over and overcame together: the Silk Air crash, SQ006 [another airplane crash], Hotel New World collapse, cable car accident, the RSS Courageous [a Singapore navy ship] collision, SARS, and the economic downturn [the AFC],” says Ong Chin Guan, a taxi driver aged forty (qtd. in E. K. Goh 11). This list (not in chronological order nor comprehensive) gives a fair idea of the major crises Singaporeans have faced since independence. The following paragraphs relate in greater detail the AFC and the SARS epidemic.



**The Asian Financial Crisis (AFC).** As a small and open economy, Singapore is extremely vulnerable to external economic developments. The economic shocks triggered by the AFC of 1997 had a profound effect on Singaporeans and the Singapore economy. First, Singapore's exports to the crisis-hit Southeast Asian economies were slashed as a result of severely curtailed regional demand and the collapse of regional currencies. Second, Singapore's exports became less competitive against these neighboring economies in third-country markets such as the United States and Europe. Third, Singapore's banks were weakened by their sizeable lending exposure to Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Fourth, Singapore's investments in the region suffered severe asset diminution.

As the crisis dragged on into 1998, the Singapore government implemented direct cost-cutting measures such as wage and cost reductions to boost competitiveness. Monetary intervention prevented further devaluation of the Singapore dollar that would have affected investor confidence in Singapore as a financial center. Fiscal policy was eased to stimulate domestic demand. Singapore was just able to avoid the worst effects of the crisis. The economy managed to eke out a small positive growth in 1998 and rebounded with a 5.4 percent growth in 1999. The earlier pay cuts for public sector employees were restored in January 2000.

The AFC had no precedent, and the magnitude and unavoidability of the events called for resilient attitudes and tough responses. Singapore's quick recovery has often been attributed to its strong economic fundamentals and sound government policies. Most significantly, the willingness to take bold and painful measures affecting every part of society in an attitudinal response to crisis provided a way out of it.

**The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis.** The SARS crisis occurred less than half a decade after the AFC. Singaporeans had to rise to the occasion again. On 17 April 2003, not long after the first confirmed case of SARS in Singapore, the government announced a Singaporean \$ (S\$) 230 million economic relief package providing immediate assistance to the tourism and transport sectors. Measures included tax rebates, a reduction in the foreign worker levy, and the provision of bridging loans for tourism-related small and medium-sized enterprises to help them through the difficult period. In the transport sector, taxi drivers were offered diesel tax rebates, and cruise ships benefited from a 50 percent reduction in port dues (“Singapore Roars” 24).

As the tourism industry would be hardest hit, a task force was immediately formed to tackle the crisis. Called the Cool Team, the task force consisted of representatives from both the private and government sectors and worked closely with industry players to spearhead and implement SARS precautionary measures within the industry and oversee relief efforts to industry members.

On 6 May 2003, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) launched a S\$2 million “Step Out! Singapore” initiative to get Singaporeans to step out of their homes, put aside their fear of SARS, and live life normally. The initiative comprised enticing offers to Singapore’s various attractions, food and beverage outlets, theme parks, and nightspots, coupled with an exciting lineup of public events. The message to Singaporeans was that it was all right to step out and have fun and that the SARS situation was well under control in Singapore. This restoration of confidence and vibrancy beginning with Singaporeans was the first step in drawing back the tourists (“Singapore Roars” 24).

Within days from being delisted from the World Health Organization’s watch list,

the STB launched a global advertising initiative across fourteen countries in the Asia Pacific, Middle East, European, and North American regions. The same campaign was launched in three pan-regional publications—International Herald Tribune, Asian Wall Street Journal, and Financial Times. The message was simple: Singapore was back in business and ready to welcome visitors back to its shores (“Singapore Roars” 25).

On 18 June 2003, Senior Minister of State for Trade & Industry and Education Tharman Shanmugaratnam launched “Singapore Roars!” the STB’s S\$200 million sustainable tourism recovery initiative. Its aim was to attract four million visitors to Singapore between June to December that year. The initiative included a land and sea party extravaganza at the Merlion Park (“Singapore Roars” 25).

The SARS crisis affected Singaporeans differently than the AFC. Those who succumbed included a pastor, a doctor, nurses, and many others from different walks of life. One never knew where the virus might lurk—in the air, on a seat, even on a doorknob. People suddenly saw how fragile life was. While no one asked outright what the meaning of life was under such trying times, they seemed to know it instinctively. For example, Singaporean health care and medical workers and researchers worked selflessly. On many occasions, they had to quarantine themselves because they had provided medical care for patients confirmed with the SARS virus. Here Frankl’s experience with typhus fever in the concentration camp is a close parallel. He discovered that those who found meaning in life gave of themselves more and did not fear danger and death as much as those who did not find such meaning.

### **Phase 3: Creating the Cutting Edge**

Singapore has been ranked the eleventh best place in the world to live, according

to a quality of life survey cited by Singapore's Today Newspaper. Researchers took into account factors such as income, health, political stability, family life, unemployment, and climate (H. S. Lee, "Singapore Rated 11<sup>th</sup>"). While this ranking is positive, one needs also to be conscious of Singapore's basic constraints—geopolitical realities, land and water scarcity, small population, short history, lack of cultural roots, and sensitive racial/religious constitution (Zainul and Mahizhnan 81). John Clammer, a respected sociologist and professor at the National University of Singapore, describes Singapore as:

a highly plural, highly urbanized society already beginning to experience the effects of the 'post-industrial' syndrome ... [that] illustrates many of the themes that are going to become the problems of most of the societies of the region in the not-so-distant future. (Sociology 8)

That future has arrived. The challenge is to prevent Singaporeans from slipping into complacency. One commentator says that managing Singapore's success with a demographically youthful, affluent, well-educated, globally informed, and traveled population is difficult. The question is whether the populace will be content with a "centrally managed, petitionary political culture that has a low level of political give and take" (Zainul and Mahizhnan 80). Logotherapist Lukas connects the problem of complacency to the question of meaning:

Meaning is more easily found when affluence follows scarcity, not the other way around. Scarcity elucidates meaning because it motivates us to overcome it. It is a motor fueled by awareness of a purpose, a "what for." To bring an end to scarcity, to build a better life, are powerful goals. When these are attained and a period of plenty follows, the contrast to privations overcome makes the achievement a source of great joy. But when the sequence is reversed, and you have known nothing but affluence, there is no exhilaration because you have not experienced the contrast. You are not motivated to change anything, the "what for?" has no answer. Why do anything if you have everything? (Meaning in Suffering 148)

A growing complacency among Singaporeans was also the concern of Lee Kuan Yew,

who held the appointment of Senior Minister during Goh Chok Tong's term of office.

Lee thought the younger generation needed to know how close to the edge Singapore had teetered:

I was also troubled by the apparent over-confidence of a generation that has only known stability, growth and prosperity. I thought our people should understand how vulnerable Singapore was and is, the dangers that beset us, and how we nearly did not make it. Most of all, I hope that they will know that honest and effective government, public order and personal security, economic and social progress did not come about as the natural course of events. (Singapore Story 8)

Singaporean society has entered the twenty-first century and is now under the leadership of its third prime minister Lee Hsien Loong. Besides sustaining whatever edge Singapore already possesses over its neighbors in terms of economy and infrastructure, Lee also strives to lead the nation beyond its existing standards and benchmarks. This places Singapore within Frankl's creative paradigm.

After more than four decades of continuous economic growth, Singapore was by the end of the twentieth century a wealthy nation with the second-highest average annual wages in Asia after Japan (Chua 195). Economic prosperity and political stability have become the national culture, as is the Singaporean concept "kiasu," a phrase from the Hokkien dialect meaning "afraid to lose." "Kiasu" Singaporeans wish to be first in lines, competitions, and negotiations. Being "kiasu" keeps standards high, but it also leads to a graceless and heartless society (Brogger 1994). Lee Hsien Loong expressed the struggle in this manner:

We'd like Singapore to be a symbol of quality; that it's associated with excellence, with perfection, with a constant striving to improve, so that you're never there, but you're always working at it. (19)

The striving can lead to innovation and creativity, but it also wears many out. It can lead

to a sense of unremitting helplessness and despair for those not as well-placed or fleet-footed. Others simply wish to enjoy their hard-earned achievements, to create comfort zones and remain in them. In his National Day Message in 2003, current senior minister Goh Chok Tong<sup>5</sup> said:

I know that some of you are getting breathless trying to keep up with the changes around you.... But unfortunately, there is no emergency button that we can press, to stop the world from changing. We will have to adjust to its pace.... Adapting to the rapid changes requires a mindset change. We can no longer expect life to progress steadily upwards on an escalator. Instead, we must be prepared for life on a roller coaster.... Above all, we must be more self-reliant. The Government will create the framework and the environment for you to thrive. But it should not and cannot micro-manage your life to guarantee you your job and your wealth. You must create and seize the opportunities yourselves.... The irony is, western journalists decry Singapore as a nanny state. But many Singaporeans want it that way. They are worried that we are shifting the burden of responsibility and decision-making back to them.... But to survive the rough and tumble of our uncertain world, Singaporeans will have to make more decisions for themselves. They will have to do more for themselves. And they must take responsibility for their actions and decisions. (Goh 14)

Having the freedom to make opportunities in an uncertain world and taking responsibility for them is the freedom of will emphasized by Frankl. The observation Lukas makes about overcoming a meaningless affluence is pertinent to Singaporeans as they struggle ahead:

What we can do is to switch the sequence from joyless affluence leading to despair, to meaning fulfillment leading to joy. This we can do by applying the motivations that work during scarcity.... We have to find a “what for.” The “what for” in scarcity is obvious: to overcome scarcity. In affluence it is more difficult—to find something that motivates people to use their strength, inner resources, and “will to meaning” to reach a goal, change a negative attitude. (Meaning in Suffering 148-49)

Finding a “what for” translates into competitive challenges faced at the national level.

The nature of these challenges are varied and sometimes complicated. Examples of

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<sup>5</sup> Lee Kuan Yew is no longer senior minister. As of 2005, he is the mentor minister.

external challenges facing Singapore can be illustrated by developments in neighboring Thailand.

**Sustaining the edge.** The Kra Canal, a grand project that has been long talked about since the 1600s, envisages a bisection of south Thailand at the Isthmus of Kra and will connect the Indian and Pacific Oceans. If successful, it will drastically reduce the importance of the Straits of Malacca (Straits) and Singapore. Presently, the Straits are the most important waterway in the world, and most of China's and Japan's oil imports pass through it. The Straits, however, has a growing problem with piracy. The Philip Channel near Singapore is only 12.5 kilometers wide—a natural bottleneck with the potential of a maritime collision, or worse, a terrorist attack. If a large oil tanker sank in the Philip Channel, other vessels could be forced to take a long detour, holding up oil imports to China and Japan for weeks. The Kra Canal would allow most ships to avoid the Straits and provide a one thousand kilometer shortcut. Singapore's status as a maritime hub would be eroded, and the Port of Singapore would lose a tremendous amount of business from servicing the fifty thousand or so vessels that call each year. One concern is that America, and in particular President George W. Bush as part of his campaign to fight global terrorism and foster better ties with China, may provide financing to build the Kra Canal in Thailand (H. S. Lee, "Will Bush Help"). Another related project being contemplated by Thailand is the Krabi-Khanom Land Bridge, with highways, railway tracks, and pipelines linking the Gulf of Thailand and Andaman Sea. This land bridge will turn Thailand into the oil-trading hub of Southeast Asia (and again marginalize Singapore) when oil depots and refineries are built and a petrochemical industry established.

Since 1998, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Seoul have all opened new international airports, spending some United States \$ (US\$) 24 billion in all. Now Bangkok is planning in late 2005 to unveil the New Bangkok International Airport (NBIA), the Suvarnabhumi Airport or “Golden Land.” It has a larger capacity than Singapore’s famous Changi Airport in terms of capacity and is three times larger in total land area. Singapore is currently the fifth largest airport in Asia, but Bangkok’s present international airport comes in a close seventh and is growing at the same rate in percentage terms. With the NBIA, Singapore’s premiere status as an air hub comes under pressure.

Some other challenges facing Singapore are posed by domestic factors. Taking the projection that Singapore’s population may increase exponentially over the next few years, the country faces a problem regarding energy resources and alternative options. Singapore relies heavily on external sources of energy to meet its industrial and domestic needs. Oil prices have already exceeded US \$50 per barrel, and further increases will impose a drain on economic resources. Singapore is compelled to look for alternative energy sources to reduce dependence on oil. The suggestion is for Singapore to think nuclear (Prakash). The argument is that nuclear reactors are cleaner than fossil fuel-run power plants. They do not emit any polluting substances; whereas, traditional power plants can lead to pollution-related health problems. The problem of nuclear waste remains, but the newer generation thorium-powered nuclear reactors address this (Seet). Dissenters of nuclear power argue that solar power is safer, cleaner, and takes advantage of the fact that Singapore has year-round sunshine. The risk of terrorism is also another argument against Singapore going nuclear (Yeo).



This survey of Singapore's modern history in three phases within Frankl's meaning paradigms sets the backdrop for the panoramic snapshots of Singaporean society that follow.

### **Snapshots of Singaporean Society**

This section gives an overview of the Singaporean context. The challenge is in delimiting the areas to highlight. Nine categories are used. The first four categories are based on ideas obtained from Clammer, who points out that three important categories in Singapore's social structure are race, the religious phenomenon, and urbanism (Singapore 1). To these he adds a fourth category, the state, in his book The Sociology of Singapore Religion: "The state is ubiquitous in Singapore: there is no place for major sub-cultures within the society which might challenge this hegemony" (40). In addition to Clammer's categories of race, religion, urbanism, and the state, I have included brief descriptions of five other areas that are relevant for the purpose of this dissertation: the economy, education, family, the counseling profession, and the Christian church. At the same time, I must qualify that some obvious lines of inquiry, like the relevance of logotherapy to followers of mainline religions other than Christianity, are for the time being deferred.

### **Multiracial Society**

Singaporean society is an interesting melting pot of multiple cultures. Otsuka Keiko, a 10 year-old student, talks about these multiple influences upon Singaporeans:

Multi-everything makes us Singaporean:  
Multi-lingual, multi-racial, multi-religious,  
Multi-cultural, multi-tasking,  
Not to forget out multi-storey carparks. (qtd. in E. K. Goh 13)

**Growing population.** According to Census 2000, Singapore's official population census, the population of Singapore crossed the four million mark in June 2000 to reach

4.24 million. The period from 1990 to 2000 registered the fastest population growth following independence, but this increase was attributable mainly to the population of nonresidents which grew at a higher rate of 9.3 percent. By contrast, the number of Singapore citizens and permanent residents only grew by 1.8 percent (“Census 2000”). Singapore has for some time been attempting to reverse the low birth rate of its citizens. In particular, the low birth rates of the ethnic Chinese have been a cause for concern. When Lee Hsien Loong was deputy prime minister, he argued that Singapore needed to move closer to the population sizes of countries such as Hong Kong (7.4 million) and Switzerland (7.3 million). A larger population would provide a larger domestic market, sustain the country’s growth, enlarge the talent pool, and maintain Singapore’s competitive edge in relation to the neighboring economies (Teo).

**Pluralistic society.** Singapore society is multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-religious. Chinese, Malay, Indian, Eurasian, and other races live side by side. According to Census 2000, Singapore’s ethnic composition remained roughly the same between 1990 and 2000 at 76.8 percent Chinese, 13.9 percent Malays, 7.9 percent Indians, and 1.4 percent for all other ethnic groups (“Census 2000”).

Each race has its respective traditions as well as a growing sense of shared identity with other Singaporeans of other races. This shared “Singaporeanness” includes respect for authority and elders, cherishing hard work and ambition, a strong emphasis on education, and regard for the welfare of family and children. Moving away from these general traits, however, the commonalities end. No common ground exists on religion and the concept of deity. No common ground exists on the social norms and rituals regarding birth, marriage, and death. These social rituals are determined more along

ethnic/racial lines. Questions of being and personhood, life's cycles and seasons, are more likely to be influenced by whether one is Chinese, Malay or Indian or whether one is Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Sikh, or agnostic/atheist and less by whether one is Singaporean or not. If a common thread is to be found, it has to be a universal one that is useful and acceptable across racial/ethnic lines. The search for meaning is one such universal thread.

**Natural divisions.** While the average Singaporean might see his or her society as one in which everyone is the same, sociologists, who point to race as a stark dividing line, sometimes view the matter differently. Clammer observes that Singapore is one of the few modernized societies in the world that stresses ethnicity as the primary means of social classification; hence, Singapore is officially regarded as being divided into the four main ethnic groups of Chinese, Malays, Indians, and "others" (a category that encompasses an array of Eurasians, Europeans, and other Asians). The four main languages spoken in Singapore are Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, and English. English is the language of commerce, and the other three languages are officially regarded as corresponding to the respective ethnic groups and are called "mother tongues." The results are not always neat. For example, the mother tongue of all Indians is designated officially as Tamil, although in reality many Indians are actually native speakers of Urdu, Bengali, Sinhala, or Malayalam. The mother tongue of all Chinese is designated as Mandarin, although it is the regional dialect of less than 1 percent of the Chinese population, the vast majority being native speakers of other Chinese dialects such as Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, and Hakka (Sociology 34). The English language is the official language of commerce and government and is the language of choice of many, including younger Singaporeans. As Singapore became more urbanized

and industrialized over the decades, certain divisions of ethnic identity like dress and dialect have gradually faded.

In view of a pluralistic Singaporean society that is diverse in language, religion, customs, and life views, a common ground needs to be found. This need is filled by Frankl's logotherapy applied in a meaning-centered pastoral ministry, which explores universal frameworks beyond the limited confines of language, religion, and cultural specifics. At the same time, logotherapy is broad enough to allow exploration from within these languages, religions, and cultural specifics.

### **Many Religions**

Singapore has many religions. Clammer's research reveals more than ten mainstream religions and their offshoots. With this diversity, the specter of religious intolerance lurks—"something which, whatever [religion] preaches, actually divides people more than it unites them" (Sociology 30). Singapore is officially a secular state with no national or common religion (Singapore 39).

Another matter affecting religion in Singapore is the secularization of society. In Clammer's assessment, Singapore is the second most secularized country in Asia after Japan. Given Singapore's high level of urbanization and industrialization, it might have been expected that adherence to religion would decline, but this is not the case (Sociology 42). Eddie C. Y. Quo and Tong Chee Kiong cite two surveys commissioned in the late 1980s. One was a national survey on religion and moral values in Singapore by the Ministry of Community Development and the other a study of Chinese religions undertaken by the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA). The national survey covered a random sample of 1,015 persons aged fifteen and over, while the SFCCA survey used a three-

staged stratified random sample of 1,025 households living in public housing. These surveys revealed interesting religious trends: the substantial growth in the number of Christians in Singapore, the rapid decline in adherence to traditional Chinese religions, an increase in the number of persons claiming no religious affiliations, and some indications of a revival in Buddhism. In addition, the findings suggested that the shifts in religious affiliations tended to follow certain demographic patterns. For instance, Christians tended to be younger in age, spoke English as a dominant home language, and were of higher socioeconomic status in terms of occupation, income, and housing type. The non-religionists shared almost the same characteristics as the Christians, except that while Christianity seemed to appeal more to the English educated, “No-Religion” as a category attracted both English educated and Chinese educated Singaporeans. Taoists, on the other hand, exhibited very different demographic characteristics. They tended to be older in age, spoke dialects at home, and had relatively lower socioeconomic status (Quo and Tong 2). Clammer concludes that religion in Singapore has held out well in the face of increasing secularization because modernity—urbanization, the spread of technological consciousness, and an increasingly dehumanized society—has driven many to religion:

It is, at least in principle, an anti-alienation and anti-anomie device. It again in principle promotes a sense of meaning and creates a community of the faithful with its attendant networks of contacts and social functions.... Tradition is a vital form of making sense of the present in terms of categories and experiences and tested institutions that have stood the test of time. In this sense all of the societies of Southeast Asia are still deeply traditional.... [T]he current preoccupation with Confucianism or with “Asian values” or with Islamic social sciences, to take just three examples, are all instances of this. (Sociology 3)

Singaporeans have turned to religion because the anomic influences have increased the hunger for the supernatural. The aspects of religion that promote hard work,

social harmony, and moral values also validate Singapore's functional, economics-driven ethos. The resultant combination is a unique, almost unrealistic, juxtaposition of high levels of ethnic pluralism, social differentiation, urbanization, industrialization *and* high levels of religious belief and practice (Clammer, Sociology 43). This situation can itself create a sense of anomie and meaninglessness and provides an avenue where a meaning-centered pastoral ministry might be offered. Using Frankl's meaning paradigms in conjunction with logotherapy's emphasis on the spiritual condition, one can dialogue with individuals of any religious affiliation to examine their will to meaning in the religious arena by asking these questions: Is your religious belief a creative force that mirrors the nature of your Creator? Is your religious practice a response in awe as you experience God? Do your religious beliefs and practices prompt and empower you to reach out to others? Do they enable you to transcend unavoidable troubles and tribulations, or are your religious practices merely a disguised striving for functional and pragmatic outcomes like more wealth and better health? Are your religious beliefs a hedge against the outcomes in life that you would rather avoid? Logotherapy and a meaning-centered pastoral ministry challenge individuals to confront these questions.

### **Rapid Urbanism**

The urban development that Singapore has undergone is a visible symbol of rapid change in Singapore. Two interrelated examples are Singapore's Chinatown and the Central Business District (the CBD), important icons in the history, growth, and also future of the country. Chinatown epitomizes the tradition and tenacity of the Chinese immigrants to Singapore. It is also an important symbol of Singaporean roots. The CBD represents a collective determination to stay the course of prosperity and progress.

Consciously or otherwise, it is the proud symbol of the Singaporean's ambitions.

This physical division between Chinatown and the CBD is artificial. The entire area used to be one crowded and haphazard settlement built up around the banks of the Singapore River where the early settlers not only worked but also lived. Only in 1966 did the government of a newly independent Singapore begin systematically to develop the area that has come to be known as the CBD. Gradually, it encroached areas that used to be considered Chinatown. Commercial developments and skyscrapers were built upon land released and sold by the government. Traditional Chinese enclaves adjacent to the core of the city, Raffles Place, were either completely demolished or selectively conserved and redeveloped for commercial and business use.

Additional land was reclaimed off the southern coast of the main island (Nicol Highway and Collyer Quay) between 1971 to 1985 to create Marina Centre and Marina South. At the time of writing, the CBD is being extended again by the ambitious development of a futuristic and comprehensive Business and Financial Centre at Marina Bay, intended to be a seamless expansion of the existing CBD at Raffles Place. A subway and an underground pedestrian network that will also link leisure and entertainment facilities at the waterfront promenade will connect the two complementary sites.

Unfortunately, the symbol of Singapore's immigrant roots, Chinatown, appears to be in atrophy. Vince Chong says, "The real Chinatown may soon be just a memory." Once home to the forefathers of the present third or fourth-generation Chinese Singaporeans, many of the present residents have moved to "better housing." While pockets of conservation have sprouted around Chinatown, many of the new businesses springing up there have little ethnicity about them. Chong points out that Chinatown in

Singapore is unlike those in, say, the United States, United Kingdom, or Canada. Chinese Singaporeans no longer need to seek relevance and familiarity within a certain type of community or precinct now that three-quarters of the population is Chinese (Chong).

As the CBD and BFC continue to expand, the urban planners are making plans to inject more vibrancy and energy into the city center and other areas that used to be Chinatown. For example, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) is now releasing sites for residential development to introduce more high-rise, high-density city living and add to the critical mass of people living within the CBD (e.g., the Tanjong Pagar area); nevertheless, these developments will eventually have distinct identities of their own, and increasingly little is left of the original Chinatown that one cannot find elsewhere in the country (Chong).

Somewhere in this relentless urbanism, the physical landscape of Singapore has lost its original identity; a part of its soul has been hollowed out. Perhaps modern Singaporeans have lost a part of their soul too, struggling with identity and trying to hold on to something in the midst of change. Here, logotherapy through meaning-centered pastoral ministry asks questions such as: Where are your roots? What is the meaning of your family and cultural traditions? How do you navigate or negotiate change? What is positive about life in modern Singapore? How can you transform stress into something constructive? How do you hold on to Christian values and relationships amidst affluence and materialism?

### **The Government and the State**

The government of Singapore is highly involved in running the nation. It provides strong leadership in the economy, in education, religion, social issues, and every other



conceivable sphere of Singaporean life.

In religion for example, the government's objective is to avoid inter-religious dissention; thus, the state confines religion to the private sphere, except where it might also be a form of tourist activity. It closely monitors cults and other fringe religious movements and excludes religion from the standard curricula of government-run educational institutions (Clammer, Sociology 30). The government also takes an evenhanded approach to adherents of the various religions. For example, the Parliament of Singapore passed the Religious Harmony Act in 1991 to maintain religious tolerance and respect and to minimize religious interference in politics (Chew 768).

In Singapore's economic policy, the government has taken a radically different route from the *laissez-faire* policies of the colonial era as these were said to have produced little growth, massive unemployment, wretched housing, and inadequate education. It believed government had to take a more proactive, even interventionist approach. The government's socialist economic policies were diverse and ranged from direct participation in industry to the supply of infrastructure facilities by statutory authorities, to the laying down of clear guidelines to private enterprises as to what they could or could not do. These policies were accepted by the populace in general and received active cooperation by unionized labor. The government's direct effort in promoting industrial growth was substantial (K. S. Goh 104). The government became a major employer through government-owned companies and statutory boards. All these establishments were expected to pull their own weight and eventually became thriving and profitable concerns; hence, they did not drain resources nor did they have to be kept alive by state subsidies. The government credited itself for good planning and the industrious work force for good results (105).

With such comprehensive governance of Singaporean society, the question arises whether the state has planned so extensively, even exclusively, that it erodes individual freedom and will. A meaning-centered pastoral ministry must discern the effects of a so-called “nanny state” on freedom, individual responsibility, and personal will. Such a ministry will ask questions such as: If everything is already planned for you, will you in effect have less freedom? Will you still take on personal responsibility? Will you eventually risk less or do less? If everything is found without you having to strive for it, will you lose your moral fiber? Will you lose your will to suffer and complain at every petty turn?

### **The Economy**

Singaporeans try to strike a balance between work and lifestyle, but do not always get it right:

We rush to work, we work to have.  
 We rush to complain, we keep to silence.  
 We rush for free, we all want the Cs.  
 We are full of contradictions. (qtd. in E. K. Goh 14)

Singaporeans want the five Cs: a car, condominium, cash, credit card and country club. Three decades ago, this desire would have just been wishful thinking for most; however, Singapore has come a long way economically. The first deputy prime minister of Singapore, Goh Keng Swee, was an astute economist, and he is often considered the mastermind behind Singapore’s economic success. In 1972, he delivered a speech in London encouraging British industrialists to outsource their production to Singapore:

[T]wo types of industry may find it advantageous to consider production in Singapore. The first type are [sic] those with export orders larger than the production capacity in Britain. They may be able to supplement production very quickly by setting up a plant in Singapore. The second type, curiously, are [sic] those industries with declining export orders if

this decline is a result of Japanese competition. Industrialists who are troubled by rising costs may find it useful to look at what Singapore has to offer.... to strengthen their competitive position in the world markets. (18)

He turned Singapore's need into advantage for others and for itself.

Singapore was small, with a land area at that time of 225 square miles at low tide. (That figure has increased 12 percent from 1960 figures because of extensive land reclamation.) Besides sand and granite used for land reclamation, Singapore had no other natural resources. The domestic market was too small to support import-substitution manufacturing. The industrialization effort could not afford to fail (K. S. Goh 96). The silver lining was that the tide of global economics was in Singapore's favor. The industrialized West and Japan had been experiencing a postwar economic boom that continued till the late 1960s. Many industries flourished during the postwar years because of new technologies and inventions, like transistors and integrated circuits. New products like battery-powered transistor radios, tape recorders, televisions, stereo sound systems, computers, and satellite communications were released at this time. Jet engine and rocket propulsion had spawned a burgeoning aerospace industry, mass air transportation, and global tourism. Spectacular growth in the petrochemical industry led to the production of plastics and synthetic fibers. Full employment in Western Europe and North America drove consumer demand. The outsourcing of manufacturing facilities in less developed countries like Singapore became feasible for the multi-national corporations, especially when host government policies were favorable and infrastructural facilities were available (99).

Singapore's economic policy provided an environment favorable to investment in employment-creating and output-raising industries. Infrastructure services and facilities

were set up to maximize Singapore's advantage as a convenient communications center by sea, air, telephone, and wireless. Self-contained "industrial estates" were built, all equipped with a network of roads, power generation, telecommunications, water supply, and convenient access to seaports and airports. New industries attracted to Singapore were provided access to finance ranging from temporary banking accommodation to long-term loans. Tax holidays were also granted as part and parcel of Singapore's economic policy. To bring the opportunities available in Singapore to the attention of industrialists in Japan, Western Europe, and the United States, a promotion agency known as the Economic Development Board was created by an Act of Parliament in 1960 (K. S. Goh 101-02). This agency remains very active, with international offices throughout Asia, Europe, and North America.

The struggle for economic survival was a legitimate and consuming activity in the life of the nation, the society at large, and individuals in particular. The collective meaning of such endeavors can perhaps be measured by an increase in the gross domestic product, a decline in unemployment, a balance of trade surplus, and a building of the country's economic reserves. The meaning of life at the individual level is found in finding a decent job, making ends meet, being able to save, and providing for basic needs. The challenges of the future will be more complex, however.

### **Education**

Human resources are Singapore's only productive assets; therefore, Singapore invests heavily in education to ensure the nation's economic success. After Singapore obtained independence, then deputy prime minister Goh Keng Swee believed that the people had inherited a problem. The colonial government had not regarded universal education

as a desirable or necessary policy objective (100). The colonial objective had been to generate a sufficient cohort of literate people to populate the lower levels of the colonial bureaucracy and to service the banks, import agencies, and similar organizations. The only real educational effort came from the handful of missionary schools and local philanthropic organizations; therefore, new schools and thousands of teachers were urgently needed. The first phase of the education program expanded the primary schools, which provide six years of basic education. Next, more secondary schools and institutions of higher education were quickly built (101).

Today, Singapore has three universities: the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and the Singapore Management University (SMU). Some universities based overseas have either set up campuses or joint degree programs in Singapore. They include French business school Insead, China's Shanghai Jiao Tong University, the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, and Stanford Universities ("Game for a Degree"). NUS has been ranked eighteenth among the world's top two hundred tertiary institutions in a ranking exercise conducted by The Times Higher World University Rankings (Tay). Today, Singaporean students are encouraged to consider new fields such as the biomedical sciences for their future careers.

Every Singaporean lives through the nation's education system, from the very young who have to carry unwieldy schoolbags, to the grandparents who accompany them, and to everyone in between to whom grades matter a great deal. Education is of fundamental importance to Singaporeans from all walks of life. It ensures advancement

in the school system, promotion at work and promises a brighter future; nevertheless, it causes tremendous stress. The role of meaning-centered pastoral ministry is to critique the learning process and inspire the learning Singaporean to appropriate the best intentions of the educational system.

### **Family and Society**

“Our culture is traditional, yet our way of thinking is modern and systematic,” says Ng Yoon Peng (qtd. in E. K. Goh 17). This statement reflects the tension between the traditional and the modern in issues of family and society in Singapore. The three main racial-religious groups, Chinese-Taoist/Confucian, Indian-Hindu or Muslim, and Malay-Muslim, all have a strong family orientation that emphasizes the extended family network (A. Tan 42). The importance of the family is mentioned in Lee Kuan Yew’s memoirs as the very motivation for nation building:

Our families were at the heart of our team efforts to build a nation from scratch. We wanted a Singapore that our children and those of our fellow citizens would be proud of, a Singapore that would offer all citizens equal and ample opportunities for a fulfilling future. It was this drive in an immigrant Asian society that spurred us on to fight. (Singapore Story 9)

This section highlights separately issues concerning men, women, children and youth, and the elderly respectively and concludes with some observations on the challenges facing families.

**Men.** Traditionally, Singaporean fathers, not unlike their Asian peers, did not concern themselves much with raising the children. The father’s primary role was that of wage earner, and he ensured that life was comfortable for the family. At home his mere presence was enough to command the family’s respect. The modern Singaporean father is, however, expected to share in the responsibility of bringing up the children. He might

spend time reading to or playing with the children or take them to McDonald's or the shopping center. While this greater involvement is positive, new challenges such as stress, peer pressure, getting the children into the best schools, and demanding good grades impose considerable strains on the father/child relationship (John).

**Women.** The role of women in Singapore is quickly changing. They are more engaged in career, advancement, and the development of their personal potential. They are taking advantage of shifts in organizational structures from traditional hierarchical/patriarchal to more flexible management styles. The postwar generation of men in leadership in government and corporations, with their restricted mind-sets of women's role in society, will retire soon, further clearing the way for women playing larger roles as careerists, entrepreneurs, political leaders, and visionaries. This shift is already happening in Singapore.

**Children.** Not surprisingly, children are the focus of the Singaporean family. Being a privileged lot, Singaporean children also face considerable demands. Apart from regular school hours and curricula, they also have "private tuition" or personal coaching outside school hours. Parents also put their children up for ballet or music classes (Nazeer). For the older children, school stress is an integral part of life. Student Wong Kon Kit, aged 9, talks about the stress of going to school:

Short pants, slippers, lah, lor, leh  
 Mixture of English, Mandarin and Malay  
 EM1, EM2, EM3, Gifted and Express  
 Stress! Stress!  
 But who cares anyway?  
 Upon our victory brings 5Cs  
 Yay! (qtd. in E. K. Goh 18)

"EM1, EM2 and E3, Gifted and Express" are descriptions of "streaming" or different

classes created for students based on their language and academic capabilities.

**Elderly.** The average life expectancy has increased in Singapore. While a 65-year old retiree in 1970 could expect to live up to age 73, the elderly in 1999 could expect to live up to an average age of 82. The number of people aged 85 and above sprang six fold to 16,100 between the years 1970 and 1999. This increased life expectancy has raised some important issues. For one, the elderly have to be able look after themselves financially. Living to an older age requires a larger nest egg, regardless of lifestyle. Just living a basic lifestyle will require roughly S\$228,000 (in today's dollars) to last from age 62 (the official retirement age) until age 100 (Leong). Most Singaporeans will need to count on their children to support them.

The lifestyle of the elderly is also changing. Reports are now emerging of a growing breed of grandparents who, after decades of hard work, are spending their retirement years volunteering in religious groups and civic organizations. They have hobbies and even work out in the gym. This change has caused a growing gap between the generations. With singles and smaller nuclear families on the rise, older people are interacting less with younger people. Many grandparents also shy away from babysitting or actively bringing up their grandchildren (both of which have been common until now). For some, seeing their grandchildren once or twice a month is more than enough. One said of her children, "I don't mind them not being so close to me. They have their own families now. I do my church work, which is very satisfying" (qtd. in Quek). These emerging grandparents do not think it selfish to live this way. One said, "My children know they can count on my help if they really need it. But they have to learn how to cope. We can't be doing their work for them" (qtd. in Quek).



**Change and challenge.** Since the 1990s, rapidly changing conditions and lifestyles have caused a shift away from traditional cultural values. Singapore's relentless drive toward a developed economy and the pressure to succeed have stretched many families. Family breakdowns, the neglected elderly, problems associated with latchkey children, teenage gang violence, and juvenile offenders became common. By the late 1990s, one in every five marriages ended in divorce (Sng 325). Homer Jernigan, a family counselor who taught at Trinity Theological College in Singapore, outlines some important roles concerning individuals, family, and society and asks whether the roles and expectations listed below need reexamining:

1. the nature of the "good life" (especially as presented by the media),
2. the nature and functions of marriage,
3. the roles of a "good husband," a "good wife," and a "good child,"
4. the meaning and significance of "family,"
5. the relationships between men and women,
6. the relationships between the generations,
7. the relationships of "family" and "community,"
8. the nature and functions of emotions in human relationships and the controls over violent forms of emotional expression, and
9. the role and functions of sexuality. (26)

In fact, significant value shifts have already occurred. Using Jernigan's nine categories, I have put forward my personal observations on the traditional views on Singaporean family values and the significant shift to contemporary views (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2. The Shift from Traditional to Contemporary Views Regarding Family**

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Traditional Views</b>	<b>Contemporary Views</b>
Good life	Bread, butter, and the basics	The five Cs and luxury frills
Marriage	Economic, socially determined	Emotional, personally determined
Husband	Sole provider	Soul partner
Wife	Homely, submissive	Career oriented, assertive
Child	Quiet, conforming	Expressive, curious
Family	Extended family	Nuclear family
Men/Women	Unequal	More equal
Generations	Filial piety	Mutual respect
Family/ Community	Family integral to community/ Corporate religion	Family loosely part of community/ Personal religion
Emotions	Personal emotions restrained (Violent expressions remain unacceptable.)	Personal emotions acceptable
Sexuality	Sex for procreation	Sex as pleasure

The net effect of these shifts has been a greater emphasis on individual needs, private values, and personal significance. Of course the average Singaporean is still very much Asian at heart; therefore, the importance of family will not diminish completely, nor will the individual wholly take precedence over community.

### **The Counseling Environment**

As issues affecting individuals have become more complicated, so too has the development of counseling and psychology become more sophisticated over the years.

**Professional counseling.** Up till the early 1960s, professional counseling in Singapore was rare, and the only psychiatric facility was the Woodbridge Hospital. One

could not get professional help for emotional and psychological problems that were not serious enough to warrant institutional care. The Methodist Church in Singapore addressed this gap, and by 1966 the Churches' Counseling Service was set up by American Methodist pastor Gunnar Teilmann (E. Tan 110). In 1976, the Churches' Counseling Service became the Counseling and Care Centre and broadened its service base to the general public. It has since established itself as the leader in professional counseling in Singapore (112).

Initially, many professional counselors were expatriates trained in the psychodynamic approach (E. Tan 114). Then the Rogerian, client-centered approach became popular as professionals returned from training in the United States. Perhaps the Rogerian focus on trusting individuals to be the architect of their lives and the belief that the individual did not require detailed and constant guidance and supervision was refreshing to Singaporean clients (Raskin and Rogers 134). In the final analysis, much depended on the major professional counseling trends in the United States. Due to the importance of family in Singaporean values, family therapy has been a logical vehicle for delivering counseling and psychotherapeutic care. The Counseling and Care Centre introduced family therapy into Singapore and launched its first postgraduate program in family counseling in 1990 (A. Tan 42-43).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Another approach that has become increasingly popular among counselors is Transactional Analysis (TA). This model was first introduced to Singapore from Western Australia in 1983, and in 1989, a pioneer group of social workers and counselors in TA formed the Transactional Analysis Association of Singapore. In the 1990s, active therapies such as strategic therapy, brief therapy, and solution-focused therapy were introduced. In school counseling, cognitive and behavioral models were introduced and have gained wide acceptance, TA being one of them. Another popular model adopted by school counselors is Reality Therapy, which has been tried out in secondary schools with some degree of success. Other behavioral approaches such as Behavior Modification are often used in primary schools with younger children. In career counseling, the Trait-Factor model initiated by Williamson, Holland's Vocational Personality theory, and Super's developmental model form the bases for theoretical considerations as well as practical applications. The emphasis is on career education as part of the school curriculum to enhance career self-awareness among the students and to foster career exploration (E. Tan 115).

Compared to the other major psychological associations or societies in America, Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, the Singapore Psychological Society (SPS) has yet to develop a broad range of specialization in psychology. At present the SPS recognizes four subdisciplines—clinical, industrial/organizational, educational, and counseling—out of about fifty possible subdisciplines (Tan and Goh 35-37). This gap leaves plenty of room for specialization as well as for the introduction of relevant fields of therapy. In particular, logotherapy could find a niche within specialized categories of psychology such as the philosophical or humanistic subdisciplines.

**Vocational psychology.** As Singapore inches steadily from a newly industrialized country to a developed nation, vocational psychology in Singapore will need to revisit the role that work plays in Singaporeans' lives and the balance between education, work, and leisure. The relentless changes in the workplace mean that individuals must embrace change frequently and be willing to strive, take pride in their work, and value working with others. Long-term effects from the Asian economic crisis add to the whole cocktail of issues. Vocational psychologists grapple with the loss of consumer confidence, the permanent loss of certain jobs, and the jobless economic recovery while career counselors ask anew how jobs are “redeployed, automated, eliminated, and regenerated in forms we haven't yet imagined” (Tan and Goh 77). Thomas H. Naylor, William H. Willimon, and Rolf Osterberg write of the meaninglessness experienced by workers having trouble connecting with their coworkers or with the organization's objectives in a hierarchical, authoritarian work environment (55, 59). Singaporeans can identify with the “crisis of work” in which work is repetitive, boring, empty of any higher purpose and people cannot wait to get away from work to engage in their “real” interests (28). Frankl's

attitudinal paradigm can be the starting point from which counselors can help people adopt meaningful stances toward their work, workplace and coworkers.

**Counseling training.** Some formal counseling qualifications available in Singapore include a specialist diploma in counseling and guidance at Temasek Polytechnic, a master's program in counseling psychology or educational psychology at the National Institute of Education, and master's level programs in social work and applied psychology at the National University of Singapore (A. Tan 46). A research culture has also been developing among counselor educators as well as counseling students, with studies generated in three groupings. The first group comprises exploratory studies to understand the field better in terms of clientele needs and counselor behavior. The second group of studies tests the validity of western theories and foreign instruments (Tan and Goh 93). The third group of studies investigates and evaluates the effectiveness of counseling practices. An intriguing study in the latter category is the dissertation submitted to the Nanyang Technological University by S. Samion who interviewed individuals who had engaged the services of both professional counselors and traditional healers. Her findings indicate that spirituality is a crucial element in the counselee-traditional healer relationship, but it is lacking in the formal professional counseling context. The aspect of spirituality is one factor that the counselees appreciate as helpful in enhancing their strength for problem resolution (94). Logotherapy fills this gap as it addresses the human spiritual dimension through Frankl's thinking on the search for ultimate meaning. Here, the three distinct elements of the spiritual dimension—the religious sense, the human conscience, and the capacity for self-transcendence—can be explored in the counseling relationship.

In the training of pastoral caregivers and counselors, the ideal case would be that students entering seminary would have had a prior degree in psychology conferred by the National University of Singapore (NUS). This background best complements the pastoral care curriculum offered by seminaries and Bible colleges, but the majority of persons trained or in training to be full-time church workers, Christian counselors, missionaries, and pastors are unlikely to have had this advantage because the NUS-conferred degree in psychology is a relatively recent one. The only form of pastoral care training they could eventually receive is as a component of a Bachelor or Master of Divinity program. While most graduates embrace a care and counseling ethos not unlike that espoused by pastoral counselors such as Howard John Clinebell—that is seeking to empower growth toward wholeness in the various important aspects of a person’s life (31)—the training is brief and more focused. The deepening of skills and further specialization is possible only if the pastoral caregiver pursues postgraduate education overseas.

Singaporean pastoral caregivers will benefit from training in meaning-centered pastoral care through logotherapy. The major tenets and techniques of logotherapy can be conveyed by trained and/or practicing logotherapists and supplemented via distance learning where further accreditation is desired. The universal theme of meaning behind logotherapy makes it possible for logotherapy to bridge the cross-cultural divide and integrate with pastoral caregiving in the Singapore context. This integration would make it possible for the logotherapist, counselor, or pastor to, in David W. Augsburger’s words, be an “intercultural pastoral counselor” as well (77). In fact, Frankl’s theory is consonant with Augsburger’s discussion of the universals in culture and personality that must be considered when transposing counseling theories across cultures. Augsburger’s sixth

universal in particular, recognizing that “humans are spiritual beings,” could have been taken straight out of Frankl’s writings:

We are meaning makers, driven by a will to meaning. We are meaning seekers. We search for meaning in relationships, in community, in history, in life, and in death. We are goal-directed beings—we seek goals for life and choose values as both means and ends. We are worshipping beings. We feel awe, reverence, and wonder for the transcendent, for “the beyond,” and express it in respect for the sacred in its many forms. We are questioning beings, who can conceive of ultimate questions probing the origin, nature, and purpose of things. (75-76)

Augsburger does not reference Frankl anywhere in the discussion or anywhere else in his book. Perhaps this silence is a mute testimony to the cross-cultural applicability of Frankl’s meaning paradigm within the human spiritual dimension.

### **The Ministry of the Church**

The Christian community is an integral part of Singapore’s sociocultural setting. Census 2000 reports the percentage of Christians as having increased from 12.7 percent to 14.6 percent of the population between 1990 and 2000 (Sng 337). Prominent church leader and historian Bobby E. K. Sng cites statistics reporting that the number of Christian congregations rose to 450 in 2001, up from 331 in 1990, and church membership increased from 95,123 to 152,371 in the same period (336). Undoubtedly the Singaporean church as a social phenomenon has in its 186-year history contributed to the well-being of Singaporean society in many different ways. Sng notes direct contributions such as mission hospitals or schools or indirect ones such as religious ideals and values worked into the subconscious of society, affecting personal habits and generating social changes (349).

**Challenges for Christians.** Sng observes a resurgence of religio-cultural sensitivity toward the church in recent years and distinguishes this sensitivity from

sporadic instances of opposition toward Christian individuals in the past:

What we are seeing today is a consciousness that is community-driven. There is a sense of cohesiveness that has drawn together disparate groups which previously operated separately. This consciousness is more educated and better mobilised. There are also established channels as well as instruments by which these groups can express their concerns. The challenge boils down to this: how can the church continue to maintain a distinctive witness in the midst of a multifaith society? Is there a need to rethink her approach to evangelism, her traditional attitude towards various cultural practices and the relationship between church and state? At some point Christians will have to strike a balance between being sensitive to others and holding on to their convictions. (351-52)

Having a meaning-centered pastoral ministry within the larger arena of Christian ministry can be part of the rethinking of evangelism. It also reflects sensitivity to the needs of contemporary Singaporeans. Most importantly it allows Christians to reaffirm that true meaning, derived from an honest search for meaning, points ultimately to God.

**Serving the community.** The Singaporean church has been growing in its community service (Sng 352). The 1990s saw a rapid increase in services rendered by Singaporean churches to the wider community, bringing Christ's love to the poor, the needy, the sick, the aged, the dying, the imprisoned, and the disabled. In 1990, Christians ran twenty-two community service centers. By 2000, the number had increased to 118. The increase was not only quantitative; the kinds of services rendered also increased (326). Some examples of Christian organizations involved in serving the community and the services they offer are outlined below.

The Methodist Welfare Services (MWS) is the outreach and social concerns arm of the Methodist Church in Singapore. Set up in 1981, the MWS reaches out to those facing crises and long-term hardship by providing care, support, and practical help. It has a total of fourteen service hubs, including a nursing home with an elderly day care center,



a home for the destitute, a home help service for the frail elderly, five Family Service Centers, three Children and Youth centers, a hospice service, and an administrative secretariat. MWS services touch about three thousand lives each month and are extended to people of all races and religions. The Methodist Church also helped set up the Churches' Counseling Centre, which continues today as the Counseling and Care Centre, and the Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home (Sng 326).

The Singapore Anglican Welfare Council opened four new care centers in the 1990s, providing care for families in crises, battered wives, divorcees, single parents and their children, and people with psychiatric or emotional disabilities. They also have a community hospital and a care center for patients with chronic mental illness, and are building a rehabilitation center with a planned capacity for 120 residential and 150 daycare clients (Sng 326).

Other established institutions such as the Young Women's Christian Association and the Salvation Army also expanded their ministries. Together, these two institutions manage twenty-nine centers covering child care, student care, family services, and eldercare. Another organization, Care Corner, began in 1981 largely as a telephone counseling service. It sought to help a segment of society badly neglected by others, namely the Chinese speaking, many of whom had low income and inadequate education. Over the years, its ministry has expanded. Its 212 volunteers now operate four hotlines, twelve hours a day, seven days per week. In 2001 alone, over 22,000 persons received help through this service. Care Corner also runs sixteen service centers that cater to the needs of the family.

In like manner, Fei Yue, set up in 1991 under the umbrella of Chinese Christian

Mission, began with only a family service center at Bukit Batok. It has since grown into a multiservice organization, and Fei Yue now offers counseling ministry, information and referral service, family life education, and volunteer development programs. Its school-based social work reaches seven schools, and financial assistance is given to families facing difficulties due to loss of a spouse, illness, loss of employment, or crisis in the family. The Presbyterian Community Services, which began in 1974 with just one center at Bukit Merah View, today manages nineteen centers spread throughout the island. Its staff of more than two hundred is supplemented by the assistance of 278 volunteers. Its Dorcas Homecare Service helps the homebound elderly. Its services include delivery of meals to homes, escorting frail elderly to medical appointments, providing daily personal hygiene and grooming, and laundry services. In 2002, 39,742 visits were made to homes (326-27).

Another area where the Singaporean church has served the community has been in the area of drug rehabilitation. Sixteen Christian-run drug rehabilitation and aftercare centers, including important ministries like Hiding Place and the Helping Hand, help substance abusers with their addictions (Sng 328-29). Finally, the Singaporean church has offered its service to the community in the form of care for the elderly. By 2001, there were fourteen such homes.

**Fast growing churches.** Apart from the mainline denominational churches such as the Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Baptists, Sng cites the rise of three “new churches” (Sng 335). Such new-style churches are run like businesses and boast big congregations and buildings. The New Creation Church was founded in 1983 by Joseph Prince and saw rapid expansion in the 1990s. It meets at the

Rock Auditorium in Suntec City, a convention center in the heart of the Central Business District. The size of its congregation had grown to eight thousand in 2001. Faith Community Baptist Church was founded in 1986 under the leadership of 50 year-old Lawrence Khong and had mushroomed into a ten thousand-strong congregation in the same period. The third, City Harvest Church, was started in 1989 by 25 year-old Kong Hee (335). From an initial congregation of twenty, it leapfrogged to the forefront of church growth. Its thirteen thousand members meet in a new eight-story building at Jurong West. More than 60 percent of its members are below 30 years of age and have never been to any other church. It runs its own Bible school and is involved in church planting in seventeen other Asian countries (335-36).

Sng finds important similarities in these three churches. They are led by relatively young but charismatic personalities. They are willing to venture into new ministries like the performing and entertainment arts. Their worship goes beyond the traditional choir and congregational hymn singing. Reaching the unchurched is a high priority. Service to the community is evident. New Creation Church raised \$2 million to build a new kidney dialysis center in Bukit Batok. Its Love Outreach Ministry helps the less fortunate in society. Faith Community Baptist Church started an independent entity called Touch Community Service and runs service centers that address the needs of children, single parents, troubled youths, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Similarly, City Harvest Church started City Harvest Community Services, which donates \$2 million to over four thousand needy persons yearly (336).

**Implications for meaning-centered pastoral ministry.** Singaporean churches and Christian organizations have concentrated their efforts, quite literally, at two opposite

poles—fixing the body and saving the soul. In serving the community, the Christian community has focused on the essentials of life, providing the basics, and ministering to lives gone wrong. At the other end of the spectrum, the churches, including the fast growing ones mentioned above, have focused on saving souls. These objectives are definitely true to a biblically-centered Christian faith, which includes ministries such as disciple making, spiritual formation and its disciplines, Bible study, Christian education, pastoral care, missions and evangelism, and the preaching and teaching of the Word. These core ministries will benefit from a meaning-centered perspective of pastoral ministry. Specifically, the search for meaning can be integrated into the discipleship, evangelism, and pastoral care ministries of the church. Chapter 4 applies Frankl's logotherapy to individual case studies in a Singaporean setting within the context of meaning-centered pastoral ministry.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **COMPOSITE CASE STUDIES AND ANALYSIS**

#### **Overview**

This chapter explores the manner and extent to which logotherapy applies to the typical Singaporean by analyzing four composite case studies using Frankl's theories and techniques derived from the review of literature in Chapter 2.

#### **The Composite Case Study Methodology**

The four case studies presented in this chapter make use of the composite case study methodology that I have modeled after the Harvard Law School case study method of teaching legal principles and the pastoral care case proposed by Capps and Fowler. In the Harvard model, case studies are presented so that the relevant facts and principles contained in them may be discerned and analyzed. The sources for a case study might include official documents, sections of autobiographies, historical cases, hypothetical scenarios involving some conflict or dilemma, and real-life situations drawn from news media and other sources. The pastoral care case model was developed by Capps and Fowler for Christian ministry, and provides an account of the pastor rendering care to individuals and/or groups. The pastoral care case writer draws on various sources and uses processes such as self-reflection, introspection, and memory.

My composite case presentation and analysis represents a prototype attempt to address the needs of Singaporean Christians through a logotherapeutic and meaning-centered filter. I have been a local church pastor for about ten years, and I have counseled or come into contact with persons dealing with situations similar to those portrayed in my composite cases. Each case study presented in this chapter has a title and includes within

the narrative a pastoral or congregational setting where relevant, the main characters, and an account of events and situations unfolding over time. Where appropriate, the case analysis also gives a theological critique on the experiences encountered or counseled on. Where an added measure of confidentiality was considered necessary, names, places, times, and events were deliberately changed to protect the identity of actual persons. In deriving the composite case studies presented in this chapter, I have also referenced Tapiwa Mucherera's method of presenting composite cases.

### **Formulating the Studies**

The four composite case studies presented in this chapter are illustrative of Singaporean individuals and sociocultural issues I have personally dealt with and are likely to be indicative of what other Singaporean pastors have dealt with as well. None of the cases are based entirely upon one-on-one interviews with specific individuals, and neither do the names identify specific individuals (Mucherera, "Toward an African Pastoral Theology" 181-82). While the cases are not scientific data in the strict sense, neither are they, as Capps and Fowler put it, fictional or "made up out of thin air, as if the only source were the case writer's imagination" (40). Each composite case study portrays the struggles of actual people, represents realities I have observed and experienced as a pastor in Singapore, or depicts accounts I have come across in the news media or heard about from other pastors. The persons I have described are Singaporean, and the events happened within the broader Singaporean sociocultural context.

As for my personal context, I am an ethnic Chinese male married with two children aged five and three, have lived in Singapore all my life, and grown up in the Singaporean school system through post-graduate study in a seminary in Singapore. I

have served two-and-a-half years of National Service as a combat medical orderly in the Singapore Armed Forces (Army) and practiced law as an advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Singapore. I have worshipped regularly in a Methodist Church since 1983 and have served in the Methodist Church in Singapore as a local church pastor since 1993.

### **The Dissertation Reflection Team**

The contributions of my dissertation reflection team played an important part in my methodology and in the finalizing of the four composite case studies. The final form of the studies presented for analysis represent the end result of their input and my reflection process.

After approaching the five individuals I picked for my dissertation reflection team, I provided them with my dissertation title, gave brief descriptions of my dissertation goal and methodology, and prepared them in advance for the fact that I would be seeking their input on the four composite case studies. The dissertation reflection team was further divided into two separate teams. Professors Längle and Wong formed the first team, the logotherapy team, and were chosen for their expertise and experience in logotherapy to screen the composite cases through a logotherapeutic “filter.” They were asked to comment on the extent to which logotherapeutic counsel and techniques were or were not applicable in each of the four composite case studies. A sample of my letter to them is found in Appendix C. Rev. Dr. Symond Kock, Dr. Roland Chia, and Miss Helen Hee formed the second team, the Singapore team, and were chosen for their input on the “Singaporeanness” of the case studies and the overall authenticity and realism of the Singaporean setting described. A sample of my letter to them is

attached as Appendix D. The four case studies were then sent out via email to each member of the two teams. After auditing the cases, the respective team members were asked to address their input to me in a “Reply All” format so that the other member(s) on their team would have the benefit of their response(s). In every instance, the responses were also to be copied to my mentor Dr. Mucherera. If they were unable to do this, I forwarded the replies I received from them to him. After all the suggestions and input were received, the necessary amendments were made. I then explored and analyzed the cases, and my results and conclusions are presented in this chapter. The analyzed cases were not resubmitted for further input from the reflection teams.

### **Synthesis of Reflection Team Input**

The Dissertation Reflection Team offered their input and comments after reading the four composite case studies. Their combined input is synthesized below, and the entirety of their comments is found in Appendixes E to I.

**Logotherapy input.** Dr. Wong and Dr. Längle offered input regarding the use of logotherapy. One procedural comment was that in a case study of this nature it was difficult to fill in the Prototype Logotherapeutic Counsel and Techniques Worksheet I had sent to the team, and that it was more appropriate for use in a face-to-face setting; hence, input was offered in a descriptive and supervisory form. In response to this input, the worksheet (described in greater detail in the next section) found in Appendix J is for information only.

The logotherapy team’s opinion of the four composite cases was that they ranged widely from a position where logotherapy was highly relevant, to one where it was only marginally so. These comments came in within my expectations, given that logotherapy



is often an adjunct therapy that is used in conjunction with other primary approaches to counseling. In seeking to present a representative picture of the Singaporean context through my case studies, I did anticipate that logotherapy would sometimes be used only as an adjunct therapy supplementing Christian pastoral counseling or other specialized approaches (such as, possibly, grief counseling for Doreen in Case 4). In my approach to exploring and analyzing the case studies, I have consciously confined myself to Frankl's theories and techniques. Within this framework, I have indicated how relevant specific logotherapeutic approaches are. I am aware that other important counseling approaches may be applicable at the same time, but a discussion of these approaches is beyond the scope of the present research.

**Singaporean input.** Rev. Dr. Kock, Dr. Chia, and Miss Hee offered the input on the authenticity of the Singaporean context portrayed. The general tenor of their opinions was that the composite case studies were realistic scenarios reflecting Singaporean individuals and families. They did, however, comment on certain details in the composite cases. The first point was the fact that the characters on the whole had “a lot of confidence in their pastors.” In particular, younger adults such as Caroline in Case 1 did not typically seek the pastor's advice on their intended life directions. The second point concerned a detail in Case 4 where an unchurched individual, Johnny, appeared too easily convinced to see a counselor or pastor. The two points raised are valid, and more attention has been given to the detailing of the interplay of relationships that make it plausible for the individuals concerned to see a counselor or pastor.

### **Exploring and Analyzing the Cases**

Each case analysis begins with a brief comment on the sociocultural background

of the client. This pinpoints aspects of Singaporean culture that may have influenced the character's reactions and responses. Next, the cases are explored and analyzed within the grid of Frankl's theories and techniques, beginning with the framework of logotherapeutic counsel. As part of this process, the counselor identifies potential sources of meaninglessness and places the characters within Frankl's meaning paradigms. Third, issues or conditions that may be amenable to specific logotherapeutic techniques are explored. Throughout the analysis, relevant theological issues that surface are integrated with Frankl's understanding of the spiritual dimension, ultimate meaning, and God. Where Christians or church members are counseled, they are oriented toward their relationship with God and the Christian community. In a general counseling situation that is outside the Christian or church setting, the counselor respected the religious perspective of the character.

From the review of the literature on Frankl's theories and techniques, I have developed a prototype worksheet called the Logotherapeutic Counsel and Techniques Worksheet (Worksheet). This Worksheet is intended for use in a real life situation where the counselor or pastor has direct contact with the client, and facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the client's situation from a meaning-centered perspective. The indications are listed in the first column, and the descriptions that accompany each are given in the second column. These descriptions assist the user to identify the client's actions and symptoms accurately. A third column allows the person using the form to write down observations. The Worksheet is included here as Appendix J. I also envisage using the Worksheet in conjunction with Wong's PMP. The PMP will be applied as a preliminary test and a general picture obtained regarding where the client is situated in relation to

Frankl's meaning paradigms. The counselor or caregiver will then apply the Worksheet during a personal session with the client. I may also consider linking specific statements from the PMP to selected components of the Worksheet at a later stage.

### **The Composite Case Studies**

Four composite case studies are presented, explored and analyzed in this section. Each analysis begins with a sociocultural comment, followed by an exploration of logotherapeutic counsel and techniques that may be relevant for the character. Every analysis concludes with options for the character that will also orient him or her towards faith and meaning.

#### **Case 1: Caroline's Expatriate Career**

Caroline, aged 26, related this first person account to her pastor: "I was always open to pursuing my undergraduate studies overseas but never made plans to do so since my family could not afford it. Things changed somewhat in April 1998 when my father saw an advertisement in the newspapers that two professors from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, had come to Singapore to recruit students. My father told me to go for the interview, just for the fun of it. I was rather surprised to receive an offer of admission immediately after the interview. At that point, I had to decide whether to go to the University of Auckland or to the National University of Singapore where I had already been offered a place. It happened that my mother received news of her retrenchment [being laid off work] a few weeks later and was prepared to let me use her retrenchment benefit if I decided to accept the Auckland offer. It seemed like God was setting up an opportunity for me to receive an overseas education.

"While I was in Auckland, I joined a Presbyterian church near campus that drew

students from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China. Through the worship and fellowship, I got to know God better. In Auckland, I lived apart from my family for the first time. I had no friends whom I had known from Singapore and had to make new friends and have housemates for the first time. It was tough when different people with different habits live in the same apartment. It took a lot of patience on my part.

“After completing my studies in Auckland, I returned to Singapore. I found New Zealand to be too isolated from the rest of the world, although working in Singapore was also very stressful for me. The nature of my work in financial accounting meant that I had to work long hours. I did not want to be a workaholic and tried to strike a balance between work and leisure. In church, I became a small group leader and taught a children's Sunday school class. I also started taking French lessons and traveled whenever I could. I enjoy traveling because it opens my mind. I have felt that way ever since I went to study in New Zealand. I have realized that the best way to open one's mind is to experience it personally. It is not the same as people telling you something or watching it on television.

“After working two years in Singapore, I grew weary of my heavy work routine. It had also become quite meaningless for me. I also felt very stifled in Singapore. In June 2003, I decided to leave Singapore after applying successfully for a two-year working holiday visa to the United Kingdom. It also happened that my aunt, who was in London, invited me there to stay with her family for a time. It seemed a good opportunity, and I was keen to work in London for a taste of working overseas—perhaps even carve out a career there. As an added bonus, London was a good launching point for traveling to Europe, Scandinavia, and the Mediterranean.

“London was a challenging experience for me. Though I had a working visa, I did not have a job waiting when I resigned my job and left Singapore. The British economy was not doing well, so I could not find a job for a long time. When I finally found a job in financial audit, the income was not fixed on a monthly basis but was project based. There were periods when I did not receive an income, though I always had enough to get me through. I would have liked to plan ahead and know what to expect, but in London, I especially had to trust in God’s providence. Patience was again something I had to learn. I grew weary after a while.

“I decided I would go back to Singapore in July 2004 if I had not secured a salaried job by then. The British economy improved, however, and I managed to get a good contract in May. I was glad for the opportunity to stay on in London, at least for the duration of the new contract. Though I have tried applying for placements with a longer term, I have not gotten one. Perhaps God is telling me that two years is all the time he is giving me in London. After that, it is time to return to Singapore. Meanwhile, I have continued learning French and have signed up for classes in London. Going to French class has given me the opportunity to meet new people and also provided a welcome break from work. I am not actively involved in church here in London. I am not in a small group, and I am not serving in any particular ministry. I just attend the worship service on Sunday.

“I had originally planned to apply for an extension for my stay in England, but have decided that I will not unless I can find a more permanent job by then. The clock is ticking and still no sign of that job. It looks like I have to pack up and go back to Singapore come June 2005. I feel that my job mission has really not been accomplished,

and by default I am being forced to return to Singapore just because I am not up to continuing in London on a project basis. I had ventured out hoping to make a career here in London. Now this dream is about to unravel, and it all seems to make my education so inconsequential and my future so meaningless. I find it hard to fathom that I started out with more opportunities than others had only to finish so weakly here.”

Caroline was depressed and felt disappointed when she compared herself with her contemporaries who had settled quickly into their careers in Singapore upon graduation. She wondered how she would fit in because of the time she lost while working overseas. Specifically, her friends in the accounting field were now senior to her professionally. Through a combination of email and telephone conversations, she sought advice from her church pastor, who her family had known for many years.

### **Exploration and Analysis of Case 1**

Education is an important aspect of Singaporean culture, and families are generally willing to make the financial sacrifices in order to provide good educational opportunities for their children. Most Singaporeans consider obtaining a degree from a foreign university advantageous for advancing their future careers. While sons used to have the first priority, daughters are now likely to receive the same opportunities to further their education, whether in Singapore or overseas. After acquiring their degrees, many young people in Singapore dream of working overseas so that they can expand their careers and enjoy traveling at the same time. Some get the opportunity to do so after acquiring several years of work experience in Singapore. Others work overseas soon after graduation with hopes that the experience gained will further their careers at home.

**The existential vacuum.** Caroline reached a crossroad when she found working

in Singapore stressful and meaningless and decided to explore opportunities overseas. She felt there was something more she could accomplish—a career and a lifestyle that could meet her need for deeper meaning.

**The meaning paradigms.** Caroline exercised her freedom of will at two important turning points in her life. First, she chose to study in New Zealand even though she could pursue a tertiary education in Singapore with less financial strain upon herself and her family. At a later point, she resigned from her job in Singapore in search of work opportunities in the United Kingdom (U.K.). Since then, she has actualized several meaning potentials like actually working in the U.K., attending French classes, and joining a church for worship in London.

The key meaning paradigm that the counselor could emplace Caroline in is the creative paradigm. Her energies are channeled toward an expatriate career in accounting. One obstacle she faces is the short-term nature of the work contracts. Initially she was prepared to hold out for a longer-term contract. Such a contract proved elusive, and she has set a limit on how long she is prepared to wait and decided on a time to return to Singapore. This scenario brings Frankl's attitudinal paradigm into view—in the sense that Caroline has to endure a situation beyond her control. Her suffering, though not physical in nature, takes the form of an emotional duress that eventually resulted in feelings of meaninglessness and depression. It can also be related to the general Christian understanding of a trial or testing of character. The other meaning paradigm that is operative in Caroline's life in the U.K. is the experiential one. Examples of the experiential paradigm are her travels, French classes, and church attendance. The counselor might however find little evidence that she has good in-depth friendships or

relationships in London that would bring the experiential paradigm to its full potential. Consequently, Caroline may experience loneliness and a sense of meaninglessness concerning life in London. An observation I wish to make is that a weakness in one paradigm, in this case the experiential, can affect Caroline's impetus in another, the creative paradigm. In reality, a factor such as loneliness may cause her to suspend, modify, or even abandon the attempt to carve out an expatriate career. Another observation is that weakness in one aspect of the experiential paradigm, such as interpersonal relationships, may be to some extent ameliorated by strength in another aspect, in this case her faith in God.

**Ultimate meaning and God.** As a committed Christian, Caroline has a faith in God that definitely goes beyond Frankl's concept of the "unconscious God." God is, in fact, in the forefront of her worldview, and for her, meaning-centeredness and ultimate meaning is synonymous with centeredness upon God's will and purpose. On Frankl's self-transcendence, Caroline exhibits strength in reaching toward God and higher values. She does not however appear to reach out to others as strongly, at least not in London. Caroline also speaks of experiencing God's peace as she makes major decisions and refers to her need to cultivate patience to await God's providence in unfamiliar settings. In this sense, Frankl's thinking that life has unconditional meaning, can be discerned in Caroline's attitude as well. She will, however, have to rediscover new meanings to address her depression at having to return to Singapore without establishing a successful career in London.

**Logotherapeutic techniques.** In Caroline's case, there are no symptoms such as anticipatory anxiety, hyper-intention, or excessive self-observation; hence paradoxical



intention and dereflection is unnecessary. The Socratic dialogue may, however, be used to explore more layers of meaning and options for Caroline to consider and actualize. Concerning her stay in the U.K., a discussion of relationships she formed there may shed light on how meaningful life is in London. Concerning her struggles about having to return to Singapore before accomplishing all that she had hoped to, I would examine the following areas with her. First, I would broach Caroline's wish to place priority on her parents and affirm meaning there. They would need her strength and support even as they had given her theirs in earlier years. Second, I will ask her to ponder the fact that a career is in essence the same whether established in London or in Singapore. Though her London experience may not have gone the way she had exactly expected or wished, it was still a unique experience that not everyone had that she could apply to her advantage. Finally, I would suggest that Caroline continue with her French lessons. She had already indicated tentative plans to go to France for a few months when she got to the final stage of her French language studies in two years' time. That would be a future source of potential in her life and would keep her dynamically involved in places beyond the confines of Singapore.

**Orientation to faith and meaning.** Assuming that Caroline will in fact return to Singapore in June 2005, some practical suggestions for Caroline to consider are as follows. First, she could think of projects she would like to be involved in when she settles back in Singapore. Making such plans would channel her energies within the creative paradigm. Next, Caroline could contemplate the possible areas God would work in and through her life, and how she might rejoin the life of her church in Singapore. This exercise addresses the dimension of faith and community in her life. Third, she might

find it useful to continuing working on her social circle in London notwithstanding her possible departure in a few months. She may consider a deeper connection with one or two friends she knows relatively well and would be prepared to get to know better. She may take this step either with her professional circle, at the church she attends, or in her French class. This decision potentially opens her to meaningful and lasting friendships made in London, and if she should she stay longer in London than expected these friendships will certainly be most welcome. This suggestion addresses the experiential paradigm. Finally, Caroline may plan with whom she would like to reconnect and renew friendships when back in Singapore. This renewal of old ties would strengthen her experiential paradigm. These suggestions, taken together, address Caroline's present depression and provide a sense of meaning for the future.

### **Case 2: The Queks' Ambition and Trial**

Jerry and Melissa Quek, now aged 38 and 36 respectively, were married in 1995. They are both working and have no kids. Jerry is a lecturer at the Temasek Polytechnic, and Melissa is an administrative assistant with Singapore Airlines. Jerry has a full teaching schedule on weekdays during semester time and sometimes spends part of the weekend working on administrative matters with his department head. Melissa has a more regular schedule and usually has the weekends free. She has been hoping to upgrade to a condominium in Upper Changi from their five-room HDB flat in Pasir Ris. Jerry is not very enthusiastic about upgrading, as he is comfortable with their current level of financial commitment to the property.

Both Jerry and Melissa support their aging parents. Jerry has two other brothers and shares the responsibility for his parents with them. Melissa is an only child and is

solely responsible for looking after her parents. What has been helpful financially is that her father receives a government pension, and her mum, a housewife all her life, is covered under his medical plan. The couple visits with each of their parents at least one weekend a month. On some weekdays, they do a quick dinner stopover either at Jerry or Melissa's parents' home.

Both Jerry and Melissa are Methodist and are regular worshippers in church. Jerry is a volunteer teacher in Sunday school. Melissa has no ongoing commitments, but the couple worship together before Jerry goes to teach his class. During this time, Melissa chats with friends over breakfast before the group goes out together for lunch after Jerry's class.

About two years ago, the couple began having some disagreements. Melissa feels that Jerry is too hardworking and not assertive enough. She feels he has been taken advantage of by the head of his department and by his colleagues and should decline taking on additional duties unless it will enhance his professional position. She also thinks he stands a good chance of getting a position at NUS because of his specialization in mathematical business models. Jerry, however, feels differently. He does not mind helping out in the department even though that is outside his responsibilities. He is not interested in a position in the NUS because he feels it will bring him more stress than he desires. He thinks Melissa is pressuring him because of her own sense of ambition and the fact that she wants to upgrade to a new apartment. He understands her wishes but does not want to step up their financial commitment at this time. His main desire is to start a family since Melissa and him are approaching forty. Melissa has been unaccommodating and says she gave Jerry fair warning before they married. She does not

want to have children and prefers to have a lifestyle that is free of the burden of bringing up children. Jerry had hoped that their “decade of marriage” and his frequent doting on her would soften her resolve and bring out her maternal instincts. He keeps telling her that she still wants to be the “baby” of the house, and Melissa resents this. She says Jerry is “out of touch” with the times, and a woman is entitled to “ambitions and goals beyond child-bearing.”

About nine months ago, Jerry started suffering from severe, persistent headaches. He did not have them before and had enjoyed good health until then. The headaches would last a few days at a stretch, and even strong painkillers did not bring lasting relief. Initially, the doctor diagnosed his condition as general stress. Jerry was advised to relax more, and he started conscientiously taking his annual leave during semester breaks so he could spend time away from the office. His condition improved slightly. About two months ago, however, their frequency and intensity increased again. This time their family doctor sent him for a brain scan that revealed a tumor. A biopsy confirmed the tumor as malignant. Fortunately, a further scan showed that the tumor had not spread. Jerry’s oncologist advised an operation as soon as possible, saying that the treatment stood a high chance of success.

These developments have added to the stress that has been building up between Jerry and Melissa. Melissa was very upset by the news. She agonized over the fact that Jerry’s tumor was malignant. The thought of a brain tumor operation frightened her. She was also afraid of losing Jerry. She called on their church friends for prayer and support. After the initial shock following the diagnosis, Jerry was actually rather calm. He wanted to get the operation over with, so he would not be in pain all the time. Though he

experiences occasional “moments of fear,” he has a measure of assurance that things will turn out all right.

After the initial sympathy, Melissa has begun to blame Jerry for not making the most of opportunities when life and health was going well. She questions why God has allowed this illness to come upon Jerry. She also loses her patience and speaks hurtfully when she thinks Jerry is dwelling too much on his coming operation. Jerry withdraws. He also points out that she is being selfish and retorts that they should have started a family much earlier when all was well. In a reversal of his usual mild-mannered and indulgent self, Jerry now challenges Melissa about her right to so stubbornly decide against having children. Jerry and Melissa’s close friends in church know their struggles and suggest that they talk their feelings and tensions over with their pastor. They agree to see their church pastor together.

### **Exploration and Analysis of Case 2**

Married couples in Singapore often have separate careers. This situation translates to a fairly comfortable standard of living in such households. The traditional roles of women have also shifted. Instead of merely taking on the traditional roles of bearing children, bringing up a family, and being the homemaker, the modern Singaporean woman often chooses career advancement or lifestyle enhancement in the form of the “five Cs.” Women have also become more assertive in the marriage relationship.

**The existential vacuum.** Melissa’s position highlights an interesting divide between purpose and meaning. She seems purposeful enough—being career minded and having plans to upgrade their home; yet she also has an inner frustration that she has taken out on Jerry for his way of looking at life. She wants Jerry to be more ambitious

and accomplish much more than he already has. The counselor can discern a lack of fulfillment on her part. Melissa may be purposeful, but she is dissatisfied and unhappy, and her life may lack meaning at a deeper level.

**The meaning paradigms.** Jerry's work philosophy balances duty and a concern for people and appears to go beyond functional purposes like remuneration or status ambition. He exercises his freedom of will consciously by saying 'no' to a possible career at the NUS in favor of a position he is already comfortable in and satisfied with. He actualizes meaning through his involvement in lecturing, his department, church, and family.

Jerry and Melissa can both be emplaced in Frankl's creative paradigm, although each in a different, sometimes antagonistic, sense. Both are making something of their respective careers, and Melissa has plans to upgrade their family home. Seen from the experiential paradigm, both have significant relationships with others. One example is in their practice of their filial duty toward their respective parents. Jerry's wish to enlarge the experiential realm by starting a family is frustrated by Melissa's refusal to have children. On the attitudinal paradigm, Jerry has, through the discovery of a malignant brain tumor, encountered incurable illness, suffering, and potential death. As a committed Christian, he does not only think about his physical health. He also appears to be concerned about remaining true to his faith and to God in the face of uncertainty, pain, and death. In this fortitude I find evidence of Jerry's capacity to find meaning despite the circumstances he faces. Indirectly, Jerry's struggles are also Melissa's, and she too comes within the attitudinal paradigm. In facing his illness and mortality, his unavoidable suffering has also become her unchangeable fate. She too has to trust God for care,

providence, and grace and remain true to her faith. As she accepts the situation, she may prevail over the sense of gloom the news has brought her. Then she too can find a new sense of meaning for her situation.

**Ultimate meaning and God.** The Quek couple appears to have a strong religious sense. Melissa may however not be conscious of the narrower breadth of meaning she has pursued. The difference is especially apparent in the factor of self-transcendence. Melissa has functionalized her relationship with Jerry and is reaching out to God out of a sense of insecurity because that functional relationship is being threatened. She now hopes God can function as guarantor to her material well being, provide for her practical needs, and forestall an adverse fate coming upon Jerry. Jerry, on the other hand, may have cultivated both breadth and depth of meaning and has a self-transcending capacity to reach out to others and reach up to God even in difficult times. He is even able to look beyond personal needs toward more meaning-oriented values such as courage, unwavering faith, and resilience in the face of suffering.

Ultimate meaning for the Queks has undergone a variation because of Jerry's intervening illness. Previously, ultimate meaning perhaps meant building a secure material, emotional, and spiritual life that incorporated elements of the creative (career) and experiential (the good life) paradigms. Now, the attitudinal paradigm impinges, challenges, and changes the texture of ultimate meaning for Jerry and Melissa. Melissa appears more affected because she has focused more on the shaky, material dimension. Money has to be channeled for Jerry's medical treatment, and Melissa has to sacrifice or at least put her upgrading dream on hold. Jerry also has to put his wish for a child on hold because his own life expectancy is now uncertain. Both of them need a deeper sense of

affirmation of life's unconditional meaningfulness that encompasses the implications of Jerry's cancer. They must both be assured that the encouragement and empowerment they seek will come, though it may come at a different time for each.

**Logotherapeutic techniques.** Melissa's ambitions, which she hopes to vicariously see fulfilled through Jerry, can be addressed through dereflection. For example, Melissa may be guided to take on a more direct role in fulfilling her own ambitions. She could, perhaps, begin by furthering her education and effecting a change of career. That way, she would ease the pressure upon Jerry, and that would, paradoxically, free him to determine or even lift his level of ambition. Jerry's wish for children, which he is also vicariously pinning upon Melissa, may also be addressed through dereflection. One approach would be to direct his meaning orientation toward becoming a spiritual parent to his more committed or promising students. That would lift the pressure upon Melissa and perhaps, paradoxically, free her to nurture the maternal instinct that has been hitherto latent. In both cases, an excessively selfish focus is dereflected toward meanings that can be realistically pursued and fulfilled. Here, the intended application of dereflection merges into the techniques of Socratic dialogue and paradoxical intention in that dereflection opens up meaning options for the client and secures a serendipitous freedom for both to realize their original desires.

**Orientation to faith and meaning.** Possible suggestions for Jerry and Melissa may be summarized as follows. First, Jerry and Melissa need to understand each other's original meaning goals and where they diverge. This understanding will help diffuse their recent tensions. Melissa's life goals probably fall within the creative paradigm. At least she has a sense of her own meaning, aims, and potentials. She needs to work toward



something, so upgrading their home is important to her. Jerry on the other hand appears to actualize the experiential paradigm, and as such relationships, values, and faith matter to him. Second, both Jerry and Melissa need to find both interdependent and individual meanings. They need to reexamine together what their marriage means. It looks like Jerry has, over the years, accommodated Melissa's understanding of marriage as security. It might now be necessary for Melissa to be sensitive to Jerry's understanding of marriage as family. That said and heard, the couple may concurrently need to disengage from using each other as vicarious means of achieving their objectives. Jerry must look beyond babies and families, and Melissa must realize that there is more to life than just getting a better nest. In being dereflected, the Queks would free each other, and perhaps, each would then freely want to do what the other so desired—Melissa might want to fill an upgraded apartment with children and Jerry might want that new apartment for the baby. This mutuality however, is just an ancillary outcome, and not a primary objective of the counseling. Finally, the couple needs to find meanings anew because of Jerry's illness. Jerry must appreciate that Melissa's biggest fear is losing him. This fear causes her to lose her moorings and explains why she sometimes lashes out at him. Melissa has lost sight of God for the moment, and is working towards a faith in God that goes beyond blessings and functional transcendence, and will need his support and understanding. For Jerry, seeing things through the attitudinal paradigm means working through his illness with Melissa and making most of the opportunity to live fully in the present moment.

### **Case 3: A Life Overhaul for Ann**

Ann Tan just turned 43. For her birthday, her husband, Beng Kuang, aged 45, planned a romantic dinner at the Harbourside restaurant. That evening, their twins Harry

and Barry, both aged 15, were at a school camp. It was the June school holidays. The food was good, and Beng was in an especially cheerful mood. He had just been promoted the day before to be regional vice president of DBS Bank in Hong Kong.

Ann had been feeling slightly depressed all week. That evening, she kept her feelings from Beng. She did not want to spoil their dinner out, which was as much a celebration of his promotion as it was for her birthday. She did not feel in the mood to celebrate and even felt a twinge of jealousy over Beng's success.

Ann used to be an assistant vice president at IBM Singapore. She had joined IBM Singapore after graduation and had climbed the corporate ladder quickly. About ten years ago, Ann resigned from IBM to look after the boys full-time. They were five at the time. Since then, her life had revolved around them. She drove them to school and back, to Chinese and swimming lessons, and a whole myriad of activities and appointments. In the initial years, she found her motherly duties a joy. She relished challenging her two intelligent and precocious boys. With the homework, assignments, projects, and exams, it seemed like she was the one going to school. After nearly ten years of this routine, however, Ann had grown weary. She felt intellectually stagnant. Recently, she had become quite impatient with the boys. They seemed more mischievous and irresponsible than ever and had to be cajoled to get their work done. Ann lost her temper often.

As Ann took stock of her feelings, she knew that she missed the excitement of the corporate world. Her social circle was really her husband's, and it was all about his friends, business associates, and clients. She was Beng's wife, not Ann in her own right. At Raffles Institution where the twins studied, she was Harry and Barry's mum. She missed her friends, her own professional circle, and her life. Ann wondered if she was

still her own person.

Ann graduated from NUS with a Business Administration honors degree when she was 22. She met Beng at the university, and they married when she was 26. She had the twins when she was 28. Compared to her peers, she had married early and was well ahead in the family game. On this score, she felt content. Beng was a good father and provider. He was involved with the boys as much as he could be and gave Ann credit often and publicly for his own success.

Still Ann wanted to establish successes of her own, independent of Beng (and the boys). Initially, she got involved with a multi level marketing company, but that venture did not take off. She considered returning to part time work and was open to taking on project work for conventions and product launches. She even thought of working for Creative Labs of Singapore in the huge launch of the Zen Micro MP3 players for Christmas 2004. These plans, however, did not materialize.

Financially, the Tans were secure. Ann maintained her own credit card and had a supplementary card from Beng that she used for groceries, home expenditures, and some personal extras. Beng was generous with her about money, and this was something Ann was thankful for. Ann's plan was to send the boys for a university education in Sydney, Australia. She wanted to purchase from her own funds an apartment in downtown Sydney that the boys could use and would double as the couple's retirement getaway when the boys were grown up. She estimated that this endeavor would cost between S\$600,000 to S\$800,000 or about S\$40,000 to S\$50,000 a year for the next fifteen years. Ann estimated that her accumulated savings and investments could cover this amount even if she did not return to work. Beng had a good salary with generous annual bonuses, and the

mortgage on their three-bedroom condominium in Upper Bukit Timah, that he was responsible for repaying, could be discharged in about five years at the present pace of repayments. He would be 50 years old then and could pace himself toward a comfortable retirement by age 60.

Something else bothered Ann—their marriage. Nothing was actually wrong with it, but it was predictable and boring. Beng was reliable, but unadventurous. He was also extremely busy and had to travel to Hong Kong at least once a month and occasionally to Shanghai. Though he kept it short and made it a point to be back home for the weekends, she was still worried about reports of well-traveled Singaporean executives keeping mistresses in China. Their mundane communications (or sometimes lack of communication) also frustrated Ann. Sometimes, she felt he was not interested enough about her. Sometimes she would snap at Beng over some trivial matter or thing that he said just to get a stronger reaction out of him.

Ann wanted to overhaul her life. She felt deficient in many areas and wanted to live differently. She wanted to relax more, broaden her mind, get fit, improve her looks, feel good about herself, get a second career—the list went on. She was comfortable with her church pastor who was an old schoolmate and decided to talk through her thoughts and feelings with him.

### **Exploration and Analysis of Case 3**

The role of the women in the Singapore corporate arena has evolved over the last decade. They are no longer confined to ancillary or supportive job roles. Increasingly, they have taken on executive, leadership, and entrepreneurial positions once thought to be exclusively male domains. The social awareness of women in Singapore has also

increased over the years. Regardless of whether they are full-time career women or full time homemakers, they are well informed and socially connected and expect a lifestyle commensurate with their better education and income. These developments notwithstanding, it has also become common for a career professional to give up her career for the sake of looking after the young children when the husband is able to financially support the family with his single income. This sacrifice is made out of a growing awareness of the important role of a mother's nurture in a child's early development.

**The existential vacuum.** Ann obviously has a zest for living, but she also feels sense of meaninglessness at the same time. As she looks back on the career she relinquished, she sees the tension between what she was capable of and who she perceives herself to be now—"just" a mother and a housewife. She suffers from a mild depression, a sense of being "a nobody." Ann is not an aimless person by nature and has tried several ventures. Unlike her earlier corporate success, however, none of her present efforts have borne fruit. Her frustration, if left unattended to, could make her vulnerable to unwise or rash choices.

**The meaning paradigms.** Ann had the luxury of choosing to be a homemaker. She has done well in this role, and her husband and sons have benefited from her support and nurture. She, however, feels she has not done enough for herself, and senses something missing from her life. The pastor may begin the counseling process by helping Ann see what successes she has already accomplished. The existential frustration she feels comes out of a desire to maximize her life and not because she has led a meaningless life thus far. This distinction helps her to build upon what she has done and

forestalls any temptation to dismiss or tear down what she has achieved since she left IBM Singapore. Ann definitely has a strong will to meaning, although that meaning has shifted and now has to be determined anew. Her goal is to enter uncharted territory with anticipation and courage.

Ann can be emplaced in the creative and experiential paradigms. In the creative paradigm, Ann can count successes in the following roles: a successful career woman, a good mother, a supportive wife, and a far-sighted person. She enjoyed quick success in her career, brought up her twins well, supported her husband's career, and has plans in place for her family. On the experiential paradigm, Ann enjoys a comfortable life, although this dimension may not be as well established relationally because of her declining social circle. Ann seems also to experience dissatisfaction with herself saying, "I am no longer my own person."

**Ultimate meaning and God.** In the spiritual dimension, Ann's Christian commitment is somewhat nominal. Besides taking part in some social gatherings organized by church members, Ann does not volunteer for any form of service or ministry. She and Beng attend worship services on Holy Communion Sundays only. Ann says she has tried to reach out to others but finds it difficult to widen her social circle or form deeper friendships. She also admits to not having a deep relationship with God. She feels distant, and though she prays, she does not expect to hear from God. The pastor may anticipate her passing through even deeper gloom before she eventually discovers God's love anew. Ann is encouraged to continue talking with God and be forthright in her frustration or anger. I can assure her of the value in approaching God in utmost sincerity because that is her voice of prayer.

**Logotherapeutic techniques.** I do not find in Ann any symptoms of anticipatory anxiety, hyper-intention or excessive self-observation; however, the modification of attitudes is one technique that could be used in Ann's case. She needs to overcome her sense of meaninglessness and revisit the meaning of her life and faith. Reasons that have held true in the past—her rationale for stopping work, why she attends church worship—may no longer be valid in the present. Being the perfect mother, supportive wife, or monthly churchgoer may no longer be sufficient or fulfilling. Her sons' and husband's expectation of her may also have evolved over time. Through Socratic dialogue, Ann can be directed toward new and constructive meanings. She may consider a return to the corporate world that she left. This step would be a constructive channel for exploring her tremendous personal potential, as well as for dissipating her frustration and depression. She wishes to “reinvent” herself, and this exercise should also be encouraged. Ann may take the first step in her second corporate career by taking up a position even as she pursues a masters of business administration. She will, of course, make the necessary plans for the twins as she returns to the boardroom and the classroom.

**Orientation to faith and meaning.** Ann has spent a good decade giving of herself to her family. This creative paradigm can now be varied as she considers giving of herself toward a fresh career. Ann also needs guidance to envision new values, meanings, and ways of relating, and this process comes within Frankl's experiential paradigm. She also appears ready to exercise a fresh will to meaning, and this willingness should stand her well to overcome the false starts she has recently had. With all the possible changes coming on, Ann should be advised to discuss her visions and plans with her husband and use the opportunity to deepen her communication channels with him. On her relationship

with God, Ann could be advised to continue her frankness with God while approaching him in sincerity and humility. She could also be introduced to one or two career women in the church with whom she can form mutually challenging friendships. The pastor could also increase her exposure to the broader community of faith by introducing her to teaching sessions that would stimulate her intellectual and emotional needs and deepen her original goal of self-improvement to one of faith and meaning-centered living.

#### **Case 4: Johnny's Need**

Johnny and Doreen Chan, in their late and early 50s respectively, were married around 1970. They have three children, Aaron (aged 28), Belinda (aged 26), and Charles (aged 23). The family, with the exception of Belinda, who is Christian, does not profess any particular religion.

Johnny was an engineer by training and owned an aircraft components distributorship with three other partners. They were bought over by a larger aerospace company in 1998 when operating conditions became tougher after the Asian Financial Crisis. Doreen was a schoolteacher before she retired in 2003. Their two eldest children, Aaron and Belinda, are both married and have moved out of the home. Neither have children yet. Their youngest son Charles is studying for a degree in electronic engineering at the Nanyang Technological University, and during the semester, stays at the university hostel.

Since 1998, Johnny had a lot of free time. He traveled a great deal to Batam, Indonesia and was keen to scout out business opportunities there because labor and property was inexpensive by Singaporean standards. It was also very near, just a half-hour away by ferry. He eventually set up a company with an Indonesian partner. At first,



his visits were occasional, but from 2001, Johnny spent more and more time in Batam. There were times when he would not be home for two or three nights at a stretch, and sometimes an entire weekend.

Through the years, the marriage had revolved around their children until Charles enlisted in the Republic of Singapore Navy for National Service. By then the two older children were already preparing for marriage. Doreen had never been very interested in Johnny's former business or his new Batam company, and Johnny found it too much of a chore to tell her the details and intricacies. He also felt Doreen never really understood how he felt about losing his aerospace distributorship. Apart from going for the occasional tennis game at the Laguna Country Club, the couple did not share many common interests. Occasionally, they would visit Johnny's ailing father together at the Econ Nursing Home in Telok Kurau.

Doreen applied for early retirement from the Ministry of Education in late 2002, and the application was approved in June 2003. She did this partly to spend more time with Johnny. To her surprise, Johnny was rather indifferent and often discouraged her from following him to Batam even though she wanted to go. The reason he gave was the uncomfortable ferry ride and the bumpy roads on Batam Island. After a few excuses, Doreen suspected that something was amiss. One weekend, after she had unexpectedly insisted on following Johnny and he gave her a flimsy excuse, she confronted him with her suspicions. Johnny then confessed to keeping a mistress in Batam.

Doreen was so infuriated that she forbade Johnny from returning to their home that week. She was too embarrassed to confide in anyone for more than a month. Finally, she told her daughter Belinda. After the initial shock, Belinda suggested that Doreen

speak to a counselor and introduced her mother to her pastor. The pastor extended counsel and comfort to Doreen and then offered to see her and Johnny together when she was ready and if he was willing. At first, Doreen did not talk matters over with Johnny. She was resentful towards him for betraying her. She contemplated divorce, but refrained from initiating legal proceedings because she did not want her personal matters to come out in public.

By early 2004, however, Doreen felt ready to talk about the matter and perhaps salvage the marriage. By this time, Johnny was spending more time away from home even though Doreen did not forbid him from returning. When he did come home, he spoke to her only occasionally. If their sons Aaron or Charles were home, he would talk with them about superficial matters. He was a little uncomfortable with Belinda because she was closer to Doreen. When Doreen eventually asked him if he would go with her to a counselor to discuss their marriage, Johnny refused. By now, he was relieved that he did not need to hide the affair and was, in fact, rather happy in it. Besides, he was not prevented from returning to the matrimonial home and could still interact with his children whenever they visited. He had the best of both worlds. A few months later, after Belinda had another talk with him, Johnny finally agreed to see her pastor. He refused, however, to see the pastor with Doreen.

#### **Exploration and Analysis of Case 4**

The corporate business environment has become exceptionally competitive since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. The government of Singapore has encouraged Singapore companies to extend their business activities to neighboring countries in order to expand markets, outsource, and diversify the economy. In the process, Singaporeans

have looked to other parts of Southeast Asia for business opportunities. This move has brought about economic benefits as well as social ramifications. One dilemma has revolved around the issue of married businessmen with work interests and responsibilities in Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan, and China. Some have had extramarital affairs or even taken on mistresses and second wives in these countries. The Singaporean wives affected eventually consult pastors for counsel, either on their own accord if they are worshippers in church or at the encouragement of friends or grown-up children if they are not attending church. In this case, the pastor was rather familiar with Doreen's situation and point of view because he had counseled her earlier. He now had an opportunity to challenge Johnny, who appeared to be satisfied with the status quo, to change his course.

**The existential vacuum.** Johnny lost significant purpose and meaning when his aerospace distributorship was sold. An experienced engineer, he did not think it was time to "call it a day." Besides, Doreen was working full-time then, and his children were already grown up. He thought sitting around all day doing nothing would be meaningless. He felt he could still accomplish something before "completely retiring," and that was why he set up the company in Batam.

**The meaning paradigms.** Johnny exercised his free initiative to commence a new business. He can be emplaced in the creative paradigm as he struggles to get a new venture going after closing the chapter on an earlier one. When viewed Frankl's experiential paradigm, it could be said that Johnny could have put more emphasis on his family and developed experiential values such as the trust and affection of his children and companionship with Doreen. However, Johnny has not chosen this route, and says these are precisely the very areas of dissatisfaction for him. He says Doreen has not been

particularly communicative or companionable over the years. He does not feel fulfilled in the area of sexual intimacy, and Doreen does not like to discuss the matter. He also feels no longer needed by his children now that they lead their own lives. Both the creative and experiential paradigms are weak at this point.

**Ultimate meaning and God.** Johnny does not appear to have an interest in the question of meaning and of God. Although I will not rule out the influence of the “unconscious God” (in Frankl’s terms) or the work of prevenient grace in his life, I will probably not talk about God at the early stages of the counseling process. I may however discuss the issue of ultimate meaning with Johnny, and try to walk through with him the wide sweep of his individual decisions, efforts and achievements. From there I can draw out the various implications of his actions, and he can then decide if they add up to an end-result with which he would be willing or pleased to live.

One approach I could take is in the idea of self-transcendence. I will ask him to look beyond his present dissatisfactions and try to understand why Doreen has seemed uncommunicative or disinterested. I would expect the grown-up children to be less of a factor in determining the fate of the marriage now, but Johnny might be gently reminded of the possibility of grandchildren to come. This factor is still important in an Asian context, and Johnny might find it meaningful not to abandon this aspect of his life.

The discussion with Johnny might also review past events. Here I could rely on Frankl’s view that the past is salvaged from the ravages of time, unblemished. This thought could be applied to an earlier time in Johnny and Doreen’s marriage, the positive memories during courtship and the early days of marriage that are neither marred by Johnny’s feelings of emotional frustration nor by his infidelity and its consequences.

Perhaps this approach might afford the couple a path through the present acrimony and provide a positive angle in the attempt to salvage their marriage.

**Logotherapeutic techniques.** Subject to further clarification on the question of his sexual needs, one technique that may be introduced for Johnny is dereflection, which directs his attention toward positive meanings. A Socratic dialogue could also be employed to project a scenario showing how keeping a mistress is not necessarily a solution to his dissatisfactions and to his quest for meaning in marriage. The pastor may, for example, reason that the new relationship with the mistress could equally deteriorate sharply over time. The differences in their respective socioeconomic backgrounds could in the future also cause him to feel taken advantaged of. He would then perceive his relationship with the mistress as being no better than his marriage relationship. The pastor could ask then, rhetorically, if it was worth sacrificing Doreen, his children, and the future. The pastor might also be sensitive to the fact that Johnny may have consented to see a counselor because cracks may have begun showing in the relationship with the mistress.

**Orientation to faith and meaning.** For the future, Johnny may be reminded that Doreen had in fact tried to take the first step by seeking early retirement to spend more time with him. She is also willing to talk about the marriage and, presumably, their mutual needs and expectations. The next move is his if he is willing to take it. He would certainly have nothing to lose.

In any event, Johnny could be encouraged to search himself: his life, his goals, his needs, his unfinished business with family and mistress, and, above all, his values. Depending on how far he is willing to go, Johnny may be brought closer to an encounter

with God without initially introducing religious language. The advantage of this approach is that it is independent of whether he gets any discussion going with Doreen. It is also sensitive to the fact that he does not profess any religion, yet without foreclosing the possibility that he could come to faith in the future.

The final approach with Johnny could arise out of the attempt to “dereflect” him toward positive meanings. He could consider the fact that it would be no indignity for a person in his position to retire and to invest his entire attention and efforts on family and in a hobby or two. Combined with this strategy is the emphasizing of the scenario about the uncertainty of the future he may face with his mistress and what he may lose by abandoning his family.

### **The Suitability of Logotherapy**

From the analysis of the four cases presented, I have made three observations. First, logotherapeutic counsel can be used to explore the meaning-related concerns of the characters in the case studies. Experiences of the existential vacuum, such as the sense of meaninglessness or existential frustration, are indicated in varying degrees in the three individuals and one couple studied. Each character also seeks meaning through choosing freely and exercises the will to meaning through his or her life situation. In all cases two out of Frankl’s three meaning paradigms—the creative and experiential—can be used to emplace the character. In Jerry’s situation (Case 2) where he confronts an unavoidable illness that could lead to death, the attitudinal paradigm is indicated. Most of the characters also have a religious sense and a sense of self-transcendence. Only when the individual did not have any religious beliefs (like Johnny in Case 4) did the religious sense appear muted or consciously denied, and the client appeared not to be seeking

ultimate meaning or God. In all the cases, it was possible to assess the clients in relation to ultimate meaning and whether or not they could affirm the unconditional meaningfulness of life and existence.

My second observation on logotherapeutic techniques is that not all the techniques are applicable in every case. In particular, the technique of paradoxical intention was not used. The dereflection technique was a more likely technique to be applied and was used when the characters were directed toward alternative meanings. The Socratic dialogue was most applicable and could be applied in tandem with dereflection to explore and discover meaning options that were available. The appealing technique was also not used in the cases presented. The characters portrayed were capable of personal reflection and making complex choices.

My final observation is that Frankl's theories and techniques are a useful tool for providing meaning-centered counsel. Not only is it able to explore and address the question of meaninglessness in the characters, it also can orientate them toward deeper faith and positive meanings. The counseling method adopted in this study closely followed Frankl's theories and techniques. It began by locating potential sources of meaninglessness, orienting the characters back to the three meaning paradigms, and applying logotherapeutic techniques where specifically indicated. Where appropriate, follow-up counsel was formulated in line with the logotherapeutic analysis offered. In all cases where the character was a Christian, concrete suggestions were offered to deepen his or her relationship with God within the context of the faith community. If the individual was not a Christian (Johnny in Case 4), the counsel offered was sensitive to this fact and left the door open for him to explore the question of faith and God through

the question of ultimate meaning. Based on these observations, I have come to the conclusion that while Frankl's logotherapy is no panacea for every counseling situation, it certainly provides an excellent framework for adding the meaning-centered dimension to pastoral ministry in Singapore.



## CHAPTER 5

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are three broad directions for the continuing study, research, and application of Frankl's theories and techniques. The first direction is theoretical, though grounded in the anticipation that it is very relevant to the Singapore church. The second direction is practical in nature and arises out of a Singaporean setting. While more localized in nature, it presents concrete opportunities for immediate consideration. The third direction is pastoral and pinpoints how the meaning-centered approach may be applied in the church.

#### Theoretical Directions

The theoretical directions for continuing research were addressed in detail in Chapter 2. It was organized around Frankl's meaning paradigms and addressed three connections of special relevance to the Singaporean context.

The first connection concerned Paul Wong's Personal Meaning Profile and the expansion of Frankl's three meaning paradigms into multiple facets that helped a counselor or pastor to better understand the client. The second connection sought to integrate Frankl's creative paradigm with an independent theory that lent depth to it. The research conducted by Csikszentmihalyi into creative personalities was proposed as a suitable theory. The final connection explored the dialogue between Frankl's paradigms and Warren's purpose driven principles and made several correlations in the thinking of the two authors. Apart from lending breadth and adding breadth to the study of Frankl's theories in relation to the Singaporean context, these three connections also support the conclusion of Qohelet that God-given meaning can be found in a sea of meaninglessness.

### **Practical Directions**

My study has led to practical questions that arise from a specifically Singaporean setting, and this section explores some immediate opportunities for further reflection and research.

#### **Soul Searching for the Christian**

Chapter 3 mentioned that Singaporeans have turned to religion because anomic influences in society have increased the hunger for the supernatural and that Singapore's functional, economics-driven ethos is itself validated by aspects of religion that promote hard work, social harmony, and moral values. This situation has ironically led to a sense of meaninglessness in the midst of religious observance and practice. Using Frankl's meaning paradigms as a starting point, Christians can be challenged to examine their will to meaning in the light of their own faith through the following questions:

1. Does my Christian faith have a creative impetus that images the nature of God my Creator?
2. Is my Christian faith a response of awe through my experience of God?
3. When has my Christian faith enabled me to transcend unavoidable troubles and tribulations?

A further set of questions based on Frankl's principles may be posed: Does my faith and practice of it prompt me to reach out to others (principle of self-transcendence) or are my religious practices merely a disguised striving for functional and pragmatic outcomes like added wealth and better health (a will to power or pleasure in religious attire)? In an urban setting such as Singapore, therefore, the use of religious practice as a hedge against undesired outcomes in life is no longer a genuine search for meaning or ultimate meaning

but a sophisticated veneer for age-old superstitions. Unmasking this veneer is one important task of meaning-centered pastoral care.

### **The Meaning-Centered Approach for Mainline Religions**

This study focused on the suitability of Frankl's meaning-centered approach in a specifically Christian context. One future direction that will add to the conclusions arrived at in this dissertation is to conduct a similar study of logotherapy in relation to other mainstream religions in Singapore such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Another research direction could be to determine the suitability of applying logotherapy across racial lines and study its application to Chinese, Malay, and Indian individuals. A third research direction could be to compare the different responses to a meaning-centered approach based on criteria such as educational level and age. Possible limitations and constraints, however, in the research directions suggested might be religious or racial sensitivities on the part of both researchers and participants.

### **Moving across Boundaries**

A composite case study approach similar to the one undertaken in this dissertation could be duplicated in Southeast Asian urban centers like Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Jakarta (Indonesia), Bangkok (Thailand), and Manila (Philippines). These cities have sociocultural phenomena and developmental pathways that parallel Singapore's, such as multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities, rapid urbanism, a developed system of education, the use of English as a medium of commerce and cultural discourse, and an incipient individualism. A study in any of these cities could yield interesting results supporting the conclusion that individuals there might benefit from a meaning-centered counseling or pastoral ministry built around Frankl's logotherapy.

### **Pastoral Directions**

The goal of this dissertation was to show that Frankl's logotherapy is a suitable model for meaning-centered pastoral ministry in the Singaporean church. The presentation and analysis of composite case studies in Chapter 4 was a linchpin, and the prototype meaning-centered methodology that came out of it is the intended application that addresses the pastoral needs of Singaporean Christians. The pastoral directions suggested here build upon my methodology described in Chapter 4. They also bear upon the practical directions mentioned in the previous section by bringing the application of Frankl's logotherapy down from a generic Singaporean setting to a specific Christian ministry context within the Singapore church.

### **Personal Transition of the Pastoral Caregiver**

Singaporean counselors and pastors can take the first step toward meaning-centered living. While this process may seem self-evident, the driven and task-oriented nature of Singaporean society makes the actual practice of it very difficult. The competitive tendency—requiring many things to be done in an effective and productive manner—often means that the meaning behind why a thing is done is not often critically examined. Pastoral caregivers do not readily admit to themselves and others that they really need not look far to find evidence of meaninglessness—in their own lives, careers, and ministries.

My analysis here does not enter into the details of providing self-care to pastoral caregivers, nor is it my intention to broach the issue of spiritual direction or ministry burnout. What is offered here, however, is a simple framework for counselors and pastors in the church to perform a self-check in three areas to ensure their own familiarity with

Frankl's three basic paradigms of meaning. This self-check consists of three questions that provide an overarching orientation to meaning: What creative gifts will I offer to others through my talents, work, deeds, and plans? What experiences or values do I seek when encountering others in relationships or appropriate from nature, culture, and religion? What attitudinal values can I instill in myself by taking the right stances toward situations or troubles that I cannot avoid or change? The caregiver must first address these questions of meaning before addressing the lack of meaning in others.

### **General Education in Logotherapy**

After living the meaning-centered approach, interested counselors and pastors need to receive a basic level of formal training in logotherapeutic concepts. As the individuals depicted by the composite case studies presented in Chapter 4 are likely to be indicative of what Singaporean pastoral caregivers have dealt with in their professions and ministries, such training can be useful. The point to put across is that the will to meaning is interwoven between routine concerns and experiences of suffering.

Pastoral caregivers also need training to integrate the Christian faith alongside Frankl's meaning paradigms. They need a basic understanding of Frankl's concept of the spiritual dimension and ultimate meaning and to know how to redirect clients. Where Christians or church members are being counseled, the clients are oriented toward their relationship with God and the Christian community. In a general counseling situation that the caregiver may encounter either outside the Christian or church setting, the caregiver must be sensitive to the religious orientation of the client.

### **Training in the Logotherapeutic Process**

Pastoral caregivers using the meaning-centered approach need to be proficient in

three areas. First, they must be able to provide logotherapeutic counsel. As part of this process, the caregiver must be able to identify clients' lack of purpose or meaning. The caregiver must also assess clients' freedom of will and will to meaning and emplace them within one or more of Frankl's meaning paradigms. As a conclusion to the logotherapeutic counsel offered, the caregiver assesses the clients' spiritual condition and their openness to ultimate meaning. The second area caregivers need to be proficient in is in the specific logotherapeutic techniques used. I acknowledge that the actual practice of logotherapeutic techniques such as paradoxical intention and dereflection may require special training, and expert practitioners in the field can be resourced for this purpose. For immediate training within a church setting, the worksheet of annotated logotherapeutic counsel and techniques used in Chapter 4 (attached as Appendix J) may be used as a guide that assists the counselor or pastor to cover the necessary ground in diagnosing the client and, at a supervisory level, to ensure that the entire range of logotherapeutic counsel and techniques have been considered or employed.

### **Conclusion**

This study grew out of my desire to find structure and content for meaningful living and to apply the findings to my ministry as a pastor. I chose Viktor Frankl's logotherapy as the starting point from which to explore the issue. In analyzing the history of Singapore, I discovered an intriguing correlation between three broad historical phases Singapore has undergone since 1965 and Frankl's three meaning paradigms. This corroboration gave me added confidence as I applied logotherapeutic counsel and techniques to four composite case studies of Singaporean individuals. My analyses support the conclusion that Frankl's logotherapy is a suitable model for meaning-centered

pastoral ministry to individuals in the Singaporean church. I hope others in a similar position will find my study useful and be able to make use of my conclusions in some way.