

**Way (DAO) is the Meaning (SINN)**  
**A comparative study between Logotherapy and Daoism**

presented by  
Jacquine Choi Ki Chan

&

Andreas Schreiber

## Abstract

As there already exist some experiences in conducting Logotherapy courses in the East-Asian world, and the attempt to continue spreading the ideas of V. Frankl in China, especially Hong Kong, this work should be regarded as an investigation of the similarities and differences between logotherapy and the philosophy of Daoism, which helps to improve the curriculum of Logotherapy courses in the Asian world in order to bridge the somehow quite different mind-sets between West and East.

The main similarities which this work points out are: a) the similar connotation of “meaning” and “DAO” which both mean somehow a way that has been produced only by going, b) the correlation of the logotherapeutic “meaning of the moment” with the Daoist idea of the ever changing flux of the two opposed features of the world, *Yin* and *Yang*, c) the parallelizing of the logotherapeutic demand for discovering the “meaning of the moment”, which is to accomplish by listening to one’s own conscience through the successful application of the logotherapeutic method of dereflection, with the Daoist concept of *Wu Wei*, the doing by non-doing.

The main differences are seen in: a) Logotherapy is pointing out the human’s individuality, freedom and will to a personal meaning, whereas in Daoism the individual is worth rather nothing and should better be merged in the DAO; b) in Logotherapy it’s emphasized that the human being feels more comfortable and healthy the more he consciously makes some existential decisions and assumes responsibility for his deeds, whereas in Daoism, according to the concept of *Wu Wei*, there shouldn’t be any volitional action, but only following the natural change of *Yin* and *Yang* without having the concept of a deciding self.

As the, at least, modern Hong Kong people aren’t anchored too much in their philosophical heritage but nevertheless suspect the especially highly individual and forceful mind-set of the Western “yes, we can”-mentality, this work will give advice how to embed the traditional ancient Chinese thoughts in the conveyance of the highly personality and freedom based logotherapy without being too chauvinistic and without to impose on them the Western thinking as a universal truth.

## Table of Content

Abstract	2
Table of Content	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Frankl's Logotherapy and Existential Analysis	6
2.1. Basic assumptions and anthropology of logotherapy	6
2.2. What is meaning?	12
2.3. Finding meaning of the moment	15
2.4. Phenomenon of conscience	17
2.5. Dereflexion	19
3. Philosophy of Daoism	22
3.1. Daoism, Laozi, Zhuangzi	22
3.2. Daoist cosmology: DAO, Yin/Yang, Qi	23
3.3. Wei Wu Wei: doing as non-doing – and nothing remains undone	30
4. Comparison between Logotherapy and Daoism	34
4.1. Way (DAO) is the meaning (SINN)	34
4.2. Wu Wei as dereflexion	36
4.3. Fundamental differences between Logotherapy and Daoism	37
5. Conclusion	40
6. References	42
7. Bibliography	43

## 1. Introduction

There seems to be an increasing interest in Viktor Frankl's *Logotherapy and Existential Analysis* in the East-Asian world; namely its short cut description as a *meaning-centered and value-based theory of personality and psychotherapy* functions as attraction for people to sign up in seminars and workshops as well as to follow long distant courses in order to gain some credentials or certificates as logotherapists.<sup>1</sup> This observation forces to the twofold conclusion that, on one hand, the pressure of modern, westernized life and life-style on the Asian people's mind-set must be very tough and rather unbearable, so that the local helping professionals seek for new and/or more appropriate tools to cope with the disseminating symptoms of "existential frustration and vacuum"; that, on the other hand, in Logotherapy the programmatically "search for meaning" cannot be fulfilled yet neither with the materialistic affluence of modernity, nor with common healing concepts inherent in Asian's tradition.

In spite of the latter assertion there must be, however, some affiliations between the concepts of Logotherapy and Asian's traditional mind-set, otherwise the students of Logotherapy wouldn't absorb this theory of therapy so willingly and easily. The authors assume that there are primarily two fields of investigation in which one can discover the mentioned affiliation.

The first comprises socio-psychological phenomena. In regards of one of the authors' experiences we may state, that especially in such booming mega cities like Hong Kong – similar in Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo, Hanoi, Seoul, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Singapore etc. – there exists an almost exaggerated westernized life-style of vibrant consumption, a financial, economical, and educational hub which compels the local population jumping into an endless vicious cycle of buying in more and higher education in order to gain higher and higher income for further and increasing consumption. The steadily increasing population of such booming mega cities, hence, is trapped in the so called "rat race", gets more and more exhausted, and falls into a kind of hopelessness and existential frustration as it surely develops the cognitional feeling of being unable to achieve their individual goals. Sooner or later after consuming the goods of capitalistic wealth, the people slump into an existential vacuum and try to anaesthetise the pain of inner emptiness with further and "harder" consumption. And there are some circumstantial effects which worsen this unhealthy spiral, namely the increasing population density which leaves only little space for individual development or aesthetic nature experiences, and the traditionally Confucian social structures, which are still alive and allow only a very restricted realm of self-determined, free life. All these phenomena together as well as the mentioned symptoms of existential frustration and emptiness may cause more and more unhealthy behaviors like addictions, aggressions, and depressions, which Frankl has summed up in the term of "neurotic triad". And with all these mentioned symptoms it doesn't surprise that such psychological "remedies" like Logotherapy, which focus on "meaning in life", get more and more attractive to the people.

---

<sup>1</sup> At least this is the impression of one of the authors of this paper, Andreas Schreiber, deriving from his experiences as guest lecturer for introductory and advanced workshop courses in Logotherapy at the Chinese University Hong Kong in 2012-2014.

The second field of affiliation between Logotherapy and East-Asian mind-set is rather philosophical and will be the focus of the present paper. In the authors' opinion the theory of Logotherapy, namely the theory of Existential Analysis, which leads to the discovery of meaning in one's life, has many concepts and ideas in common with traditional Chinese philosophy, namely of Daoism. Thus, the present study explores the philosophical relationship between Logotherapy and Daoism in order to work out their main similarities as well as their crucial differences. In the end we will discover how the understanding of the tenets of philosophical Daoism will supplement with and enhance the understanding of some somehow crucial, but yet not consistently and sufficiently explained assumptions and statements of Logotherapy, namely *how* to find and fulfill the "meaning of the moment".

The bridge between these two philosophies<sup>2</sup> is built, on one side, on the Daoist concept of *Wei Wu Wei*, doing by non-doing, on the other side, on the logotherapeutic "call of conscience", which should be answered by value based, situational actions while fulfilling the search for the "meaning of the moment". The soteriological method, i.e., the salutary way out of the suffering which is provided by life itself, is – in the realm of Logotherapy – the so called dereflection, whereas in Daoism it's advised to reach self-forgetfulness and to go along with the DAO as "the way". Both "methods" lead to a status of self-abandonment and self-conquest, which can be specified by the picture of "flowing with the river". The convergence of the logotherapeutic method of dereflection and the Daoist's "entering the DAO" leads to the abstract concepts of Frankl's "unconscious god" and Daoist's DAO, which, on one hand, fruitfully complete each other, and, on the other hand, give opportunity to emphasize the fundamental differences between both philosophies.

Essentially, the study is divided in three parts. In the first part it is given a brief summary of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy while already focusing on and interpreting these theoretical parts which will serve the comparison with Daoism. In the second part a few strokes about the philosophical core assumptions of Daoism will be drawn without going too much into the scientific and sinological details; apart from that, the structural moments which offer the best comparison with Logotherapy will be focused on. As a summary, in the third part, these foregoing two sections will be combined in order to highlight the additional and dividing points of both philosophies which will elucidate some hitherto unexplained and easily being able to be misinterpreted dogmas of Logotherapy. As a conclusion we will outline what is to be considered to improve the introduction of Logotherapy in the East-Asian world in order to match the logotherapeutic core messages with the East-Asian mind-set.

---

<sup>2</sup> We consider Logotherapy mainly as philosophy as – according to Frankl – each psychotherapy is based on a philosophical anthropology. Hence, our focus regarding Logotherapy is on the theoretical assumptions, less on its therapeutical function.

## 2. Frankl's Logotherapy and Existential Analysis

Viktor Frankl's "Logotherapy & Existential Analysis"<sup>3</sup> is, in the context of European history of psychotherapy, called the "Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy" – succeeding Sigmund Freud's "Psychoanalysis" and Alfred Adler's "Individual Psychology" –, and can be sorted into the American history of psychology in between humanistic & existential psychology and transpersonal psychology.<sup>4</sup> Frankl's Logotherapy, which was a therapeutic answer to psychological problems of Frankl's and – grace to his long life-time and exorbitant activity and productivity in polishing, actualizing and propagating his theory – also still of our time, attempts to help people in their struggles in life, namely in their existential and essential search for meaning. But his therapeutic approach (i.e., Logotherapy) to the nowadays, mainly in affluent societies detectable existential sufferings of frustration, boredom, and emptiness is based on a certain and more or less consistent theory (i.e., Existential Analysis). Insofar we are justified to name his work also as a *logotherapy*<sup>5</sup> which relies on some few, but fundamental principles and a stringent anthropology. These will be briefly explained in the following sections in order to have a basic insight in Frankl's assumptions and be well prepared for the thereupon subsequent comparison with Daoism.

### 1. Logtheory: its basic assumptions and underlying anthropology

**The main assumption** *sine qua non*,<sup>6</sup> i.e., without it, Frankl's logotherapy wouldn't be what it definitely is and wouldn't therapeutically function properly, sounds as follows:

*Life itself, always and ever, has meaning, however bad the circumstances may be.*

The one, who doesn't accept this core assumption, will completely miss the point of Frankl's "Logotherapy and Existential Analysis". The merciless harshness of this sentence appears perhaps only and peculiar in fateful and extreme distressed situations which man has to en-

---

<sup>3</sup> In the following this extended term is mostly used either in its short-term: Logotherapy, or with the abbreviation: LthEA.

For a concise understanding of these two terms we may briefly summarize: *Logotherapy* is a certain method of psychotherapy which focuses on the noetic human dimension in order to elicit the meaning in life; *Existential Analysis* is the anthropological theory of the former which focuses on the human way of existence.

<sup>4</sup> See Graber, Ann V. (1998): Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy. Method of Choice in Ecumenical Pastoral Psychology; Windham Hall Press, Lima (Ohio), pp. 171 – 177, esp. figure 8, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> This expression is owed to the Finnish philosopher and logotherapist Timo Purjo who used this term in his new book in order to emphasize that Frankl's "Logotherapy and Existential Analysis" is grounded in a consistent philosophical theory and can only be rightly conceived when this basic theory is understood (see: Purjo, Timo (2012): Viktor Franklin Logoteoria. Tie arvopitoiseen ja tarkoituksentäyteisen elämään; Juvenes, Tampere).

<sup>6</sup> A Latin legal term which goes originally like this: condition sine qua non, and which means literally "[a condition] without which it could not be". For quick reference see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sine\\_qua\\_non](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sine_qua_non).

dure, e.g., the sudden passing away of beloved ones, or the unexpected occurrence of terminal diseases at others or at oneself, or the experienced infirmity after a crucial accident. Also imprisonment, torture or bare hunger, and many of others so called life-adversaries could adamantly question the above statement. Hence, Frankl's logotherapy is validated and effective only insofar as one might find or could still believe in a meaning of life even in such situations. And this is, in fact, the greatest challenge what logotherapy has to face. It is its very touchstone.<sup>7</sup>

**The second axiom** of logotherapy says that man essentially has an imperturbable will to meaning. Whatever one strives for in his actions, but in its highest and fullest degree this doing has to make at least any sense to him, or has to be quite significant, leastwise for himself as an individual and regarding the completeness of his life. Man, hence Frankl often repeated a saying of Nietzsche, must have a "why" for living, then he's capable to endure almost every "how". (Frankl, 1975, p. 51) If there could be recognized and might be in principle a possibility of a reason for human's sufferings and a "whereto", i.e., a purpose, for his doings, then man has quite good chances to spend his life in a way of logotherapeutic meaningfulness, i.e., satisfyingly and successfully. And it is exactly this, so the second logothereotic assumption, what man only and ultimately wants to achieve with his whole fortitude of striving. The *will to pleasure* (Freud) and the *will to power* (Nietzsche, Adler)<sup>8</sup> are, as Frankl assumes, only derivative will powers which gain their superiority only and foremost, if the *will to meaning* is frustrated and not able to be fulfilled over a longer period of time. (Frankl, 2006a, p. 72)

**And the third axiom**, which philosophically should be placed at first, postulates an essential freedom, in whose realm humanity resides. Only from this basic dimension of freedom the capability of wanting is comprehensible and at last liveable. But it's not in the arbitrariness of humans to only have the freedom of will whenever and for whatever they want to have it, rather freedom is imposed on them involuntarily, so that humans are *forced* to want or, as Sartre said: *man is condemned to freedom*. Man is thrown into the world with nothing but his existence. All what he is going to be essentially, he is coerced to develop it out of himself in accordance to the given circumstances by the weighty principle of responsibly free choices. This brings man in a rather paradoxical state of being: From an ontological viewpoint, humankind hence has the *ability to want*, i.e., is *allowed* to want (due to the principle of freedom); from an ontic viewpoint however he *must want*, i.e., he is obliged to want (due to

---

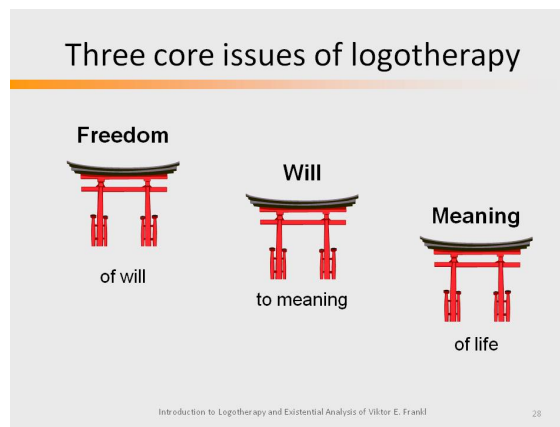
<sup>7</sup> So far we just take it as the logotherapeutic dogma, but in the ongoing text we will suggest how it might be understood without the necessity of only believing it.

<sup>8</sup> With these slogans Frankl characterizes the fundamental differences between his theory and the other powerful psychotherapies of his days which simultaneously have been his psychotherapeutic parentage. That Freud's Psychoanalysis as well as Adler's Individual Psychology has been more complicated as expressed in these slogans was well known to Frankl.

the principle of necessity to build-up a personal essence out of the given existence)<sup>9</sup>. Thus, it follows that humankind always wants something, whether it wants to or not; humans cannot not wanting. And the last purpose of human's will is that his existence would be, or become, or at least could be considered as meaningful and significant (see axiom two).

Let's have some more brief reflections on this third axiom of human's freedom: Man, caught up in its daily routine, normally interprets freedom as a possibility of getting rid of his burdens, sufferings and socio-political restrictions. This so called *negative freedom* is for sure very important as incentive for many socio-political deeds and led to a lot of improvements of living conditions over the history of man (for example the abolition of slavery and human trafficking, the democratizing of former feudalistic governments, the women's liberation and emancipation, etc.). Yet the logotherapeutic focus of attention lies on the so called *positive freedom* which means to use the acquired freedom for aiming at something meaningful. This positive freedom, which discovers the ever-present meaning in life and hence satisfies the will to meaning, enables us to focus our will on meaning resp. on something meaningful, to strive forward to it and finally to realize the meaningful.

The following graph summarizes the three core assumptions of LthEA:



Source: Andreas Schreiber

The foregoing three core assumptions – *freedom of will, will to meaning, and meaning in/of life* – are based on a specific anthropology<sup>10</sup> which can be summarized as follows:

Man is a singular and unique individual. Hence, in the spatial-temporal place, which man occupies in the worldly cosmos during the time of his life-span, he is irreplaceable, and irre-

---

<sup>9</sup> This description may function for an attempted explanation of the phenomenon that humans nearly cannot cease their will, unless with hard disciplinary and meditative work on renouncing the world and human's rationality. But as human's intentions and wills are considered as the main source of sufferings, almost all religious attempts of salvation are concerned to overcome human's will by suggesting submitting it to a higher, divine being, like a god, who cannot and doesn't want to do wrong due to his divinity (e.g. following the dharma in Buddhist theory, submitting the will to Krsna in Hinduism, or to God resp. Jesus in Christianity).

<sup>10</sup> See Frankl's „Ten Theses about the person“, in: Frankl, V. (112005): *Ärztliche Seelsorge. Grundlagen der Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse*; Deuticke Verl., Wien, pp. 330 – 343.



trievable. Thus, every situation, that each single person coats and shapes in the world, is a peculiar, unprecedented, and irreproducible one. This special status of each situation makes every single moment incredible precious, renders a single, unique and irretrievable experience that is totally unrepeatable. Moreover, this special status makes each situation unbelievable meaningful, especially if we assume that regarding the whole cosmic history each situation is inevitably important for the development of this very history, i.e., for the cosmos itself. Therefore each single person in its individual situation obtains an ineffable dignity and a priceless value in the total bustle of the world.

In our opinion, we don't push Frankl too much, if we extend the foregoing description of the human person as unique and singular with the existential feature of its *situatedness*. For every moment expresses and establishes a unique *constellation* of world, every single human and all his actions thereby are necessary for the development of the worldly cosmos, and for the actual as well as future appearance of the world. He experiences himself of being necessary for every of these moments and is in that way in deep interaction with the situation, so that he irrevocable changes the world with his deeds,<sup>11</sup> and thereby is changed by himself in reverse.

To exemplify this idea bold and simple we may think of a man cutting some slices of bread. Hence, we do have, as a constellation of the world, the few slices, the rest of the loaf of bread, the knife, and the breadcrumbs spread around on the table. But we also do have as a reverse interaction of the caused situation of the man as someone who indelible has cut bread. He can't delete his deed anymore. For now and ever he will remain that certain man who cut the bread slices in exactly this constellation, i.e. to this certain time, in this peculiar way, with this special effects which it may have caused. To understand the idea of mutual efficiency, which can be named according to the Buddhist concept of *pratityasamutpada* the *dependent arising*,<sup>12</sup> we now try to recognize in one glance on the one hand the causation of this special world constellation by the man cutting the bread, as well as on the other hand the simultaneously and recursively determining of the man as a "bread cutter" (the doer of that deed) by the situation itself. Situation, deed, doer, and the "result" of the deed are all interwoven as one, are all belonging mutually together, and build together the *unique world constellation of that special moment*. It is only for heuristic reasons and mainly favored in the Western thinking that this kind of mutual efficiency of any situation is divided into different, temporally succeeding, and causality linked portions, but in fact it has to be considered as a whole phenomenon.

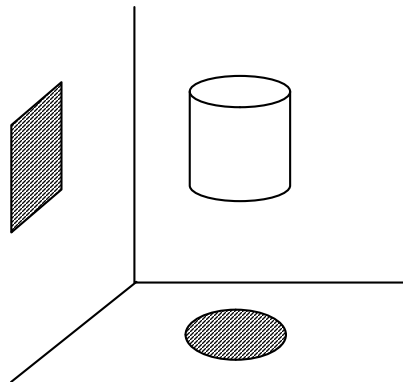
This depicted mode of situatedness which grounds, among others, in the singularity and uniqueness of mankind, requires hence an outstanding awareness, demands a high range of responsibility from man regarding his doing and non-doing, and regarding the event of the world constellation.

---

<sup>11</sup> With this explanation one caring and comforting notion of Frankl's understanding of time is better comprehensible, namely that every single deed of any human is indelibly stored in the time dimension of the past, no matter if further on any other human will remember it or not, yet even when humankind no longer exists. But we will draw attention to this later on in the appropriate place when discussing Frankl's theory of time.

<sup>12</sup> See for a quick reference: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prat%C4%ABtyasamutp%C4%81da>.

But Frankl defines the human person not only as singular and unique, but also as an *individual*, i.e., someone as *undividable* and *whole*.<sup>13</sup> With this definition he opposes vigorously the psychologism and reductionism of his days – especially the latter, which is still alive in lots of sciences, so as in medicine where humankind is considered as *nothing but* a material, physico-chemical organism, in psychology where man is *nothing but* a stimulus-response pattern, even in philosophy and theology where man is taken as an rational, *but* essentially incorporeal soul (theology) or mind (philosophy). Against these reductionisms Frankl emphasizes the indivisibility (individuality) of man when he puts forth his *dimensional ontology* and thereby stresses the wholeness<sup>14</sup> und completeness of man. This *dimensional ontology* shows that the human being, who for sure can be divided *heuristically* into the three parts of experience – body, psyche, mind –, is but one and already totally complete like the three dimensions of our space. If we consider each of the heuristically divided parts as one dimension, so to say body as the first, psyche as the second, and mind as the topping third, then of course we are able to recognize this dimensionality, but we cannot reduce the whole three-dimensional “object” in only two or one dimension, except when reckoning in the losses of these reductions. Frankl demonstrates this feature geometrically:



Source: Graber, 2004, p. 69

If one, for example, projects a cylinder from the side onto a wall, he'll get a square; if one projects it from above to the ground, he'll get a circle. If he now wants to combine both dimensionally reduced figures, he won't come to the complete cylinder anymore, but “try to square the circle”, which is obviously impossible as the two figures even contradict each other. Thus with the reductionism one always will miss some certain parts of the object as a whole. Nevertheless we are able to do so, theoretically, but we always should be aware of

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the Latin origin: in-dividere = not (to) divide.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the wholeness Frankl doesn't consider it as a completed perfection, but rather it develops into such only with the end of life resp. in the death. But Frankl assumes man already and in every second of his life as complete and whole, so that he stresses that the essential feature of “existence” never could be literally analyzed, i.e., dissected, but rather be illuminated as a unitary phenomenon. Whenever we dissect the spheres or dimensions of man, so only for methodological reasons to make it descriptive and for being able to communicate about it. (See: Frankl, V. (1987): Grundriß der Existenzanalyse und Logotherapie [1959]; in: id.: Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse. Texte aus sechs Jahrzehnten, Piper Verl., München, pp. 57 – 185, here pp. 63 – 73).

actually reducing the object, and we always should keep in mind for what purpose we are going to do this. What's necessary to bear in mind is the wholeness of the object, and that the third dimension never is able to be abstracted, i.e., to be isolated or extracted from the other two. The third dimension rather brings about the essence and therefore the completeness of the three-dimensional object. It is not something which can be arbitrarily added to a two-dimensional object, rather these are two different kinds of objects: a two-dimensional one and a three-dimensional one. The third dimension is either there, i.e., existing, or not. Only in the game of mathematics we can add or substrate dimensions, just as we like, but not in reality.

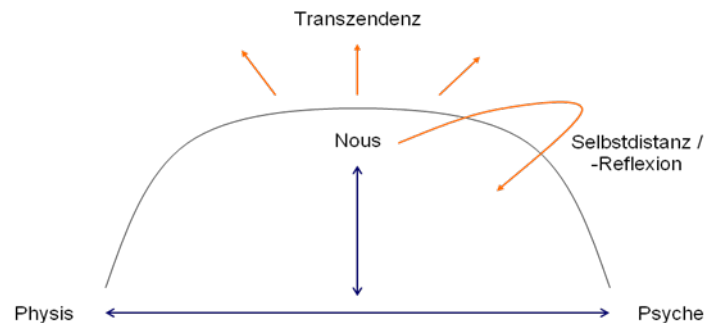
To come back to Frankl's *dimensional ontology*, it is exactly this third dimensional exceeding of the mind/nous what discerns man from animal. Indeed, man also has resp. inhabits the dimensions of body and psyche, which both are interdependent and influencing, and determining one another, but the specific feature of human lies in the dimensional different faculty of the noetic, of the freedom of will to meaning wherein such phenomena like freedom, responsibility, love, will, thinking, intuition, consciousness etc. are dwelling. Frankl describes this dimensional difference as on the one hand the *psycho-physical parallelism* (in modern terms: the psycho-somatic interaction), and the *psycho-noetic antagonism* on the other hand. (Frankl, 1987, p. 62)

Through the noetic dimension mankind gained essentially two types of freedom. Its consideration leads us to understand the logotherapeutic assumption of two human core features:

**First**, man is free to behave along or against his physical and psychic conditions. With the inner psychic power, which is called by Frankl the "*defiant power of mind*", man can behave in one way or another regarding his physical and psychic situation, he can take a stance to himself and to his own affectivity resp. state of mind, or he can just bypass this self-awareness and only float in the stream of the mediocre daily life. Thus, in the nous human has the enabling freedom to get into distance to and to contemplate about himself, and to freely react upon it. This freedom compels him to responsibility, because now he no longer can excuse his deeds by emphasizing that the circumstances or his physical or psychic condition have forced him to react like this or that. Through the freedom to the faculty of **self-distancing** he is rather obliged to investigate his behavior and take a stance to it; so to speak he is coerced to find in regards to other people and foremost to himself a plausible and rational, considerable and meaningful answer for the question "why" of all his doing and non-doing; he needs to *respond* to his deeds. This responsibility (literally: response-ability) out of the freedom to self-distancing affiliates with the one mentioned above in regards to the anthropological character of situatedness. Hence, Frankl logotherapeutically emphasizes always the human capability of freedom and its "defiant power of mind", but never omits to stress the concomitant structural element of responsibility. He even stresses that being human means as such being responsible. (Frankl, 2006a, p. 12)

**Second**, man is free to totally abstain from himself and his internal states so to address something which lies completely outside of his own mental and physical vicinity, may it be another person, another living being, another item or a task which transcends his own and self-

centered wishes, goals and interests. In the freedom as an offspring of the noetic dimension resides the second essential faculty of man, namely the capability to surmount, to transcend oneself, literally speaking to exist<sup>15</sup>. And it is especially in this possibility of **self-transcending** where Frankl positions the quest for meaning. Man will find a true meaning, a real significance which justifies the whole of the individual's completeness, only if he transcends, if he steps out of himself in the direction towards others, if he – anticipating and pointedly spoken – forgets or loses one's self by serving other persons, love somebody, or pursue a higher purpose.



Let's summarize: In Frankl's logotherapy man is considered as singular, unique, indivisible, and hence always phenomenally appearing as wholeness, whose structural elements are *self-transcending and self-distancing*. These basic features lie in the noetic dimension which discerns man from animal and which, though not only surpasses the dimensions of the physis and psyche, but also pervades them as it were as their inner pivot. The constitutive moments of the nous are particularly the basic conditions of freedom and will, which pervades humankind as its motivational force.

As the logotherapeutic argument states, the power of will always is directed towards a meaning that dwells in every situation as well as in the totality of the individual's life. That this meaning exists, however miserable the preconditions of our lively situation ever may be, belongs to the fundamental credo of Frankl's "Logotherapy and Existential Analysis". And, so another logotherapeutic dogma, meaning is found particularly then, when man is fulfilling his very own, intrinsic values. We will address to this last point later on. But first let's throw some light on the concept of meaning.

## 2. What is meaning?

Belief systems are systems, which must be believed in, which cannot be proved by pure reason. Such is also the case for the dogma of the meaning which resides in life in every situation, no matter how bad it will be. However, if this really helps somebody to overcome fun-

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the original meaning of Latin: ex-sistere = stand forth (<http://etymonline.com/?term=existence>).

damental and existential doubts, which arise out of maybe unjustified hard strokes of fate, is rightly questionable. After all, nobody can be forced to believe something, rather it's his own decision to do so. Nevertheless the logotherapeutic dogma of meaning in life is at least educible, if yet not logically provable, namely without redirecting to religious dogmas or beliefs.

Frankl, as far as I know, didn't render any further discussion about neither the content of the meaning of life nor of the concept of meaning itself, rather he used the term in the dimension of the common sense, so to speak following the Greek word "logos" in its connotation of "meaning, significance". For "logos", which is translated mostly into "concept, word, speech, language", is only reasonably deployable, if the predicated word, or the given speech, or the used language makes sense, means or signifies something, i.e., points towards something that underlies the given indication (*signifier*) as something solid, substantial, based, as something true (*significate*). This usage of *meaning* (Ger.: der Sinn) as *signification* (Ger.: die Bedeutung) is totally legitimate and doesn't require any further explication to be understood. It was Florian Lampersberger (2012) who indicates in his bachelor thesis that Frankl almost only focused on this common sense of "meaning", although, as Lampersberger showed in his work, there exist much more connotations of this concept. But Frankl, so Lampersberger, was more concerned about the practical content of the concept of meaning than about its philosophical-linguistic discussion.

Nevertheless I want to focus on a slightly different, so to speak peculiar horizon of understanding the concept "meaning" in order to solidify the logothereotic dogma of the meaning in life. Like mentioned above, in "logos" even in the translation as "word" there is phenomenologically a certain orientation, a spatial dimension inherent, which enables one to associate the word easily with the concept of "direction". The word as signifier signifies *towards* a significate and hence indicates in its indication a direction. The semantics of the word *points towards* the essence of the enunciated thing; it is pointing from "here", i.e., the position of the one who perceives the word, to "there", i.e., the essence of the intended thing. Hence, in any word indwells a certain dimension, i.e., a measuring resp. a longing from "here" to "there",<sup>16</sup> thus it has a connotation of distance<sup>17</sup>. The so interpreted concept of "meaning" (Sinn) indicates a certain spatial direction which provides orientation. And in fact, one of the many connotations of at least the German word "Sinn" supports exactly this interpretation. And if we look a bit closer to the etymology of this word, then we discover that the old-German radical word of "Sinn" is the verb "sinnan" which means "travelling, going, being on the way, moving in a direction" (Grimm, 1971, vol. 16, col. 1103 – 1152). Surprisingly this feature still occurs in every usage of the word "Sinn", even if we use it in the physiological connotation of "senses", as we need to *direct* our senses towards something

---

<sup>16</sup> "Dimension" from Latin *dimensionem* (nominative *dimensio*) "a measuring," noun of action from past participle stem of *dimetri* "to measure out," from *dis-* "apart, between" + *metiri* "to measure" (see: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=dimension>)

<sup>17</sup> From Latin *distantia* "a standing apart," from *distantem* (nominative *distantis*) "standing apart, separate, distant," present participle of *distare* "stand apart," from *dis-* "apart, off" + *stare* "to stand". Meaning "remoteness, space between things or places" (see: [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=distance&searchmode=none](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=distance&searchmode=none)).

perceptible (= sensible). With my physiological senses (Ger.: Sinne) I focus “outward” into the world, try to perceive the outer items, and find *orientation* with my sensible perception. Hence, also with the senses we are bridging a distance from “here”, i.e., me as the inner perceiver, to “there”, i.e., the perceivable world objects, which therefore can be loosely interpreted as “being on a way or journey” (= “sinnan”).

“Sinn” resp. meaning is, as it were, the way, on which I’m metaphorically moving on and which provides me orientation, or rather which primally is “wayed”<sup>18</sup> (= groomed) by me being on the way. The orientation, which results from the “wayed” way, helps me in living my life. By going a step further in our consideration we take a look on the phenomenon of life. There are several interpretations of what life as such might be. The most common and famous one is the definition of life as a biological process of metabolism, growth, and procreation which is fulfilled by an autopoietic system, i.e., a living being. Until now there’s no philosophically satisfying explanation of the phenomenon in question, but if we bind together the biological definition with an idea of life of the old Greeks, whereby life was described as the process of self-motivated and self-created motion out of itself, we may be allowed to summarize the quest for life as such as the self-generated, dynamic movement of or within a being, distinct to its surrounding.

Hence, *my* (= human’s) life is the dynamic movement (there’s also already in it a hint of the hidden meaning of “grooming a way”/“waying”) of *my existence* as literally a stepping out of myself (see footnote 15). For being recognized as a movement it requires some fixed or relational standpoints. If such points are set-up, the relation among them results metaphorically spoken in a spatial dimension, in a literally di-mension (measurement), which allows to orientate, and indicates a certain direction. Life as a self-generated movement hence is a dynamic state of *being-on-the-way*, is a going, which, as a process of linking the fixed points of orientation together, primarily traces the track/ways the way. – This is in the meaning of the old-German connotation simply “Sinn” (= meaning). To live ones live simply means to be on the way, to go ones way (Ger.: “sinnen”).<sup>19</sup>

If we are willing to accept this slightly extended interpretation of life as well as of meaning, then we easily understand the logotherapeutic dogma that life has meaning (Sinn) in *all* circumstances, even in its worst ones, without making recourse to any religious assumptions or dimensions. Understanding “meaning” in its connotation of “going”, and life as “only”, but essentially a movement, then “to live” and “to mean” signifies more or less the same. Thus, we can state that:

***Life is meaning! The meaning of life is to live one’s life!***

This interpretation usually is honored with great incomprehension, because it seems to bring nothing new about our desperate search for an answer of the “why” of our living. Because

---

<sup>18</sup> Here we follow an old meaning and usage of the German translation of way: “der Weg” in its verbal connotation “wegen”, which means “to make/prepare/establish a way”. Commonly in English “way” doesn’t exist as a verb, but I want to coin it here as such in order to signify the verbal character of a way that only gets a way whilst going it. For a better understanding I sometimes offer some other, more common expressions of this issue. (For the verb “wegen” see: Grimm, 1971, vol. 27, col. 3091).

<sup>19</sup> This interpretation is going to be important when we later combine Logotherapy with Daoism.

finally we want to know in which direction we should move on with our lives, if we should continue to move at all. We tend to know what *the* meaning of *the* life is, especially when we are hit by bad fate. And this “to live the life” might already be the intrinsic, even perhaps the only meaning of life, and it seems to be pretty few and redundant as an answer. Yet we already mentioned, and Frankl himself accentuates this quite often, that for the answer of the question about *the* meaning of *the* life we need to take a meta-point of view, which lies outside of our experience and cognoscibility, and cannot be reached by us as long as we live. How should we rise above the way in a landscape, how should we attain a meta-standpoint, if this way resp. this landscape is our own life? Wouldn't this imply to leave our very lives behind us? And if we leave our lives (ways), how could we then recognize this life (way)? Thus it remains an unsolvable question which only may be satisfied in religious faith (see Frankl, 2005, pp. 72 – 78).

Nevertheless Frankl shows us a way out of this dilemma so that we eventually are able to find some hints for the direction we should take-up with our very lives. The famous Franklian “Copernican revolution” (Frankl, 2005, p. 107) makes us clear that it's not man who deserves to ask life about its meaning, rather it is life itself which is throwing man into quest about a meaningful answer for its given situations. Man has to answer the situational quests of life with meaningful and valuable deeds. (Frankl, 2005, p. 107)<sup>20</sup> This change of perspective throws us back to the existential precondition of our situatedness, mentioned afore, which we easily ignore by considering life at all in an abstract way. The following chapter will show how we will find meaning in the very moments which appear to us as tasks that are given to us by life itself as its situations.

### 3. Finding meaning of the moment

As mentioned above, the experience of meaning is linked together with the realisation of values. Therefore it's no surprise that also the discovery of the meaningfulness of the moment is enabled by the actualisation of one's intrinsic value structure. But Frankl doesn't discuss peculiar values or describe a certain set of values that might apply best for the recognition of the meaning of the moment, for he was very aware of the individuality of such sets. He himself believed in a sparse amount of values which he considered as universal, i.e., applicable

---

<sup>20</sup> Orig.: „Holen wir zu einer Rückbesinnung auf die ursprüngliche Struktur des Welterlebens aus, dann müssen wir der Frage nach dem Sinn des Lebens *eine kopernikanische Wendung* geben: *Das Leben selbst ist es, das dem Menschen Fragen stellt. Er hat nicht zu fragen, er ist vielmehr der vom Leben her Befragte, der dem Leben zu antworten – das Leben zu verantworten hat.* Die Antworten aber, die der Mensch gibt, können nur konkrete Antworten auf konkrete ‚Lebensfragen‘ sein. In der Verantwortung des Daseins erfolgt ihre Beantwortung, in der Existenz selbst ‚vollzieht‘ der Mensch das Beantworten ihrer eigenen Fragen.“

for each person of each region and each epoch, namely *freedom, responsibility and love*.<sup>21</sup> But it's not this set of values which might serve the meaning of the moment, instead he figured out a *triad of ways of value actualisation*. These are the actualisation of *creative values*, of *experiential values*, and the *value of attitudinal change*. (Frankl, 2005, pp. 91 – 95) Frankl was convinced that these three ways are the comprising possibilities to realise our various individual, intrinsic values and to experience meaning thereby; as it would be, if we a) are active, take part in the composition of our environment, and *bring something of value into the world*, if we b) are open to the kindness and beauty of the world (for example the beauty of nature) and the loving care of fellow humans, and *receive something of value from the world*, and if we c) revise our attitudes when the world looks too ugly and misfortune to us, and *reverse our perspective towards that of value in the world*. Then each moment in life becomes, or better to say: can be discovered as meaningful.

Especially in situations of strokes of fate the latter way is the hardest to realize, but therefore also the most dignified. It is the highest dignity of human being that, with the help of the “defiant power of the mind”, he is able to endure even the hardest, but unavoidable sufferings with grandeur, that he is able to willingly change his attitude in order to quasi heroically bear his fateful misery and to transform his sufferings into an achievement, although, in fact, this is not an easy task. Because of this Frankl considers the changing of attitudes as the supreme way of actualizing values. While this way has the highest priority for Frankl, he emphasizes that the primacy lies in the way of actualizing creative values. That means, whenever and as long as we are (still) able to actively bring something of value into the world or being able to change (bad) situations by our actions, so to speak as long as there is any freedom and possibility to actively deal with the situation, we are obliged to fulfil this in order to find meaning in life and in the moment. But if it's no longer possible to actively take part at the composition of our environment, to give our active contribution to the world, may it be because of the situation which doesn't allow us to act and react, or of physical blockades due to, e.g., illness, then we still must fulfil our possibility of actualizing experiential values. And only if we face unavoidable and unchangeable misery, fate and/or suffering which we, after thorough examination, cannot change anymore, then, and only then, we do have the dignity to fulfil an attitudinal change in order to experience even in such moments still some meaning, and bear the sufferings heroically. (cf. Frankl, 2005, p. 162)

Eventually we have discovered and fixed a certain order of value-realization which leads to find meaning in the moment, but this order can't be considered as a recipe or a fixed schema which could be automatically and technically processed. Rather, due to the uniqueness and singularity of each person and its situatedness, so to speak “*ad personam et ad situationam*” (Frankl, 2006a, p. 13), each moment sets man a specific task which requires a peculiar way of value actualization. Frankl says:

---

<sup>21</sup> Regarding these universal values I haven't found any concrete proofs of being considered like that in Frankl's texts, but I inferred these three from my studies of Logotherapy: *Freedom* as “freedom to will” is already one of the three pillars of logotherapy; *responsibility* is the indelible partner of freedom and is mentioned as essential feature of human being at least in Frankl, 2006a, p. 12; and *love* is discussed in length as an own chapter in Frankl, 2005, pp. 178 – 216.



In life the opportunities to address oneself to this or that group of values vary from hour to hour. Sometimes life demands of us the realization of creative values; at other times we feel it necessary to turn to the category of experiential values. At one time we are called upon, as it were, to enrich the world by our actions, another time to enrich ourselves by our experiences. Sometimes the demands of the hour may be fulfilled by an act, at another time by our surrendering to the glory of an experience. Man can be "obligated" to experience joy. (Frankl, 1955, p. 51)

For the conscientious meaning seeker there still remains the question how he could figure out which category of value actualization is in demand for this or that peculiar moment. Furthermore he tends to know which of these many possible values of each category is suitable to fulfill this special situation. Though everyone will understand and has sympathy with this yearning for a guideline through the rough sea of life's situations, but this demand is not to be answered by Logotherapy, nor is Logotherapy willing to do so due to the uniqueness of personality and situatedness. Rather the task itself with which one is confronted in each situation proclaims which value realization is required now. (Frankl, 2005, p. 85)<sup>22</sup>

But therefore one has to listen to this proclamation very cautiously, one has to take into account oneself in the actual situation, and has to *intuit* carefully out of this constellation the demanded values as well as the category of value realization. Yet this intuiting, as Frankl names it, is not a mere sensing or feeling, it is not only psychological, rather it is a *mindful* act of existing which takes place in the depth of our personhood. And the "authority", which grants us the task-specific value realization by intuition and hence the experience of a meaningful moment, is called *conscience*.

#### 4. The phenomenon of conscience

For Frankl the conscience is a "*meaning-organ*" (Frankl, 2005, p. 87), it is a special human faculty for intuitively recognizing the singular and unique meaning which is contained in each situation and has to be realized as man's very own duty. It is necessary to hear and to answer the "voice of conscience"; man has the duty to follow the "call of conscience" and to interpret it due to the situation. But also concerning the conscience there is still valid the postulation of man's freedom and free will. We do have the possibility to willingly and consciously ignore the gently knocking of the "voice of the transcendence" (Frankl, 2006a, p. 39 – 46) and turn away from the task of the moment. But if we meet the challenge of the "call of conscience", then we still have the duty to interpret this voice. Unfortunately, due to our "damnation to freedom" there's always the risk of misinterpretation (otherwise there would be no freedom at work), and we can never gain certainty about it during our whole life, although, as Frankl states, the conscience heralds solely "the one, that's necessary". (Frankl, 2006a, pp. 86 – 89)

---

<sup>22</sup> Orig.: „Die Werte gehen in Forderungen des Tages und in persönlichen Aufgaben auf; die hinter diesen Aufgaben stehenden Werte lassen sich anscheinend nur durch die Aufgaben hindurch intendieren.“

This may leave the meaning seeker in desperation and discouragement, nonetheless it belongs to the adventure of being human that we must bear the risk of inscrutability of the „last things“. Man, as a finite being, has no other choice than taking this risk as he never gets certainty about the finite meaning of life at all. (cf. Frankl, 2005, p. 89)<sup>23</sup>

But we don't have the faculty of conscience in order to be essentially in error. To err is only a possibility of our freedom, not a necessity. Therefore the fact of having a conscience contains also the very possibility to interpret rightly and to follow this interpretation appropriately regarding the situation. The more we practice the listening to our voice of conscience, the better it will succeed. One logotherapeutic method to practice this listening is the so called *dereflection*, although it wasn't developed by Frankl specifically for this task. But we will explain this in short.

First I want to summarize and extend the theory of conscience a bit more. Conscience hence doesn't reflect that what exists, like the rationality does, rather it anticipates that what ought to be, it conceives possibilities of existence in accordance with the factual situation. As such it is almost already the highest expression of being human, insofar it longs as well in the realm of freedom as in the realm of responsibility. So to speak it is the (mathematical) function, i.e., the essential interface as a human faculty, which connects future potentiality with the compounded past and actual factuality. Hence we can call the *conscience as the inward, and functionally unconscious, but noetic individual expression of a human person*, whereby every person gets distinctive and unique.

„Person“ as a Latin word means „mask“, and stems from the linkage of „per“ with „sonare“ which means „to sound through“. So we have a wonderful allegory of the conscience – in its function of linking that what ought to be with that what already exists, and as an expression of our very person: conscience, as the „voice of transcendence“, sounds to us „the one, that's necessary“ through the „mask“ of the factual situation. This echo or better: calling, remains unconscious for itself but can be heard by our conscious mind and – likewise the role play of an actor with a „mask“ – can be expressed as an individual conduct of life, as a decision which initiates an action. And it is exactly in this way how Frankl imagines the conscience as the „voice of transcendence“. This one may see especially in two of his sentences: „Through the conscience of the human person sounds [*per sonat*; A. S.] an extrahuman entity.“<sup>24</sup>, and „The conscience is only the inward side of a transcendent whole.“<sup>25</sup> The calling of „the one, that's necessary“, comes from outside of us, and it is our very human duty to answer this. The answer is, as it were, our response to the challenge of our situation we are living in, and with our meaningful actions we take responsibility for our interpretative percep-

---

<sup>23</sup> Orig.: „Und mag der Mensch auch noch so sehr auf sein Gewissen angewiesen sein, was den Sinn einer konkreten Situation anlangt, und mag er auch noch so sehr im Ungewissen sein (und bis zum letzten Atemzug bleiben), ob sein Gewissen in der konkreten Situation irrt, wie fakultativ alles Menschliche, oder nicht irrt, er muß das Risiko solchen Irrtums auf sich nehmen und sich zu seiner Menschlichkeit, zu seiner Endlichkeit bekennen.“

<sup>24</sup> Frankl, 2006a, p. 40: „Durch das Gewissen der menschlichen Person *per-sonat* eine außermenschliche Instanz.“ (Translation by the author A.S.)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 41: „Das Gewissen ist nur die immanente Seite eines transzendenten Ganzen.“ (Translation by the author.)

tion of this challenge.<sup>26</sup> Yet the transcending from where the calling emerges – Frankl therefore freely uses the term “god” – remains inaccessible and unconscious for us.

Finally, although the origin of the calling is transcendent to us and the “call of conscience” remains in itself unconscious, the conscience itself nevertheless is a noetic function and belongs to the person as its intrinsic expression. The personal expression longs from the deepest bottom of our unconscious psycho-physical being up to our highest possibility of mere noetic awareness. The person as our very noetic core pervades as well the psychic dimension as the physical one, as mentioned above, and longs from the realm of unconsciousness up to the realm of the highest consciousness. As such it’s like a pivot, around which the conduct of our individual life as a unique person circles. And this pivotal person can be considered as the conscience which guides us to find meaning in every moment appropriate to each unique situation.

Let’s see now, how we can practice to listen to this personal “call of conscience” by the method of *dereflection*.

## 5. Dereflection

Frankl developed the method of dereflection not in order to listen to the “voice of conscience”, but to help people with special neurotic symptoms, especially sexual disorders, which weren’t induced by physical but psychic and mental causes, by breaking a certain kind of vicious circle. In Frankl’s opinion, these disorders derive from an enforced intention (i.e., hyper-intention) that leads to a hyper-reflection which captures the patient’s mind by increasingly targeting at and yearning for the sought-after aim. The complete thinking, the whole mind, so to speak, as well as subsequently the whole action and behavior is then occupied with the desire and the thorough attempt to reach that target. But, and that’s the fateful tragedy, the target cannot be reached. Hence, the effort of winning the self set-up goal is increased and the person ends-up in a vicious circle which intensifies the person’s suffering. At this point the method of dereflection successfully helps to break the vicious circle.

Frankl illustrates his method with an example, whereby a female patient who was sexually abused by her father in quite young age nowadays couldn’t find sexual fulfillment and orgasm. She complained about her incapability and asked Frankl for help. He diagnosed a hyperreflective concentration of the woman on the highly awaited impacts of the abuse whenever she will have sex with her partner. As a therapy Frankl first told her that he actually would not have time for a treatment, but would like to see her again two months later. Second, he prescribed her meanwhile not to think about her ability or disability regarding having an orgasm or not, but only concentrating and focusing on her partner while having sexual

---

<sup>26</sup> Whether this interpretation has been right or wrong will be shown in/through future situations. Nevertheless we a) need to make any decision regarding the task of the moment, i.e., we need to interpret the “call of conscience” and act thereupon, we b) need to face the consequences of this action in further situations, which is what is called to take up one’s responsibility.

intercourse. As Frankl reports the woman already announced two days after this consultation that she already has had an orgasm, the first orgasm in her life! Frankl infers that solely the removal of her attention on the awaited impact of the abuse already freed her to experience spontaneously her orgasm out of sexual joy. (cf. Frankl, 2006b, p. 65) This case study shows impressively how dereflection, i.e., the removal of one's attention and concentration from the hyper-intended issue in order to provide an inner state wherein spontaneity can happen, works.

But in this rather psychotherapeutic method resides an ontological mechanism, which operates more fundamentally than only in neurotic disorders, and which can be applied particularly in the search for meaning. This extended interpretation of dereflection was not in Frankl's mind, as far as the literature shows, but yet it's still motivated by his statements regarding the will to meaning. Frankl often repeated his notion that happiness cannot be aimed at directly, while otherwise we'll miss it completely. Happiness only comes as a "by-product" of a life full of meaning realizations and value actualizations. By this occasion Frankl sometimes quotes a remark of Kierkegaard that 'the door to happiness opens outwardly', and whenever one wants to push it open, he shuts it even more. (cf. Frankl, 2006b, p. 71) These two thoughts (i.e., to aim at something makes it slip away, and it rather appears occasionally as a by-product) inspired us to our further interpretation about the mode of action of dereflection. If we observe not only neurotic, but our all common behavior, we can recognize that whenever human not only heartily, but willingly and thoughtfully strive towards something which is not merely a material object but rather the immaterial essence of it, we gloriously miss it. Only if we, after a certain point of wanting which is needed to be active in order to start the striving, then forget about the target, forget even about our striving as such we'll come recognizable closer to it, in a way that we even cannot name – ineffably and unconsciously. By forgetting about our striving and even our target the latter mysteriously appears so to say by itself.

Let's illustrate this mechanism for example with the aim to discover the essence of matter. The deeper we go, the more we analyze and explore the substances of matter, the less of particles, even the less of something we find; it's merely void, and from time to time a challenged reaction of something that should be a kind of matter theoretically. Just consider the experiments in the lab of CERN. They do have large amounts of papers, full written with mathematical equations which seem to proof that there should appear now and there this or that reaction, like a short flashlight or so. Sometimes it happens, sometimes not. In between there's rather nothing, emptiness. And – to get back to our interpretation – the CERN experiments are the far longing results of the first investigation of matter which leads to the idea of atoms which already appeared in ancient Greek with Democritus. – Or to put in another, quite easier understandable allegory: If one seeks out to catch water or wind with his bare hands, he will regularly miss it, so to say it will always slip away whenever he closes his hand in order to hold it tight.

This example illustrates the mechanism which we also may find in the investigation of the essences of, for example, health, happiness, love, friendship, peace, freedom, luck, pleasure, power and whatsoever. What we want to emphasize with this is that even we're recognizing these phenomena and somehow also experiencing them in our life, we are not able to grasp

their very essence, especially not by reasoning. We experience health or love or friendship, if we *don't* consider them, if we follow our daily duties and aim at other things than these. It seems as that the feature of any essence in the world we may consider lies in its *withdrawal*. And the perception of it happens phenomenally while we are drawn into the draw of the withdrawal of the essence of the things being. The attraction of the very essence grounds in its own averting or turning-away.

And it is our conviction that this mechanism also functions with the search for meaning itself: We yearn for meaning, but whenever we focus our mind to find a certain meaning in this or that situation, in our life, or in life at all, we already are in a state of hyper-intention which leads to hyper-reflection, and thus we will finally miss the target, we will not find any meaning. We won't find the meaning because of our hyper-intention, on the one hand, but also because of the mechanism of withdrawal of the essence of meaning itself, on the other hand. But once we start to dereflect, i.e., to focus our mind onto other things or even on nothing at all (as we will see in the next part of Daoism), we'll experience meaning *by the way*, i.e., as a by-product.

Still the question will arise, on which things we should focus instead. Therefore logotherapy holds the answer and we already mentioned it above: we should *not directly* focus on something, but just *transcend* our own horizon, our concern about our self, i.e., our self-interest, and aim towards something "greater" than us, some higher task or people to care for. But the success depends on the inner state of mind. If we aim to care for others and expect in reverse some acknowledgement, we again miss the essence of the target. The dereflection works in the way that whenever we recognize ourselves being in a hyper-intention and/or hyper-reflection, i.e., in a state of mentally as well as emotionally focusing *too much*, then we just should switch our action towards deeds that doesn't imply at first so much thinking, at second our own well-being as result. With this practice we will experience meaningfulness "by the way", without having intended it, we will find the meaning of the moment by just realizing it, and we will just understand the "call of conscience" by fulfilling it without having directly listened to it. This is, because the above mentioned withdrawal as the character of every very essence is not nothing, hence cannot be considered only in a negative or even nihilistic way. Rather the withdrawal "calls" us into its move as averting and so reveals to our unconscious mind "the one, that's needed".

The dereflection in combination with the self-transcendence leads to a state of mind which in other contexts is emphasized as the holy state of mind of forgetfulness, emptiness, peacefulness. If we let ourselves go, if we forget about us and our self-concerns, and just live intuitively as the situation of the moment requires it, then we automatically realize our intrinsic set of values in an appropriate and flexible way and experience meaning in every single moment. This is, in our opinion, what Frankl intended with his logotherapy, and this is what Daoism is about, as we want to show in the following chapters.

## 2. Philosophy of Daoism

In this work we want to combine the insights into logothery which we've achieved by the previous deliberations with the traditional Chinese thinking, especially the philosophy of Daoism, in order to fathom the possibilities of cross-fertilizing and thus improving the professional help in meaningless situations, and to reveal the fundamental divergences of both attempts. As we have already taken a more theoretical standpoint regarding the logothery we now consider Daoism likewise more theoretically and hence skip mostly the religious and alchemistic connotations. Our focus thus lies, as mentioned before, on the *philosophy* of Daoism.

### 2.1. Daoism, Laozi, Zhuangzi

According to the contemporary scientific outcomes, the origins of Daoism lie in the second half of the first millennium before our time (5. – 3. cent. B.C.), and are laid down in the bequeathed scriptures of the *Laozi* resp. *Daodejing*<sup>27</sup> and the *Zhuangzi*. The spiritual basis of these works, which can be traced back to the beginning of the first millennium B.C., are the divinations and the rites of oracles which have been noted on tortoise shells and bones, and which later have been collected in the scripture of the *Yijing*, the famous *Book of Changes*. The *Yijing* as well as the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* are no coherent compositions of a theory or a consistent set of thoughts, and they are as well not written by only one single author. Rather their contents have been collected by various persons, again and again restructured, and completed by this or that comment, interpretation, and other wisdom sayings. That means, we do not have any assured knowledge about the original text basis of Daoism, although we can detect a certain common thread which pervades these texts, and which we consider as the philosophy of Daoism. Before we look at this we just want to mention some few notes regarding the texts of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*.

The authorship of the *Laozi* resp. *Daodejing* is ascribed usually to a person named Lao-tzi. Even the most famous and also first annalist of Chinese history, Sui'ma Chien or Sima Quian<sup>28</sup> of the second century of our age, cannot report something valuable and reliable about him. It is more a legend what he reports. This tells about a person of the family Lao who lived in the period of Warring States (5. – 3. cent. B.C.), and who held an administrative job as archivist which he suddenly quitted to leave the country to the West. At the border he was stopped by the guardian who inhibited his passage unless he would have written down his already famous wisdom. Lao followed this command, sat aside and scribbled down his thoughts in

---

<sup>27</sup> The first of the names is the original one which is preferred in sciences, although the latter still is valid. To enrich the variety of expressions in this text we will use both names.

<sup>28</sup> Also here exist different writings of Chinese names. See: Moeller, 2004, p. 6.

5000 characters and 81 chapters. After finishing, Lao-tzi disappeared to the land in the West and has never been seen again.

Because of the beauty of that story we just leave it as it is and keep further in mind that Lao-tzi as well as the guardian didn't exist as reported and that even the text in the nowadays appearance of 81 chapters and 5000 characters hasn't exist like that.<sup>29</sup> There are too many arguments against such an assumption as reported in the legend, starting with the many interpolations and repetitions in the text, and ending at least with the many compilations of the text fragments which have been excavated in different places in China. (Moeller, 2004, pp. 1 – 8) Rather we need to assume that the *Laozi* was a so called hypertext for the usage of already inaugurated persons like priests, kings, ministers etc. in order to memorize the inherent images and the basic essence of DAO, its effects and its efficiency (DE), and to hand down this wisdom to the following generations. (cf. Moeller, 2006, pp. 4 – 7)

Concerning the *Zhuangzi* the case is much clearer, although still confused enough. At least we know that there really has been a person named Zhuang Zhou who belonged to a poor family and therefore has been a guardian who later assembled lots of students due to his wisdom. Nevertheless he spent his life foremost in poverty which was somehow self-chosen respectively to his Daoist attitude. Zhuang-tzi composed a lot of poetically beautiful and philosophically complex scripts which have been compiled, edited, and integrated in the eponymic book *Zhuangzi*. Zhuang-tzi must have been a bit younger than Lao-tzi, because his texts can be understood as comments and explanations, as literal reprocessings and practically illustrations of the wisdom sayings in the *Laozi*. The nowadays edition of the *Zhuangzi* is structured in three pieces with in total 33 chapters: the “inner chapters” (1 – 7) which might have been written by Zhuang-tzi himself, the “outer chapters” (8 – 22) which stem probably from his disciples, and the “miscellaneous” (23 – 33) which have been composed either by his disciples or by other Daoist authors. (cf. Zhuang, 2008, pp. I – XXVII)

In this work these two books, *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, will be the textual basis, although it is taken into consideration the knowledge of the *Yijing* and other Daoist texts and interpretations.

## 2.2. Daoist cosmology: DAO, Yin/Yang, QI

Different from Western thinking, in Daoism the concern is not mainly about human being and its essential features, rather it is investigated the basic conditions of the cosmic order and its preservation. Humankind only takes part in this consideration as a part to preserve this order. If we envisage this fundamental difference, then it is no surprise that there's no humanism in the *Laozi*, and that it couldn't be interpreted ethically like we are used to do so

---

<sup>29</sup> Although I mostly refer to the texts of Hans-Gerd Moeller, see also in addition the recent publication of the German translation of the so called *Urtext*, which was found 1993 in the Chinese village Guodian and seems to be the oldest recording of *Laozi*-texts (approx. 300 B.C.). [Lao Zi (Laotse). Der Urtext; transl. and intro. by Kubin, Wolfgang, Herder, Freiburg 2011] It's remarkable that the found 71 tablets correspond only with 31 chapters of the “textus receptus”, i.e., the common edition of 81 chapters (Lao Zi, 2011, p. 13).

with Western philosophic texts. (cf. Moeller, 2006, ch. 7, pp. 99 – 111) Nevertheless and quite contrary to the last statement, human plays a significant role in the *Daodejing* and in nearly every chapter it's talked about him. But this seemingly contradiction is quite easy to solve. Although Daoism isn't that much concerned about ethical analysis and about blaming man regarding its unfulfilled moral duty, hence his irresponsibility, still it is man who is able to recognize the structure of the world and its ongoing dynamics, and as such he should take care of not disturbing the flow of nature, but not for a higher moral aim, but rather for his own sake.

The present chapter will elucidate what is meant by the above mentioned assertions. This is, on one hand, quite easy to understand, on the other hand still difficult to grasp if we're not living or practice this theory. Nevertheless we will try to give a brief and clear introduction into its philosophy and therefore relinquish lots of scientific discussions about the text compilations and excavations as well as about different translations and the general difficulty of translating this text into modern languages.

Starting from the phenomenal world it is quite easy to notice the dual differences in/of our world: Night follows day, winter follows summer; there are male and female beings as well as the basic directions of up and down, right and left, front and rear; we find solid and liquid, visible and invisible, loudness and quietness, height and depth resp. lowness etc. According to these observations of nature and to the entanglement in agrarian life of the early Chinese societies man discerned the bipolar classification of the world into the two qualities *Yin* and *Yang*. *Yin* literally means "northern riverside or hillside, shady side, shadows", and *Yang* "sunny hill, side of light, sunny side".<sup>30</sup> In the beginning these concepts rather have been used geographically to indicate the different (may it be fortunate or misfortunate) sides of a place, till they were extended over history to more and more abstract and complex connotations of all kinds of features and qualities spread over the whole realm of phenomenal experiences. Thus the "shady side" turns into, for example, the darkness, coldness, lowness, humidity, femininity, enclosure, conception, giving birth etc., whereas the "sunny side" subsumes the opposites of the former. But both aspects primarily were not thought in competition of one being „better, more precious“ as the other.

But the main difference to Western thinking is not solely in the recognition of bipolarity, because this was also seen in Western philosophy as it, too, stems from agrarian experiences, but in the West the focus laid more on that which separates, and on the logical self-contradicting features which inhabits these dual poles.<sup>31</sup> Out of this it evolved the nowadays common rational and mostly bivalent logical thinking and classification, whereas in ancient Chinese thinking the focus rather laid on the complementarities of the diverging poles and on the everlasting changes of one of the qualities into another. While in the West is was searched for stability, permanence, established clear positions, substances and immutable essences in the phenomena, and serenity and truth of being, in the East there has been accepted much more the characters of transition, turnover, reversal which all the phenomena experi-

---

<sup>30</sup> Cf.: [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin\\_und\\_Yang](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_und_Yang).

<sup>31</sup> For example this led to the Aristotelian formulation of the principle of contradiction that something cannot be in respect of time, place, and qualities simultaneously be and not be.



ence from time to time, and which cause a high degree of vagueness regarding their cognoscibility. That's why and how the *Yijing*, the *Book of Changes*, was one of the first and most famous books in China. With its divinations and oracles they have tried to figure out as exact as possible the status of any given situation in order to anticipate the future way of changes and to direct one's own action according to these changes, so as to preserve the harmony of the world and the order of the changes.

Well, *Yin* and *Yang* yet cannot be considered only as two opposing poles, which contradict each other in its existence according to Western logic. They are not the "absolute one" or the "absolute other" like in the West where they like to think of two endpoints of an imagined endless long and ideal geometrical line. The so called poles *Yin* and *Yang* are no immutable, substantial fixed points (substances) with its appropriate properties which adhere accidentally to these substances. Rather they already constitute a certain *field of properties*, for example *Yang* = abundance and *Yin* = deficiency, according to which they determine the yin-like and yang-like phenomena. And both "sides" always already exist together, they are never separated from each other. The before mentioned complementarities which adhere to the antipodes already tell about their essential affiliation, their mutual bipolar relationship. They essentially belong together. Even in that time when people interpreted them geographically as the fortune (yang-like) or misfortune (yin-like) side of a river or mountain they have been fully aware of the relativity of this interpretation and that a yin-like side was needed in order to have a yang-like one. Because, taking the example of riversides, you can't - per definition - not have a river with only one riverside. If there is a river, the one side implies the other. And additionally we have to take into account that the now so to say fortunate side may change rapidly into the misfortunate one and vice versa.

Therefore *Yin* and *Yang* conceptually never split into a principal contradiction to each other, rather they are just opposing one the other. Even when it looks like as there might be, for example, pure light, i.e., pure *Yang*, as a phenomenon, there's always also the darkness, *Yin*, at play. In Daoist thinking there is no *Yin* without *Yang* and vice versa.

To illustrate this we find some wonderful verses in chapter 2 of the *Laozi*:

Everybody in the world knows the beautiful as being beautiful.

Thus there is already ugliness.

Everybody knows what is good.

Thus there is that which is not good.

That

presence and nonpresence generate each other,

difficult and easy complement each other,

long and short give each other shape,

above and below fill each other,

tones and voices harmonize with each other,

before and after follow each other,

is permanent.

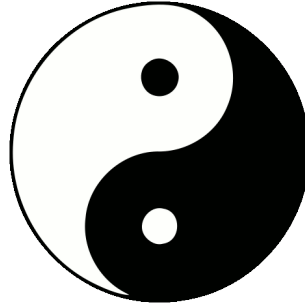
(Moeller, 2007, p. 7)

If, for example, *Yang* increases more and more, still it doesn't increase into infinity or to reach a state of absoluteness, because with this it would literally kill *Yin* in its essence, would

annihilate it, and by this also itself. Rather it is the case that *Yang* is growing only up to a certain point of its intrinsic exhaustion whereupon it gives the always already indwelling *Yin* the possibility and premise to grow out of itself (Chin.: *ziran*) – naturally, without any force. Now the *Yang* is diminishing more and more while *Yin* is steadily increasing, until the *Yin* reaches its intrinsic exhaustion, and the movement flips to the opposite.<sup>32</sup> The constantly up and down resp. in and out and forth and back is illustrated in chapter 5 of the *Laozi* by a bellows:

The space between heaven and earth –  
Does it not resemble a bellows?  
Empty, but not consumed,  
The more it is moved, the more comes out.  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 15)

If we now, regarding these permanent changes between *Yin* and *Yang*, visualize the famous symbol of Daoism, we will recognize in each of the different-colored points (for example the white one for *Yang*) residing in the other colored “drop” (here: the black one for *Yin*) the stylized essence of the reciprocal quality which dwells as a germ, regarding our example in *Yin*. The form of a “drop” and its arrangement symbolizes the growing which takes place “self-so” (*ziran*), the qualifying directions of up (*Yang*) and down (*Yin*), the reversal of the one into the other as well as the eternal movement in general. The circle which holds and encompasses the “drops” represents the closeness and the unity as well as the inescapability of the change. Eventually, this is all, that is (exists), hence there’s only changing, process, movement, and becoming-vanishing.



The now arising question is: How does the permanent change, the steady reversal occurs and on what is it based? As an answer some verses of the chapters 40 and 42 of the *Laozi* may serve quite well, although they need some further explanations:

Chapter 40:

Reversal is the movement of the Dao.  
Weakness is the usefulness of the Dao.

The things of the world are generated from presence (*you*).  
Presence is generated from nonpresence (*wu*).  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 97)

---

<sup>32</sup> It’s highly remarkable that this thought was already expressed in the ancient Greek, namely by Anaximander. He states: “Into that from which things take their rise they pass away once more, as is ordained; for they make reparation and satisfaction to one another for the injustice according to the appointed time.” (quoted from Rus- sel, 1967, p. 113) Likewise as in Daoist thinking we also shouldn’t here interpret this passage ethically, rather the “reparation” is thought as a mutual owing and has no moral implications.

## Chapter 42:

The Dao generates Oneness.  
Oneness generates Twoness.  
Twoness generates Threeness.  
Threeness generates the ten thousand things.

The ten thousands things;  
carrying Yin, embracing Yang –  
blending Qi to create harmony.  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 103)

The „ten thousand things“, i.e. all that appears in the phenomenal world, are and can only be in the sphere of presence/being, like we experience them as existing. The manifoldness of the things emerges, according to chapter 42, out of the threeness and appears in the way we already described above: alternating and always reversing multifariously in its opposite. Hence, the threeness symbolizes the dynamic play of changes of *Yin* and *Yang*. The interactions of this threeness with its endless possibilities as result configure the “ten thousand things”, i.e. the diversity of our world. But what is the threeness itself? It emerges out of the twoness, namely of *Yin* and *Yang*, and consists of these two polar fields *and* of their dynamic which emanates out of the bipolar tension. Figuratively spoken, the tension itself results only of the contra-positioning of the polar opposites, of their positioning into a relationship, which represents certain energy, and by its virtue the movement of changes is initiated. This moving power or dynamic is expressed in Chinese with the character of *Qi* what literally means “gas, air, steam, aether, aspiration”, and is used nowadays in the connotations of “energy, power, temperament, breath or atmosphere”. In the meaning of “energy”, which is a strict defined term only in natural sciences, we have a vague idea of what *Qi* wants to tell us, and as “breath or aspiration” we do have a good opportunity to combine it with the ancient Greek use of “*pneuma*” which has been the expression of the still mysterious phenomenon of vital energy (which later was transformed into the concept of “soul”).

If we, according to chapter 42, consider only the transformation from twoness over threeness to “the ten thousand things” there’s no greater problem of understanding for the Western mind. In the West the concepts are almost the same as we may see at the example of electricity: There’s plus and minus as qualities of a surplus of electrons (= *Yang*) and an electron deficiency (*Yin*). If we put these qualities in a mutual relation (voltage field/*Qi*) and provide a free flowing in between (electrical connection) then an endless realm of possible efficiencies result out of these three conditions as one easily can verify regarding our highly electrified world. Much more difficult to understand is the step from the oneness to the twoness. With the Western way of thinking there always pop up thought-traps which seduce us to carry out some waggly speculations like applied mainly from theologians or theologizing philosophers. The jump from the oneness to the manifoldness remains inscrutable in the occidental thinking and hence offers an open space for confessions of (metaphysical) faith. We likewise can consider the assumptions of theoretical physics which, in spite of the postulate of manifold big bangs, still believe in and search for the condition of possibility and the causing particles and forces of the *very first* Big Bang, as such a faith.

Daoistly thought, the issue is quite very easy as Moeller quotes from the *Yijing*: “One Yin, one Yang, that is called Dao.” (Moeller, 2007, p. 100) *Yin* and *Yang*, the twoness, as qualitative potentials do always exist, constitute in phenomenological respect the DAO. DAO is the constitutive, ontological antecedent unity resp. oneness of the possible polar duality of *Yin* and *Yang*. Thus, *this oneness is the DAO itself*. This last sentence is quite important for avoiding the fallacy of Western thinking to infer an antecedent zero before/behind the oneness when reading this verse of chapter 42: “Dao generates Oneness”. If we do so, we get entangled again in the occidental explanatory gap regarding the genesis of the manifold of the phenomenal world out of the unity of the oneness, or of the being coming out of the non-being – as it was stated in the last two verses of chapter 40: “The things of the world are generated from presence (*you*). / Presence is generated from nonpresence (*wu*)”. Especially the last assumption was already vehemently rejected by the Western middle-age theologians with their dogmatic assertion: “*ex nihilo nihil fit*/from nothing comes nothing”. So the Western thinking is almost condemned either to believe in the universal divine oneness (God) and to explain the genesis of the manifold by an act of mystery by this oneness, which then is mediated by a divine revelation, or to discard the assumption of an existing oneness and explain the manifold as the efficiency of a dynamic chain of physical causality, which has no beginning and no end.

Yet, in Daoism presence/being, nonpresence/non-being, DAO, the oneness, twoness and threeness are mutually interwoven and hence belonging together, are, so to speak, one and the same, but in different perspectives. The discourse of the term “generation” is not to be taken for granted and as literal in an ontic (worldly) sense, i.e., it is not taken as to be inferable out of our phenomenal experiences which formed the concept of “to generate”. Rather the expressed order is an *ontological* one. The oneness of the DAO is therefore only ontological antecedent to the two- and threeness. The illustration of “generation” serves only our recognition, but has no actual ontic equivalent. When the *Laozi* mentions that DAO generates the one, the one the two, the two the three and the three the “ten thousands things”, then it’s intended that the one is (only) based on the DAO, the two on the one etc. It is not meant that in fact DAO precedes the one, the one the two and so on, but rather that they belong together as mutually determining each other as that what they are. In the Greek thinking there exists the term “*aitia*” (= cause) which expresses somehow the similar phenomenon of reciprocal guiltiness, but factually implies the issue of “to owe” resp. “to be due to s.th.”. Then the beginning verses in chapter 42 have to be read as follows: “The one owes its existence to the DAO; the two owes its existence to the one; etc” – and vice versa! According to chapter 40 the verses must be read as: “being is owed by non-being; non-being is owed by being”. If you put it this way, the common causal connotation of “generation” hence is removed. To put it in a slightly different way: The DAO up to “the ten thousand things” are one and the same and represent only different phenomenal facets; they bring themselves into appearance by a mutually interplay of mirroring simultaneously each other and so bringing forth its very essence. There’s neither a strictly speaking causality, nor any essentially distinction between these dimensions at work; all differences and timeliness is only due to our limited cognitive ability.

Let’s summarize: DAO, *Yin*, *Yang*, and *Qi* are essentially one and indivisible. Their difference is, likewise as the one in the three-dimensionality regarding the essence of mankind in Fran-

kl's logothery, solely a heuristic, rationally necessary positing, but which always is and remains a unity. However, we as sensual beings are living in the realm of "the ten thousand things", thus, we cannot really grasp and name the DAO.

This phenomenon becomes apparent particular with the rise of modern language philosophy whose fundamental insights are, that the word which signifies something is not and never identical with the signified. Thus, the middle-age definition of truth as accordance of the cognizing, i.e., the intellect which expresses itself via speech, with the cognized got rebutted. We cannot state any definitive assertions of truth anymore. And this rather modern insight we may already find in the *Laozi*, in fact on highly delicate and logical central position, namely in chapter 1:

As to a Dao –  
if it can be specified as a Dao,  
it is not a permanent Dao.

As to a name –  
if it can be specified as a name,  
it is not a permanent name.

Having no name  
is the beginning of the ten thousand things.  
is the mother of the ten thousand things.

Thus,  
to be permanently without desires  
in order to see the subtleties.  
to permanently have desires  
in order to see that which is yearned for.

The two –  
Together they come to the fore,  
Differently they are named.  
Together they are called:  
Darker even than darkness –  
Gate of multiple subtleties.

(Moeller, 2007, p. 3)

The only remaining thing is, perhaps, the however appearing, yet deep experience of truth, i.e., the concept of the essence of the phenomena through the unity of our body. But as soon as we start to communicate these experiences, we'll miss them essentially and destroy with our signifiers, words and gestures the experience of the pure and unitary phenomenon. This we already recognized above in the part concerning Frankl that the signifier never reaches the significat. The latter always remains a mystery to the former, and yet both are mysteriously linked together through their mutual reference, through the draw into the motion of its withdrawal. Due to that it can be said in chapter 1 of the *Laozi* that both are the same regarding their origin ("together they come to the fore") and are only different regarding their names ("differently they are named"). Though together they constitute the mystery

("darker even than darkness"), and the pure ineffability of its occurrence is the mystery's far deeper mystery ("Gate of multiple subtleties").<sup>33</sup>

Hence, what are we supposed to do regarding this mysterious, inconceivable and ineffable situation? We mentioned it already: Nothing. We can do nothing except the experience of the unity of our embodiment which is always changing like the ever changing river of Qi. And it is exactly this, as we may see in the next chapter, what is considered as the holy ideal in the philosophy of Daoism: Doing as non-doing.

### **2.3. Wei Wu Wei: doing as non-doing – and nothing remains undone**

Let's recapitulate the already achieved issues. In the philosophy of Daoism the existing things in the world are mere temporal, situational manifestations of the incessantly game between the dual qualities of *Yang* as abundance and *Yin* as deficiency which is kept running through the enabling power of Qi that resides in the tension of the dual poles. The dynamic of the game (Qi) as well as the playing field (*Yin* and *Yang*) constitute in their whole structure the DAO, i.e., literally the "way", on which the game is "going on". Significantly in Daoism there's no "telos", i.e. no final goal, towards the game of "the ten thousand things" is moving to in its dynamic, there's not like in Western thinking an idea of progress or evolution, but only change. Of course, in this change lies the possibility of improvement, but this is not following a certain way which once may terminate in a state of absolute, yet ideal perfection, rather this improvement is highly relative to the situation and the one who perceives the improvement as such in this situation. This relativity grounds in the concept of the endlessness of changing. There will be no fixed endpoint to reach in history as there's also no determinable beginning of it. The power of Qi, the changing of *Yin* and *Yang*, and the efficiency (DE) of DAO will always and ever go on and on and on.

And if we accept this concept then we as humans have no clue where to start from and where to lead to our actions. We only can observe the actual situation, try to discover some kind of laws or rules of the ever changing process, which surely manifests itself in recurring circles, and cautiously act according to the processes in order not to disturb or disrupt them and cause some unexpected impacts. Because, if we do so, the process of changing will never stop, but just take another, unforeseeable direction which may lead, in the very extreme, to that point, where the DE of DAO will probably scrunch us as a species. In avoidance of this the Daoist tries to act as non-acting, he tries to find out the natural dynamics which makes things change in their natural way, "self-so" (*ziran*), in order not to disturb the immanent possibility of a kind of harmony.

Maybe this is the most puzzling and incomprehensible point in Daoism that in the dynamic of change of *Yin* and *Yang*, in the Qi itself, resides a possibility for a harmony, a so called dynam-

---

<sup>33</sup> For this connotations refer to the German translation of Richard Wilhelm in: Lao-tse, 1991, p. 41: "Beides ist eins dem Ursprung nach / Und nur verschieden durch den Namen. / In seiner Einheit heißt es das Geheimnis. / Des Geheimnisse noch tieferes Geheimnis / Ist das Tor durch das alle Wunder hervortreten."

ic balance which corresponds to the DAO and hence is beneficial for the whole structure of nature which is spirally circling of the process of reversal. For every natural phenomenon, i.e., all that appears in and as cosmos, owns a specific dynamic of *Yin/Yang* energy which it tries to pass through (or fulfill) on its very own way (DAO) during its existing. If all follow the own and inner DAO, then the “cosmos” would be in order. And this is the status which is considered as the highest ideal in Daoism. Although the inconsiderable action regarding the DAO will cause disorders, quite serious for the survival of human beings, it is nevertheless a hybris of man to think that he alone is responsible for the cause of disorder or the installation of cosmic harmony. As we can learn from chapter 23 of the *Laozi* the so called and often in Western thinking strongly romanticized “harmony of nature” can be disrupted by nature self, again “self-so” (*ziran*):

A whirlwind does not last a morning.  
A downpour does not last a day.  
Who is acting in these cases?  
Heaven and earth –  
But even these can't make them last.  
How then, should humans be able to?  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 59)

These so called natural aberrations from DAO occasionally happen – as the first not quoted verse of the above mentioned chapter says: “Silent speech – self so.”, – but they don't last long. Soon they change again and after a while nature finds the way back to its dynamic balance. This movement of natural changes with its aberrations and re-stabilizations is the mode of operation of the concept “self-so” (*ziran*). Occasionally the changing process jumps out of harmony in order to find back dynamically in another state of balance. This, for sure, will change the appearing face of worldly phenomena, but never change or destroy the inner structure of DAO.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned above, man is able to cause some extra jumps which then may change the face of the world that much that the ongoing changes of *Yin* and *Yang* endanger human's further existence. But man never can disrupt the process so that the process itself will cease. On the other hand man also has the ability through his noetic dimension to somehow understand the QI up to a certain degree and submit his actions to the “way” of QI resp. to the DAO. And exactly this is called *Wu Wei*, the doing as non-doing.

Chapter 48 illustrates this as follows:

One who engages in learning  
increases daily.  
One who hears of the Dao  
diminishes daily.  
  
To decrease and to decrease even more  
so that “doing nothing” [*wu wei*] is reached.  
Doing nothing, and nothing is undone.  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 115)

---

<sup>34</sup> In Western sciences we do have the term “mutation” for this phenomenon, but restricted to the process of the evolution of living beings.

By doing as non-doing, it's not that man is doing completely nothing, that he remains inactive and in paralyzation, rather he acts as he is supposed to act as a human being, but aligns his doing with the investigated and recognized flow of Qi. In doing so his acting just follows the natural flow of changes, hence, he is not doing at all. If man submits his willing, which sometimes runs riot, to the DAO then his doing is one what DAO is going to do, and it looks like he's not doing something, hence, nothing is left undone. This is the secret of non-invasive, non-interventional action which comes always to the right resp. appropriate point and time without being active, without being involved in unnatural behavior and therefore in power consuming activities.

See chapter 64:

Those who act on things will be defeated by them.  
Those who take things in their hands will lose them.  
Therefore the sage  
will not act and thus not be defeated,  
will not hold on and thus not lose.

When the people follow their tasks they are continuously defeated at the completion.

Therefore it is said:  
Be as careful with respect to the end as with respect to the beginning,  
then you will not suffer defeat in your undertakings.

Therefore the sage  
desires without desiring  
and does not esteem goods that are hard to obtain;  
learns without learning  
and returns to that which the masses of people have passed by.  
He is able to support the own course [*ziran*] of the ten thousand things  
and does not dare to act on them.

(Moeller, 2007, 147 – 149)

The Daoist sage is practicing *Wu Wei* and all his striving goes for being like the DAO, being like the pivot, or the hub of a wheel which doesn't move, yet determines the spoke's turning, which is rather nothing, but yet so essential that without it the function of that object is suspended.

For illustration of this complex thought see chapter 11:

Thirty spokes are united in one hub.  
It is in its [space of] emptiness,  
Where the usefulness of the cart is.  
Clay is heated and a pot is made.  
It is in its [space of] emptiness,  
Where the usefulness of the pot is.  
Doors and windows are chiseled out.  
It is in its [space of] emptiness,  
Where the usefulness of a room is.

Thus,  
There is presence [*you*] for the benefit,



There is nonpresence [*wu*] for the use.  
(Moeller, 2007, 27.)

If we consider all these verses carefully we detect the secret way of achieving DAO and practicing *Wu Wei*: The submission of one's self to the DAO resp. to the process of QI as the ever changing dynamic of *Yin* and *Yang*. The highest aim to reach for the Daoist is the state of self-forgetfulness. Leaving one's self behind, forgetting about it, and still living passively active without personal or individual distinction to the surrounding nature is the highly ideal of the Daoist sage. This also may be illustrated with some verses of the *Laozi*:

Chapter 2:

Therefore the sage  
resides with the task of nonaction,  
practices the teaching of nonspeaking.

The ten thousand things –  
he makes them work, but does not initiate them,  
he makes them act, but does not depend on them,  
he makes them complete their tasks and does not reside with them.

Well, only because he does not reside with them,  
they do not depart.  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 7)

Chapter 7:

Therefore the sage  
takes back his own person,  
and will personally be in the front,  
keeps his own person out  
and will personally be established  
Is this not because he has no self-interest?  
Thus he can bring his self-interest to completion.  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 19)

He then knows how and when to act as if nature itself would have whispered it to him. His doing seems to be completely effortless, precise, and supportive to the flow of situation. He doesn't need to learn much, or to act hard or to travel far, as chapter 47 knows:

Not to go out of the door –  
to know the world.  
Not to look out of the window –  
to know the Dao of heaven.

The further one goes out,  
the less one will know.

Therefore the sage  
knows without going,  
names without seeing,  
completes without acting.  
(Moeller, 2007, p. 113)

### 3. Comparison between Logotherapy and Daoism

Now we come to the final step and main part of this study, namely to compare both introduced theories in order to discover their similarities as well as differences. We will divide this part in three chapters whereby the first two will interpretatively and synoptically depict the similarities, and the third one shows the differences.

#### 3.1. Way (DAO) is the Meaning (SINN)<sup>35</sup>

In our introduction of logotherapy we already emphasized the interpretation of the word “meaning” as “being on the way/going/travelling”, according to the old connotation of the German word “Sinn”. Highly interesting in that regard is the foremost verbal interpretation which focuses on the action of going, travelling. As there is no fixed determination of how each human being should develop oneself, but rather needs to create his own essential being-in-the-world due to the faculty of freedom, we cannot assume an already existing way that only would need to be used in order to actualize ones innate self. Instead, we humans first need to pave the way while going (grooming, waying the way/Ger.: den Weg wegen). There’s a saying by the old Islamic mystic Rumi which summarizes this thought impressively: “As you start to walk out on the way, the way appears.”<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, finally, i.e., at the end of our lives, there is a way, which represents us and our own and individual living process. This yielded way and the process of waying/grooming is one and the same, and it appears as, or better said: *is*, the meaning (of our very own life). It represents the direction we’ve pursued, the tracks we’ve left for the descendants and fellow men; it constitutes the purport of our life and person. Insofar this walked way can be considered as the sought meaning in life whereby every single and even small step as the fulfilled meaning of the moment was uniquely important. This interpretation fits very well with the above mentioned claim that *the meaning of life is a lived life* which we now are able to transcribe into: *the way of life is a way which is brought forth by going*.

This abstract and somehow indecent summary of the core issue of logotherapy, namely the search for meaning under the premise that meaning can be found in any circumstances of life, coincides very well with our other object of investigation, with Daoism. As we have worked out, DAO literally means just “way”, but couldn’t be understood in a common sense,

---

<sup>35</sup> The title derives from the significant German translation of the *Daodejing* by Richard Wilhelm, who consequently translated the word DAO as Ger.: SINN (= meaning). In his introduction he explains that he grabbed this translation in reference first, to a passage of J.W. v. Goethe’s *Faust I*, where Faust tried to translate the biblical word “At the beginning it only was *logos*” with “Am Anfang war der Sinn”, second, to the observation that in Chinese translations of the Bible the word “logos” consistently is translated into “dao”. Third, Wilhelm already points to the coincidence of the very similar connotations of “dao” and “Sinn” as “going, taking a direction, way” (Lao-tze, 1991, p. 24f). So, the title of our present work is not only a word-play, but brings intrinsically together what was already considered by Wilhelm.

<sup>36</sup> The only inconsistency of this saying with our thought is, that Rumi already presumes an existing way when he states: “As you start to walk out **on the way**, ...” (emphasis added).

for as it is claimed in the very first verse of the first chapter in the *Daodejing*, the way which can be named as way is not the true way (or correctly quoted: “As to a Dao – if it can be specified as a Dao, it is not a permanent Dao” [Moeller, 2007, p. 3]). That which we commonly consider as way and which is used by us in order to lead somewhere is not the true way, is not DAO as way, insofar as it is already specified and fixed, and thus misses the inner feature of DAO, namely to be stable, unalterable only regarding the granting of the incessant movement of changes, and to be dynamic regarding this movement of changes, which appear as the ongoing world. This means – in difference to the common interpretation of way – that the motionlessness of DAO as a pivot is not able to be specified. DAO essentially needs to be unspecific exactly for providing the process of specification of DAO, which takes place in its movement as the “spokes” of the world. This sounds quite odd and totally paradox, but that’s exactly the only way to grasp a glimpse of the idea of DAO. It is a general and abstract term which signifies pure possibility of concretization. DAO is, so to speak, the ontological framework for the process of ontic concretization. By contrast, the common interpretation of way assumes, first, a certain being – the way – which already exists (in the realm of the ontic), which is totally defined and – as a way – leading from one point to another, but – as an ontic being – succumbs to the worldly dynamic of perpetual alteration of its mode of being. Second, there exists another being – e.g., a human – which uses this first entity (= way) for its “going” (= perpetual alteration). So we do have, in the common interpretation of “way”, two different entities which interact with each other. Not so with the unnamable, true, pivotal DAO in Daoism. There the way and the walker are one and the same, but different in their perspectives. The innermost feature of DAO is the enablement of the configuration of the way by means of its outer feature of the flowing change of *Yin* and *Yang* like the walker who then ways the way by walking.

This explanation should serve to recognize the coincidence of Daoism with logotherapy. At the latter we metaphorically summarized it in the saying of Rumi: “As you start walking out the way, the way appears”, and pointed thereby on the verbal interpretation of “way”: going. This interpretation applies exquisite also for Daoism as there’s no substantial reference in the world that can be determinatively named as way. Only by the process of everlasting changes, of the circling alteration of *Yin* and *Yang*, DAO appears, a way emerges. But the mystery is that the perceivable way which can be named as such cannot be considered as the true resp. permanent way which ontologically provides this waying of the way. The true way/DAO is inscrutable, yet it appears in its efficiency (DE) and effect as somehow a common way. DAO as the core, the pivot, the hub, as the emptiness, regarding to chapter 11, is the unrecognizable, still, and stable center as the origin resp. anchor of the ongoing process of changes which constitute our perceivable, empirical world. And this process is the one and only which we are able to know and to react on, this process is the nameable way which constitutes our life. (We may just think on the above given picture of the feature of each essence as withdrawal which, exactly because of its withdrawing, draws into movement. The draught of withdrawal into the center core of emptiness discloses world as “the ten thousand things”.)

Here now, the ways of both theories converge, as likewise the way as DAO and the way as the logotherapeutically so-called meaning of life are in their inner fabric inscrutable and remain in their essence unconscious for us. DAO and meaning coincide as the way which is to

be understood verbally as waying/grooming/paving, so that we according to our title can state: **Way (= to way the way) is the Meaning (= live the life)**. This coincidence as way now defines in its conditional feature the further procedure of how to realize, how to create, how to discover and fulfill this way resp. meaning, which is to be understood now as the meaning of the moment resp. the perpetual changing flux of *Yin* and *Yang*.

### 3.2. Wu Wei as dereflection

The above presented coincidence of the Daoist DAO and the logothetic meaning as the bi-perspectival way (on one hand as unconceivable [DAO/meaning of life], on the other hand as perceivable [*Yin*, *Yang*, *Qi*/meaning of the moment]) is justified as in both theories this way provides us the possibility to dive into the motion of the way as “to live our life” and gives us directions to way this way, so to speak, how and whereto we should and could live our lives. These directions are the phenomena of the situational circumstances, called the constellation, and the so called meaning of the moment. The former can somehow be analyzed by our rationality through observation and inference, and brings to the fore the recurring “life cycles” [East] resp. laws of natural sciences [West]. The latter occurs rather unconsciously through the hearable but yet incomprehensible “call of conscience” which needs to be interpreted in accordance with the perceived world constellation. This interpretation though is not so much a highly rational reflecting act of mind, but rather the meaning of the moment is conceived by intuition. Intuition hence is no active, but more a passive action, it is no willingly doing, but an aware awaiting. In this manner our mind abstains from reflecting on the possible meaning of a certain moment, but opens up its inner senses rather to feel into the situational constellation. That’s why Frankl always could say that meaning, especially the meaning of the moment, never can be given to somebody, nor constructed out of one’s own fantasy, but rather needs to be found, as it already indwells the unique situation and awaits its discovery by the meaning seeker. If one willingly reflect on the meaning of the moment than he rather misses it, for this reflection is like a hyperintention which leads to hyperreflection, as the more meaning is intended the more it flees away. It flees away because as something that is non-substantial but rather an essential process it cannot be grabbed and determined. For if so, then it would be fixed and deprived from its inner way of being, which is – taking in consideration the Daoist stance here – the process of change. Its essence appears only in the execution, like the way only occurs by waying, the direction (also a connotation of Ger. “Sinn” resp. meaning) only is a direction as such by pointing from one point to another, by bridging-over a dimension, by directing. The way as well as the meaning actualize themselves only by acting out themselves; that means, the way realizes itself by going it, and the meaning realizes itself by living it resp. by actualizing one’s inner set of values, i.e., the correspondence between one’s inner attitudes and the actual world constellation.

If we really want to grasp the meaning of the moment, if we in fact want to understand the DAO, we shouldn’t long out for knowledge or for other goals or aims. Rather we should strive

for diminishing our longing for and our wishing for self-actualization, as chapter 48 of the *Laozi* explains. For conceiving the meaning of the moment we have to dereflect. And this means we have to redirect our focus of the seeking mind from this special meaning to something which provides us stillness, calmness, relaxation, and which therefore hasn't to do something with our very own. We need to turn the reflection from the meaning as a purpose to something which is even no purpose at all. This is the "self-so-ing" (*ziran*) DAO at best. And we will reach it by practicing *Wu Wei* as it was described above, which coincides formidably with Frankl's idea of a) listening to the "call of conscience", and b) practicing dereflection. *The very coincidence lies in the point of the Daoist self-forgetfulness as Wu Wei through the Franklian self-transcending as dereflection.* The latter only functions well – also in pure logotherapeutical consideration – if the transcending is not forced with eager intentions towards a self-settled goal, like forcefully wanting to save the world or love all humans (or at least one's spouse) etc., but if the task or goal of the self-transcending occurs by itself (self-so, *ziran*) in a spontaneous way (like the mentioned orgasm in Frankl's case study). In the *Zhuangzi* there are many examples where the Daoist sage, appearing quite as a normal fellow, suddenly and spontaneously acts highly appropriate to the situation and even creates skillfully almost perfect artifacts, paintings or speeches, or uses perfectly skillful his professional tools like, for example, a butcher his knife (cf. Zhuang Zi, 2008, ch. 3, pp. 36 – 38). This spontaneity is required to grasp and live the meaning of the moment, to recognize and fulfill "the one, that's needed". And also Frankl refers to this spontaneity when he says that love, happiness, or even orgasm cannot be forced, when he emphasizes that meaning needs to be found, not given, and that the task of a logotherapist is to listen to the patient's narrative in order to discover some so called "logo-hooks". These "logo-hooks" are some words or phrases which have been spoken out by the patient rather unconsciously, but bear hints of meaning. To reflect this hidden meaning in the "logo-hooks" is the highly task of any logotherapist.

### **3.3.Fundamental differences between Logotherapy and Daoism**

The last remark in the foregoing chapter brings us directly to the elucidation of the crucial divergences between the two explored theories. One of these points is the intrinsic purpose of each theory. Logotherapy is, though it is also developed as an anthropological and psychological theory, foremost a *therapy*. That means that its main concern is about the healing help for people with neuroses and problems of life, induced by a lack of meaning in life. Frankl was a doctor at first, and as such he saw himself. The development of his theory was based on his strive for an appropriate therapy which helps solving some psychopathological problems of our time, i.e., in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast, Daoism is a conglomeration of soteriological thoughts from ancient times until now which have been assembled to a more or less concise theory. Daoism mainly wants to explain the essence of the world as such, as well as the essence of man, and how man could and should live in this world in order to suffer less, and to cause less world-wide troubles. With this philosophy – similar to that of Bud-

dhism or Hinduism – the people sought strategies to cope with the unpleasantness of life in general, and to find their individual as well as human's salvation.

To summarize this very first and crucial difference we may say that Logotherapy aims at the psychologically healthy well-being of individuals, especially such of affluent societies, for they suffer most from the so called existential vacuum and frustration. Daoism, by contrast, aims at the explanation of the intrinsic laws of the universe and how to maintain and support them as humans. It is clear that in Daoist thinking the well-being of each human individual is not in its focus, but rather it aims at the smoothly ongoing of the dynamic of DAO. The role of man is limited to and considered idealistically as submitting one's self to the flux of changing, forgetting about one's self and diving into the DAO as the pivot of the moving world. Nevertheless, even this more universal, yet abstract approach entails an ideal of human well-being, but this is not so obvious and commonly accepted as such, because it is hard to achieve and not so appealing to the normal thinking mind. The Daoist well-being lies in the renunciation of the world, which is totally contrary to the emphasized well-being of logotherapy, where the individual is rather brought back to a smooth and meaningful worldly life. The Daoist renunciation of the world seem more like a sour asceticism, though the Daoist sage permanently is depicted as self-centered, motionless, and, most notably, happy.

This last point brings us to another crucial difference between the two theories, which is highly ambiguous. We stated that entering the DAO is a kind of renunciation of the world in order to achieve inner stillness and thus everlasting happiness. We also noted that this is, first, hard to achieve, second, striking our commonly thinking. If we think of all the nowadays published books of self-development and self-help, of the fame of positive psychology resp. positive thinking, of all the books which give practical advice to gain happiness, satisfaction and success, then we will discover that their recipe is totally counterfactual to the Daoist advice. The – mainly westernized – thinking emphasizes the *decisive activeness of the individual*. Aiming to purposes, setting goals, and stepping forward to it decisively seems to be the right way to experience happiness. If one looks around in his social surrounding, he also may recognize the phenomenon that people from various social backgrounds all the same absorb eagerly the published and broadcasted stories of people “who made it”, i.e., who had unexpected success, overcame crucial obstacles, or just found their inner peace and self-satisfaction only by following this formula: *enter into a dialogue with yourself, find out what you always and really want(ed), settle up reachable and controllable goals, go for this goals with adamant discipline, control and evaluate your steps, and never give in when you experience hardship, but stay with your decision!* This is the westernized formula for a succeeding life, for well-being, and happiness (– noteworthy: not for inner peace)! So, one may achieve satisfaction in life when he has a purpose to strive for and cultivates an attitude of disciplinarily pursuing this purpose. Happiness will ensue by itself, guaranteed! And even Frankl held this position although he at last combined it with the individual responsibility, and warned the readers not only to settle-up their goals by their own reasoning and fantasy, but – as mentioned above – rather to find it out of the situation by listening to the constellation of life.

This leads us to the ambiguity of the difference of our two considered theories. For Daoist thinking it is clear that the practical ideal of *Wu Wei* is favored and even considered as the only way to salvation and self-soothing contentment. Wanting, pursuing, acting, all are ways

of life which rather cause trouble, chaos, disorder, and will be followed by catastrophes. So, it's better not to act forcefully but investigate the rules of DAO and act as non-acting with the flow of QI. So far, so clear. But the ambiguity lies on the side of logotherapy. In contrast to the just mentioned, logotherapy holds the position that having resp. finding ones situational purposes and striving for them will be obviously very healthy and lead to a happy and fulfilled life. Even if you fail your purpose, you will have the content feeling of having given your best and hence resting self-sufficiently in your rendered performance. For the main posit of Logotherapy is still the often quoted sentence from Nietzsche: *The one who has a why for his life endures almost every how!* And finding a why, which also implies a whereto, provides the best chance of a happy, joyful and succeeding life. Also the logotherapeutic "defiant power of the mind", and the third way of value actualization, changes of attitudes, proofs the forgoing statements.

But on the other hand Logotherapy accentuates with the meaning of the moment, the listening to one's conscience, and the practice of dereflection the alike attitude of Daoism, namely the "letting go" resp. "letting flow". As we learned from above also in logotherapy reigns the insight that we cannot successfully and satisfactorily grab out into the world to achieve mainly self-settled goals and purposes, but should match such longings with our perception of the life constellation and our inner set of values. We should get into critical distance to ourselves and try to find a "higher" meaning in order to be able to transcend one's self and find somehow something like a purpose which isn't a purpose as such. This sounds self contradicting, and in fact it is. On one hand Logotherapy states the necessity of an inner "noo-dynamic", which means a dynamical tension in our mind which keeps us going on with the noetic qualities of wanting, loving, thinking etc. On the other hand it states the impossibility of reaching the foremost sought happiness in life as this appears only as the side effect (or, combined with Daoist thinking, the efficiency [DE]) of the satisfactorily striving for "higher" goals. Like happiness also this goals should transcend our self-interests and self-concerns. They should have nothing to do with the improvement of our lively well-being. The latter follows by itself, self-so, ziran.

To conclude with this ambiguous difference we may summarize that in Logotherapy the main concern is the noetical well-being of the individual which comes to the forth by yearning for valuable purposes and striving for their actualization, although these purposes essentially should transcend our self-concerns about a meaningful and happy life, and should rather be no purposes at all. To achieve this split we shall honestly and seriously strive for meaning, but "only" for the meaning of the moment which we discover – not impose! – by listening to the whispering of our unconscious "call of conscience". This works out by being highly aware but unfocused in mind, by dereflection. In logotherapy we should be both at the same time: noetical dynamic by using our freedom to will in order to make responsible choices for meaningful goals, *and* holding back ones eager striving for self-interesting achievements by transcending one's self towards a state of mind of dereflective self-forgetfulness. By contrast, in Daoism only the latter is required. Though this is already hard enough, it spares one from the experience of unsuccessfully trying to bridge the contradicting gap resp. to solve this mentioned paradox, at least in its idealistic self-conception. In fact – and this again brings the two considered theories again closer to each other in spite of the mentioned differences –

also the Daoist approach eventually is a kind of paradoxical, as also practicing *Wu Wei* and achieving individual forgetfulness is at first a mindful act of decision, second of disciplinarily practicing, and at last also of inner awareness and somehow alertness concerning the actual yet changing state of DAO.

#### 4. Conclusion

Our reflections about Logotherapy and Daoism as well as the deliberations about their similarities and differences, and especially the last paragraph of the last chapter revealed a remarkable feature of the essence of being a human: not only our theories seem to be controversial, *but rather our very human condition is highly paradoxical!* At the end we need to admit that maybe the essence of ourselves, our very own personality, consists of, or better: *is* our inner contradictions, which bases on the paradoxical feature of humankind. This paradox can be explained by Frankl's emphasis of the so called "noo-dynamic" and the dismissal of the concept of homeostasis, which he ascribed to the theory of psychoanalysis. In our opinion, man needs both. And this exactly depicts the named fundamental paradox. On one side we need the inner, noetic tension in order to live our lives resp. to actualize our dynamic part of being. The noetic tension is the innermost energy which leads us to achieve something, it is the motivation for our striving for goals, seeking for meaningful activities, and longing for love and happiness. On the other side we certainly also need to establish a state of balance, harmony, or homeostasis. This may be seen in the striving for relaxation, inner peace, calmness and mental as well as psychophysical stability. If we wouldn't also seek for a relaxing balance, the tension would tear us up. But if we wouldn't set us by ourselves in this noetic tension again, we just would die inwardly, we would seem to be in a state of suspended animation.<sup>37</sup>

If we cut off the fashionable extras or religious connotations of our two deliberated theories, we may agree that both serve quite well this paradoxical feature resp. need of humankind, although from different starting-points and perspectives: philosophical Daoism isn't completely and only ascetic, and logotherapy isn't completely and only dynamic resp. fulfilling the activity of will. Both reflect the active as well the inactive parts of our essence. In Daoism these inactive parts and strivings for balance are anchored in the concept of *Wu Wei*, doing by non-doing, in Logotherapy they are anchored in the conceptual practice of dereflection, i.e., reflection on different, self-transcending things resp. focus-less reflection. And that's why and how they both fit together very well, as we may consider the practice of *Wu Wei* as the practical result of logotherapeutic dereflection. But also the above mentioned active parts of human essence are embedded in both philosophies. In logotherapy they are clearly anchored

---

<sup>37</sup> Maybe we can harmonize these inner differences and name the mentioned similarities by a structural term which was already claimed by Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana: *Homoeodynamic*. This may reconcile Frankl in his insistence on "noo-dynamic" with the, by him, rejected term of homeostasis, which emphasizes the inner yearning for peace and stability.



in the emphasis of the will to meaning, hence in the striving for meaningful achievements, whereas in Daoism the active parts are fulfilled by the longing for the actualization of the ideal of the Daoist sage. This is done by the thoroughly investigation of the actual constellation of *Yin* and *Yang* in order to perform *Wu Wei* in the appropriate way to DAO.

Still, there remains a last question out of the interpretation in this study: How does this comparison influences the further introduction of Logotherapy in the Asian world? In other words: Can we extract some practical conclusions from this study in order to provide a more appropriate Logotherapy for the Asian students and clients?

In our opinion, there are especially four points which are worth to be considered for designing a course curriculum which serves the Asian mindset. First, as the Asian mindset is not only built by the concepts of Daoism, but rather by that of Confucianism which focuses more on a system of moral, social, and loyal obedience, there should be still a higher emphasis on the logothereotic core values of freedom to will, will to meaning, meaning in life plus the individual responsibility regarding the outcome of applying these values. Second, in Logotherapy courses it should be focused more on the ideal method of dereflection to achieve a sensitive understanding for the discovery of the meaning of the moment, which is the only worthy meaning to strive for. Third, it should be emphasized the similarity between Logotherapy and Asian mindset exactly by stressing that this method of dereflection resembles very much an ancient Chinese philosophy, namely the concept of *Wu Wei* in Daoism. This may help, fourth, the Asian students to avert their possibly entertained suspicion against the westernized world approach of "Yes, we can!", and may reopen themselves towards their own cultural and philosophical heritage when they discover that even the Asian world has had its own therapeutic methods for mental forlornness and its psychological implications.

If we follow these points and further expand them through deeper reflection, we beneficially may match and harmonize the Asian yearning for Western wealth and mental achievements out of sciences on the one hand, with their suspicion of maybe getting overrun and thereby losing their cultural and traditional self-reliance on the other hand. So it will come to inspiring and hopefully mutual fructification which leads on the long run to more, and more happier people.

## 5. References

- Frankl, Viktor (1955): *The Doctor and the Soul. An Introduction to Logotherapy*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York
- Frankl, Viktor (<sup>3</sup>1975): *Die Psychotherapie in der Praxis*; Deuticke, Wien
- Frankl, Viktor (1987): *Grundriß der Existenzanalyse und Logotherapie [1959]*; in: id.: *Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse. Texte aus sechs Jahrzehnten*, Piper, München
- Frankl, Viktor (<sup>11</sup>2005): *Ärztliche Seelsorge. Grundlagen der Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse*; Deuticke, Wien
- Frankl, Viktor (<sup>8</sup>2006a): *Der unbewusste Gott. Psychotherapie und Religion*; dtv, München
- Frankl, Viktor (<sup>17</sup>2006b): *Das Leiden am sinnlosen Leben. Psychotherapie für heute*; Herder, Freiburg
- Graber, Ann (2004): *Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy*; Wyndham Hall, Lima (Ohio)
- Grimm, Jakob & Wilhelm (Ed.) (1972): *Deutsches Wörterbuch*; 32 vols., here vols. 16, 27, WBG, Leipzig
- Lampersberger, Florian (2012): *Eine philosophische Untersuchung des Sinnbegriffs in der Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse von Viktor Frankl*; Bachelor-Arbeit an der Philosophischen Fakultät der Hochschule für Philosophie, S.J. München, 2012, yet unpublished manuscript
- Lao-tse (1991): *Tao te king*; transl. and comm. by Wilhelm, Richard, Diederichs, München
- Lao Zi (Laotse) (2011): *Der Urtext*; transl. and intro. by Kubin, Wolfgang, Herder, Freiburg
- Moeller, Hans-Gerd (2004): *Daoism Explained. From the Dream of the Butterfly to the Fishnet Allegory*; Open Court, Chicago
- Moeller, Hans-Georg (2006): *The Philosophy of the Daodejing*; Columbia Univ. Press, New York
- Moeller, Hans-Gerd (2007): *DAO DE JING. The new, highly readable translation of the lifechanging ancient scripture formerly known as the Tao Te Ching*; transl. by Moeller, H.-G., Open Court, Chicago
- Purjo, Timo (2012): *Viktor Franklin Logoteoria. Tie arvopitoiseen ja tarkoituksentäyteisen elämään*; Juvenes, Tampere
- Russel, Bertrand (1967): *A history of Western philosophy*; Simon & Schuster, New York
- Zhuang Zi (2008): *Wisdom of Chinese Culture Series*, ed. by Du, Joyce (Exec. Edit.), Chiao Liu, Vancouver

## 6. Bibliography

- Diederich, Ulf (2013): I Ging. Das Buch der Wandlungen; dtv, München
- Fabry, Joseph (1988): Guideposts to Meaning. Discovering What Really Matters; New Harbinger, Oakland
- Fabry, Joseph & Lukas, Elisabeth (1995): Auf den Spuren des Logos. Briefwechsel mit Viktor E. Frankl; Quintessenz, Berlin
- Fowler, Jeaneane (2005): Pathway to Immortality. An introduction to the philosophy and religion of Taoism; Sussex Academic Press, Portland, Oregon
- Frankl, Viktor (1961): Die Psychotherapie in der Praxis; Deuticke, Wien
- Frankl, Viktor (1996): Zeiten der Entscheidung; Herder, Freiburg
- Frankl, Viktor (2000): Man's search for ultimate meaning; Perseus, Cambridge
- Hall, David & Ames, Roger (1995): Anticipating China. Thinking through the narratives of Chinese and Western culture; State University of New York Press, New York
- Herthneck, Kai-Uwe (2010): Das Prinzip des "handelnden Nichthandelns" in der asiatischen und in der westlichen Philosophie in seiner Bedeutung für die zeitgenössische Psychologie, Psychotherapie und Psychoanalyse; Univ.-Diss., online source: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:21-opus-46740>
- Kaltenmark, Max (1981): Lao-tzu und der Taoismus; Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M.
- Karcher, Stephen (2000): I Ching – Das Buch der Wandlungen. Das Geheimnis der Selbstverwirklichung; Herder, Freiburg
- Lao Zi (Laotse) (2011): Der Urtext; transl. and comm. by Kubin, Wolfgang, Herder, Freiburg
- Lin, Yutang (2009): The Wisdom of Laotse; 2 vols., chin.-engl. bilingual ed., Cheng Chung Book, Taiwan
- Lukas, Elisabeth (1994): Auch dein Leben hat Sinn; Herder, Freiburg
- Lukas, Elisabeth (1997): Sehnsucht nach Sinn. Logotherapeutische Antworten auf existentielle Fragen; Profil., München
- Lukas, Elisabeth (1998): Lehrbuch der Logotherapie; Profil, München
- Lukas, Elisabeth (2000): Logotherapy Textbook. Meaning-centered Psychotherapy consistent with the principles outlined by Viktor E. Frankl, MD. Concept of Human Beings and Methods in Logotherapy; Liberty Press, Toronto
- Marshall, S. J. (2001): The Mandate of Heaven. Hidden history in the I Ching; Columbia University Press, New York

Schilling, Dennis (2009): Yijing. Das Buch der Wandlungen; Insel, Frankfurt/M.

Tong, Lik Kuen (2011): Wei Wu Wei. Essays on Daoist Philosophy; Hong Kong