



Some remarks on the Nominal Socratic Dialogue as an Existential-Analytical Tool for a (short-term) Logotherapy.

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1. Introduction

The Socratic dialogue, used in Logotherapy, mirrors the inner dialogue of the individual client between their particular challenging effort to answer their situational question and their tendency to hide behind learned behavioral limitations.

The nominal Socratic dialogue focuses on what is called attitudinal value.

The goal of such dialogue in Logotherapy is to remobilize the specific human faculty of Self-transcendence and to actualize the choice between ego and Self.

A Logotherapy does not provide the answers, nor does it prescribe any kind of emotional release, a moralistic, or an ethical preference. It therefore is a very sober offer for help.

"Look at your life, pick up the pieces, start the rest of your life sadder and wiser than ever before, making the best of it because your presence and contributions actually make a difference."

We all know that Viktor E. Frankl is the author and engineer of what we know as Logotherapy and Existential Analysis.

Frankl coined the word "Logotherapy" in 1925, and "Existential Analysis" in 1933.

Between 1925 and 1942, he worked with a professional team, first in the neurological polyclinic, and after 1933 until 1942, in the Rothchild Hospital in Vienna.

His closest colleague was Dr. Paul Polak, who not only managed to save one copy of Frankl's original dissertation through the war, later known as "The Doctor and the Soul", but who also wrote a brilliant article about Frankl's Existential Analysis and Logotherapy, shortly after the war, "Frankl's Existenzanalyse in ihrer Bedeutung für Anthropologie und Psychotherapie" (1949).

Polak's motto: "All that I need I carry within" refers to the noetic, unconscious "person", who remains, most of the time, pre-logical and un-reflected. The Nominal Socratic Dialogue is closely connected to the unconscious pre-logical and non-reflected as such.

Other colleagues, Dr Eva Niebauer and Dr Kurt Kocourek testify on the efficacy of Logotherapy.

Dr. Niebauer showed that her patients reached significant improvement on average after 8 sessions.

These people were the grandparents of what we now know.

Wow, 8 sessions on average... what would have been the content of such sessions?

Would it not be a great help to find out?

2. How does Frankl define his contribution to the humanities?

"Logotherapy – since Logos oriented – is a meaning-oriented (and from the perspective of the patient a re-orienting!) treatment.

This treatment aims at the mobilization of the will to meaning, where this will is blocked, is unconscious, or repressed.

The first aim is to evoke such will.

Above and beyond it is the task of logotherapeutic efforts to bring to light concrete meaning potentials; for which an analysis of real being, the personal existence of the relevant patient is needed- in one word: Existential Analysis (Existenzanalyse).

"It goes without saying, whenever we speak about Existential Analysis (Existenzanalyse), we do not mean an analysis in the common understanding of the word, but specifically the *explication of concrete existence*, such as we find in individual biography because during the course of life, the human develops; his or her life enrolls, and thus the best way to read someone appears in relation to his or her own realities, as well as to his or her meaning potentials: Life itself already represents a kind of Self-explication of personalized being".

(V. E. Frankl, *Das Menschenbild der Seelenheilkunde, Kritik des dynamischen Psychologismus*, Stuttgart 1959, p, 52-53).

"Existential Analysis posits (*ekphoriert, brings back into light*) an uninjured spirit who is incapable of being hurt, the one that exists even behind a psychosis, and it *appeals* to a freedom which also stands above a psychosis, the one that allows a dialogue with psychosis", Frankl wrote.

(*Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders*, p. 62)

And further: "Existential Analysis, as far as it is a Psychotherapy, hence a Logotherapy, not just raises the awareness of the noetic, but also calls the noetic to express itself, it calls out the defiant power of the human

spirit”

(V. E. Frankl, Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders, Munich-Basel, 2007 p. 68).

3. Argumenta ad hominem ad situationem; who governs our conscience?

*The search for meaning to be fulfilled or completed is not a drive.
It is more like an attractor, like atoms are held together by an invisible yet enormous force
that even surpasses gravity.*

„In this sense, existential analysis is a search for meaning. The meaning, however, after which it seeks, is concrete, and this concreteness pertains to both the uniqueness of each person as well as to the individuality of every situation. The respective meaning is *ad personam ad situationem* (that is, specific to this person and to this situation) In each case, the meaning sought after is required of and reserved for the individual.

Existential analysis extends its analysis to the totality of human persons, which is not only the totality of a psycho-physical organism, but of a spiritual person.

Existential analysis follows the spiritual person into its unconscious depths.

To this extent, it earns itself the characterization of depth psychology.

Unless, of course, we were to conceive of the spiritual in persons, in contrast to the psycho-physical, as the „highest“dimension.”.

(V. E. Frankl, On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorder, New York, 2004, p. 228-229).

Before we dive into the NSD, we need to look at Frankl’s Arguments for a Tragic Optimism.

As we already learned from Polak (1949) each and every person carries all they need already within.

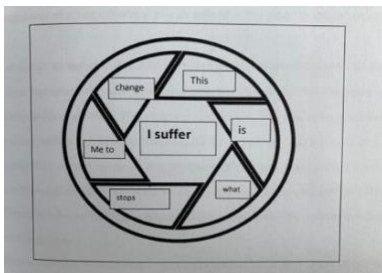
Frankl underlined that the noetic is principally unconscious, in the background of perception, feeling, thought and action. Our spiritual identity is unconscious, and remains unconscious: un-reflected, pre-logical, and pre-moralistic. (Frankl, the unconscious God, 1948). Intuitively, he underlines, value-potentials are perceived (ibid). In Man’s Search for Meaning we find Frankl’s “Arguments for a tragic Optimism”, dealing with the tragic triad pain, guilt, and death on the one hand, and still saying “Yes to life in spite of everything”, the optimistic triad existing in love, hope and faith.

(1959-2020). Since meaning always contains the dynamic constellation of someone’s arguments for a tragic-optimism, I decided to focus on the 7 issues configuring the NSD tool.

These seven issues are:

- the unique person in his/her
- love (still un- conditional, for someone or for a cause)
- pain (commitment, hurt, sacrifice, gift, engagement, etc.)
- hope (aim, intention, etc., self-distance and self-transcendence).
- death (transience, inner emptiness, loss, reality in its shocking truth, our responsibility, etc.)
- faith (confidence, courage, self-transcendence, trust, etc.)
- guilt (the ability to change, complete, what we owe love, to fulfill a meaning)

How does a patient/client perceive himself, presenting their problem?



Session 1 Presentation of the individual suffering, katharsis.

How do we as Logotherapists see our patient/client?

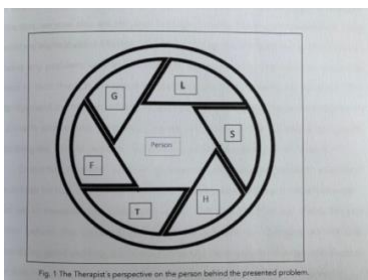


Fig. 1 The Therapist's perspective on the person behind the presented problem.

Sessions 2-8 (see below)

The above is a schematic presentation for an 8-session Logotherapy treatment.

The first session is carefully listening and internalizing how a client perceives his or her own situation.

Sessions 2 – 8 relate to the process of EA and include the seven steps for a tailored Logotherapy, using the result of a Nominal Socratic dialogue, also known as “Attitudinal value”, being the provisional awareness of one’s particular noetic or spiritual dynamics which lead to the authentic freedom for and responsibility in the next phase.

We remember here Frankl’s wording: “The human is the one who decides who he/she is going to be in the next moment”.

Your attitude tells you who you are, what and how you feel, and for what or for whom you act. It may well be that your psyche and your habits don’t agree. The latter two decide on the degree of your current problems. The search for meaning to be fulfilled or completed is not a drive. It is more like an attractor, like atoms are held together by an invisible yet enormous force that even surpasses gravity.

Facing adversity in life is like having to climb a mountain one did not expect.

However, if one reaches the pinnacle, the view one gets is rewarding.

4. The tool and its application; a fresh start regarded from the end.

The NSD is a tool! Not a test!! Many tests measure the degree of psychological health, like in terms of personal goals and coping with adversity. The NSD does not measure any of those issues.

It is a tool to help both sides of the therapeutic encounter focusing on someone’s personal “Yes to life *despite*” the current problems, starting from the healing capacity.

The tool limits the number of sessions to what is necessary to re-evoked the awareness of meaning, the freedom to change and to remobilize responsible action following the noetic identity.

The method enabling the tool is – like in Psychoanalysis - free association, however, it is limited to only 6 items, excluding whatever one may or may not “have”, or survived.

The aim of the NSD tool is to reach the unconscious attitudinal dynamics, also called noodynamics.

Noodynamics are the existential natural so to speak, because they are pre-logical and un-reflected.

To enable the use of the tool we have the so-called Existential Questionnaire.

Using the Questionnaire requires a lead pencil and an eraser.

The reason for this is that whatever pops up in our minds still relates to our psyche, which governs perception, feelings and decisions.

The Questionnaire is designed to “get to the human essence” of a life, to find out what truly *attracts* us into the direction of meaningful life, and dignity as a human person.

We need to get away from morals, from “learned values” (conformism), and find the pre-logical, not-reflected, noetic unconscious, which – while “person” is kind of outside time, evil, and peril – we received before we could even speak.

Existential Analysis always integrates both the Self (Person) and their life as it changes from situation to situation. It is the description of the optimistic-realism of everyday life.

That is why the result of the tool shows up in one line, beginning with “I”, and including all items following the prioritized order of these items.

One’s attitude in life decides who one actually is as a free and responsible actor.

That is why our therapy plan starts at “What I (still) owe life”, governed by “Love”, which stands for my intention, and looking at “my engagement, commitment, participation”, see below.

Frankl underlines the essence of “to retrieve” and “to appeal” of the existential analytical and logotherapy-process, which includes that the issue of “meaning” is the opportunity that appeals and evokes the person from the specifically humane dimension and allows it to be expressed in the reality of the everyday encounters. To retrieve or to posit (ekphorieren) to actively remember, relates to previous meaningful experiences being brought back into immediate awareness.

That is why meaning always is “ad personam ad situationem.”

Meaning experiences, as well as engaging into meaningful potentials, rests upon memory on the one hand, and integration into action and relationships on the other.

One could say that the person reveals himself or herself in meaning (love, hope, confidence, relationship).

5. The Existential-Analytical Questionnaire

Dear Mr. /Mrs.....,

Let me begin thanking you for putting confidence in me. Before we will go into the details of your present problems, I would like to know you as the person you were before your present problems occurred. The exercise is designed upon the seven most important aspects of you. Therefore, it does not contain things that you have or have not, it actually goes way bac further, to the time that you first smiled. Since that may be a long time ago the exercise takes time. The process we use in this exercise uses what is called "free association", that is: one word pops up in your mind when you come to think of yourself as the person who was eager to live your life.

Use only a lead-pencil and an eraser.

Just list 6 nouns as they pop up in your mind. Use your lead pencil.

(Excluded are nouns like your house, your car, your job, your boat, your partner, your kids)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Write the most important 3 out of 6 nouns here:

- x
- x
- x

Three unmarked left: mark the most problematic of them with a minus.

- .
- .
- .

Repeating the x-marked nouns here

- x
- x
- x

Now choose the most important one below:

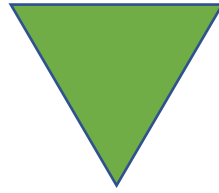
xx

Here you find a triangle: put the xx -noun in the top, both x-marked ones at the basis



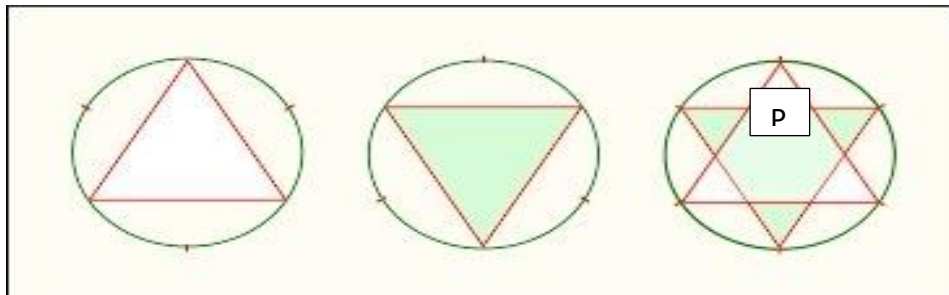
After you have finished the above steps, proceed to this one:

Fill in the non-marked items here, putting the one with the – at the top.



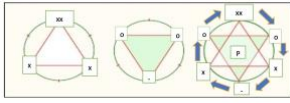
The two unmarked items at the basis are exchangeable; you have to make a choice.

Put the items from both triangles in here, and integrate the two triangles like this:



After you have finished, put your name in the middle of the star where it reads "P".

Write a one-liner, starting with "I", adding all six items from the star, beginning with the "xx", turning to the right.



"I

Your one-line statement reminds you of a special experience from your life. What was it, when was it, what did you feel, what did you do? Take your time filling this one out.

1. What my one-line statement reminds me of:
2. This happened to me when?
3. What is it that I do?
4. How do I relate to this special occasion?

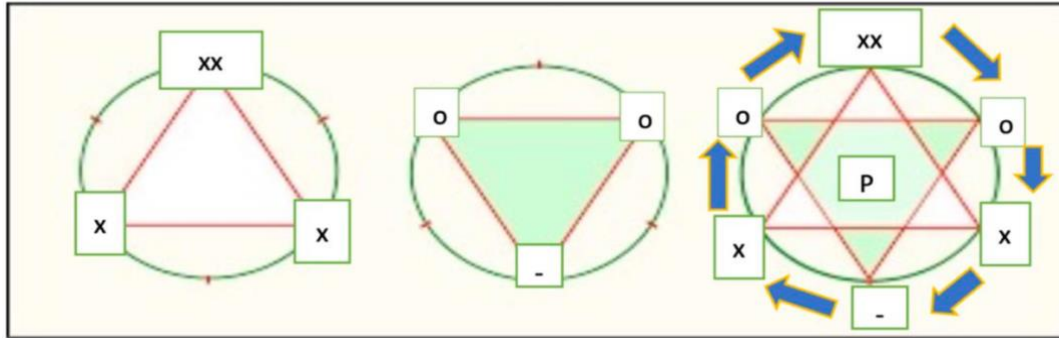
You may relate your retrieved memory to your present situation:

1. Related to your "Yes, I do" to life
2. What do I need to do to change myself and/or the situation?
3. For what or whom would I do this?
4. When do I begin?
5. Who can confirm my efforts?

... as presented by our

6
cl

Life is short, therapy should be short too, and as precise and clear as possible in a reality that needs so much change.



This file relates to Frankl's Arguments for a Tragic – Optimism.

The Tragic Triad: Logotherapy specifically addresses the "triad" of human suffering: pain, guilt, and death, aiming to transform these into personal growth extending the tragic triad with the optimistic triad represented in love, hope and confidence or faith. Evoking and calling for self-distance, self-transcendence, openness for possible personal meaning in a given situation.

The NSD in fact aims at the Copernican change, that is, at the efficacy of paradoxical intention.

(V. E. Frankl, E. Niebauer, K. Kocoureck, Paul Polak, et.al.)

It, in fact, is such intention. Life puts up the questions, humans provide answers.

The contents of the sessions relate directly to the choices of our client, represented in the one-liner.

Here we may need the eraser. If the one-liner at a particular issue appears to break the line, it may well be replaced as proposed by the client. Freedom for includes responsibility in.

Please note: If the one-line statement beginning with "I" is existentially true, watch the emotion (motion of the heart). If so to speak "an existential lie", we need to carefully note of the accompanying feelings.

Based on the outcome of the Existential Questionnaire, we may design our therapy plan.

Step 1: see above, the problem presented in the first session, katharsis.

Step 2. Conscience, (o) subject: the value appearing in the "one line-statement" is starting point.

Step 3. Heart, (xx)

Step 4. Commitments, (o)

Step 5. Hope, (x)

Step 6. Your place in reality, (-)

Step 7. Your spiritual home, (x)

Step 8: Your life matters (closure).

Step 2. Conscience. (o= the client's word which word was placed in the left corner of the down-pointing star =conscience is earth-bound, change-prone).

Conscience reports what needs to be changed, true change involves the direction of the heart, and is followed by concrete-personal commitment to another person or for the sake of a cause.

Conscience in psychodynamic terms is a negative issue. In EA, however, it is a positive, while dealing with value perception: What we "owe" life, what needs to change by whom.

Value perception precedes meaning as such, because meaning is a goal in real life, whereas values in an existential sense of the word are questions, or aspects of questions, one needs to answer.

Frankl calls conscience a meaning organ because it helps us perceive the specific values in a situation or condition and invites us to answer.

We will see, that and how conscience is connected to Step 8.

In Step 8, your spiritual home, we find the pre-logical, pre-moral, pre-reflective self-awareness; your existence, embedded into your bodily and psychological present. If God exists, says Frankl, he would not mind us calling Him different names.

Remobilizing conscience is all about the augmentation of value-perception; that is: finding out what moved us, e.g., in music, a poem, or a story, in art, in nature, or literature. Therapy aims to bring to consciousness what has disappeared from the perception and experience of day-to-day reality.

Step 3. The heart. (xx the word at the top of the hierarchy, placed at the top of the upwards pointing triangle = heart is open for the other, for potential meaning and meaning potentiality)

The heart keeps its hidden wisdom, and, according to Frankl, perceives the uniqueness of the other. The Hidden wisdom is the awareness that your life matters, maybe even before you ever imagined it. The heart communicates, together with conscience, what your next decision committing yourself to a future or a better situation includes. For

what or who do you decide? What kind of situation is waiting for you to interfere, who is it that you, and only you can help in this instance?

Who is it that you love? We differentiate between "I love you" and "It is you that I love", why do we do this? Is there any cause that you would give your life for? What is it that you can contribute, despite your anxiety and yes-but's?

Is there anyone in your past who defied his or her suffering in a way that you admired?

Step 4. Commitments. (o, the word punt into the right corner of the down-pointing triangle.

Commitment = the ability to and preparedness to suffer, earth-bound actualization of humanity)

In the "Arguments for a tragic-optimism" we find the issue of "suffering". As long as the world is not a paradise (and even if, some people will destroy it) life contains suffering. We suffer during our birth process; we eventually will die. Thanks to, despite, and even by the force of our being human, we know that this condition is the very basis of finding meaning and dignity. An old story says:

When a child comes into this world, people show joy.

When a human being dies, there is grief.

It simply is the wrong row of order, isn't it?

When a child comes into the world, we should cry because we do not know if and how this child will come through the dangers of life.

And when our loved one passed away, we should celebrate, because he /or she left us with a good name.

Frankl emphasized that life is unconditionally meaningful. Unconditional refers to our reality of existence as spiritual beings.

Sobriety about ourselves is that we know deeply within that who we are does not equal whatever we have or whatever fails us. We have bodies, feelings, anxieties, worries, or thoughts.

Down to earth, it is of great importance to know this, and- as we did as children- joyously started out growing up, dreaming our dreams, living our lives. What is the harvest here?

Which commitments did you perceive as a child, and what did you heartfully meant in terms of participation? What is the content of such participation or commitment, and where do you retrieve these in your present? We emulate such values, such commitments.

The situation of our lives change all the time, (Step 5), we cannot "organize" life, or, for that matter, reality without limiting it to "rules and regulations", "bylaws", "preconditions", "morals", "opinions"- you know these humanly all too human efforts as but limitations coming at a great number of costs in terms of quality in your life. That is why our commitment to life comes from the inner dialogue between conscience and heart. To what or who did you commit yourself offering the best you could?

Step 5. Hope (x, the word at the right side of the basis of the upward pointing triangle, linked to and integrated into commitments, goal-bound).

Coming from the decision of conscience and heart, we accept life as it is, and get on our ways of contributing, committing, helping, changing, and taking care of what is called reality as it shows itself.

Whatever our input is or has been, we cannot have given it without the pulling force of future, that is: hope. Hope has a reality-based beginning and a definite real goal. Without hope we would not survive, nor would we ever be able to heal, to bear pain, to give birth, and even to die. Hope, therefore, is the personal signature of commitment, the covenant between reality and future for the sake of the return or improvement of human dignity. Hope confirms the other that he/she is not alone, reinforcing mutually shared awareness of meaning, and fidelity. We must remember that hope comes from the heart, the inner voice that reassures us about ourselves. "The last thing that dies is hope", a deep truth, because hope is the force that endures the efforts of change.

Hope tells me that it is not just the reality of our world, but me also, that is in transition towards a definite goal.

We cannot hope hoping, we cannot want to love. Both are not self-centered!

We do not hope for our own sake, as we do not love for our own sake.

Step 6. Reality as it is. (-), the word at the top of the down-to-earth pointing triangle, do we need to explain this?

Reality is what we always are about to change by changing ourselves.

Reality, at the same time, can be an emotional or mental prison-like issue.

He/she who does not know anxiety or worries must be in deep trouble.

So, if you come to therapy because of your fears and depressed feelings, you are quite normal.

It cannot be the goal of therapy to change the world in which we find ourselves living with others.

Reality is like climate and wore, without ever losing its character.

The hopeful moment here is that we are "*alias aliter sed non aliud*".

We change all the time without ever becoming someone else.

Change as growth is what is meant to be the reality of our existence.

Without our flexibility in solving problems and alleviating suffering, mankind would have become extinct a long time ago.

The requirement of reality in human terms is to change whatever needs to be changed, to bear whatever cannot (yet) be changed. Reality is the soil of which we – expressing our spiritual essence – build houses, farms, utensils, machines, medicines, and other "home improvements". Reality is where our efforts are stored forever, the barn of

our harvest is the basis of a good life, the stock of our experiences and actions that will serve nourishing our meaningful developments.

Reality is also that what says that we are mortal. Reality also offers us someone of something to live, love and die for. Reality is like the yin-yang of day and night, both in universal and in personal issues.

Step 7. This is the step where we retrieve what is in the deposit of memories (see above).

What is your spiritual anchor? (x, the word in the left side corner of the upwards pointing triangle, confidence, self-evidence, proprio-perceptiveness, Gelassenheit, trust in life, trusting God).

What is our spiritual anchor? Remember that all the above steps are figuring the unconscious dynamics of human being. Ever tried to consciously ride a bicycle? I remember painful moments until I could ride it without thinking about it. In psychology it is called "proprio-perceptiveness"; the noetic unconscious, pre-logical and not-reflected basis of any humane natural.

In wholistic medicine, we are bodies, not just corpses or chemical reactors that can be reorganized by adding more chemicals.

In LTEA we are three-dimensional beings, embodying the spiritual, unconditional person within a mortal psycho-physical body. The psycho-physical is like an instrument, meant to play its tune in the orchestra of life. Life needs us – it is okay to leave it at that.

If our spiritual anchor would be "life itself" as a value.

Remember who decided about values? Right, your conscience in concordance with your heart.

When you decided to trust the divine, then again, it is okay to do so.

The divine created us, that is: He had a purpose for us, and He needs us.

Therefore, your life matters.

Creation equals one's last resort of inner freedom.

What does life, what does God expects of me here and now? How can I serve?

Maybe you say: "Yes-but" here. Serving, however, is not submitting.

Serving is a choice to spend your energy and efforts for a better tomorrow, for a different future, for a good life. You cannot avoid choosing.

The harvest of your life may underline your "Yes to life in spite of everything".

Nothing of this harvest can get lost or be stolen.

No power, no illness, nothing on earth can take you out as a person.

You may lose everything you "have", but never "who you are in essence."

Whether you talk to God or grapple with your conscience may make no great difference.

The thing to remember is that *miracles don't work unless you do get yourself involved.*

Step 8. Closure.

Your life matters: you yourself are a miracle. ("P" in the center of the star has changed from the P representing Problem, to the Person, the one representing who you truly are).

That is where we have arrived now, during our final session.

Who you are for or to others matters. It is who you are, the Self you may have been looking for, the one you doubted so much that your psyche stepped into the traps of convenience and comfort. What you have re-discovered is your unconscious personal motivation to live for, the motivational energy that makes you move mountains if need to be. Fears and anxieties are part of your life;

you may make mistakes and miss points. Fears and anxieties tell you what you found out here:

your life matters. That is: Whatever you decide matters. Both to yourself and to others.

Ancient wisdom comprises such awareness. What you also re-discovered is the wisdom of your conscience and your heart. Even if these are human, fallible instances, your spiritual anchor tells you to not give up your commitment towards a human life in dignity.

You may recover from mistakes, and faults, you can still change your life towards leaving

a good name. It is here that you make the first steps into a new chapter of your life, all by yourself.

All you ever need you already carry with you.

Open your heart, open your mind, listen to your conscience, and be kind; patiently going step by step, day by day towards completion, leaving a good name.

Blackbird, be one and be a message of hope and courage.

Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these broken wings and learn to fly
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to arise

Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these sunken eyes and learn to see
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to be free

Blackbird fly, blackbird fly
Into the light of a dark black night
Blackbird fly, blackbird fly

Into the light of a dark black night

Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these broken wings and learn to fly
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to arise.
(Lyrics Paul Mccarthy)

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