

# Specs of the value-oriented analytical tool, called “Basic ID”, by Willem Maas Ph.D.

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Existential Analysis (Existenzanalyse) according to V. E. Frankl is a phenomenological effort to understand issues occurring within the framework of anthropology, a diagnostical tool, and the basis of Logotherapy.

The Nominal Socratic Dialogue or Basic ID exercise procedure was designed in the 1990's as an existential-analytical tool which aims at (re) mobilizing and accessing resources within a personalized, meaningful and dynamic context.

Items as nouns occurring by free association are related to the unconscious meaningful personal efforts to contribute to the individual's life efforts.

They appear to be items of particular interest to the person during the exercise.

The exercise includes 6 such nouns, which are significant to the test-person.

The test-person attributes a hierarchy to 5 of the six items, and eventually will put the items into a statement beginning with “I” by using verbs to connect the various items.

This statement is a conscious construct, representing the actual meaningful involvement of the test-person in life.

The statement then denotes the Self-perception of the test-person within a framework of meaning.

Within the statement not just resources but also social involvement will appear.

The test result shows, that the person's life orientation is neither focused on individual happiness nor on individual compensation, but that this orientation is in close contact with the nature of human reality, in fact, offers a description of how this person integrates and interacts with reality as is.

Once finished, it will offer a staircase out of the problematic emotional involvement in present crisis (the reason why the individual sought help).

Meaning orientation is the actual human energy for change, it contains the personal “yes, I do” to life. This can be verified.

The exercise of the six nominal values surrounding the Self-perception within the present individual situation is a tool, designed to verify an existential true image of the integration of personal meaning within the given reality of the individual.

The exercise is based upon Viktor Frankl's Arguments for a tragic optimism  
Frankl speaks of triads.

The self-destructive triad is identified as the combination of aggression, addiction and suicide.

This triad is a kind of psychological summary of what Frankl identified as “time spirit”, a widespread and (probably) non-conscious attitudinal pose, “infecting” the image of life of many young people.

Frankl came up with it after he spoke to a taxi driver in New York in the 1960s, on his way to a presentation he had to deliver.

Reading the daily news, one can agree to his analysis.

The fact that it is a non-conscious attitudinal pose is supported by the social reality of many people. They act aggressively, they do suffer from various addictions, be it drugs, alcohol or social media, video games or fashion.

And they kill often (each) (the) other for no reason, but frustration, anger and felt rejection.

The tragic triad is composed from suffering, guilt and loss.

Frankl derived this triad from his work, shortly after WW2.

Most people had suffered from the war, they had lost close relatives and /or home, farm, factory, work, etc.

Many felt guilty for not having opposed Nazism early enough, or because they happened to have been involved in the crimes of social nationalism, like having been drafted and forced to go into war, or even worse.

Reality is thus carrying these signs of the tragic, the nature of reality is tragedy.

We all will lose someone or become lost to someone else, death is inevitable and imminent.

We all will have “dirty hands” because life is no playing ground or Kindergarten, no pony farm. Even if one tries to avoid damages to other people or to oneself, shit happens. And thus, suffering is a part of life’s receipt.

Because either we will suffer from various causes, and we will be involved, even involuntary in the suffering of others.

These three are the characteristics of human reality.

Apart from accepting these characteristics, we all “know” about our most of the time hidden, dark sides.

The realism of existential – analysis is that we actually become aware of and accept this. Each of us is part of the reality of ourselves and of the reality of numerous others. Even the most common habits like driving a car, will leave tracks and impose damages on the environment beyond expectation.

Microscopical dust particles of break-pads and tires have even been found in polar ice probes.

Being human is at least questionable, ambiguous being. *Nihil humani alienum in nobis.*

To acknowledge this reality is a necessary presupposition for our life and work.

Being human means to exist between two poles of behavioral possibilities.

We may act *pro humano homine*, unconditionally humane, and we actually do so more often than one would expect. Insofar we act upon our true nature as the spiritual person we are, as the true Self who is unconditionally “with” the other.

We may also psychologically react, and this brings the “*nihil humani alienum in nobis*” to the level of our actual acting. In such cases we are more or less a combination of predator and parasite. We can do wrong, be cruel, be violent, even without any good reason and we can act out our hurt feelings and perverseness upon defenseless others. We can kill; however, this does not necessarily make us into

killers by nature.

Frankl found another triad, which he called the optimistic.

This triad also contains a dynamic pattern. Being unconditional a person is able to love.

Meant is the unconditional love which precedes humaneness.

It is supported by hope and confidence, that is: love is an energy that is able to change into hoping and confiding. Hoping and confiding are humane phenomena, culminating in the spiritual energy of being with the other.

Through these triads, Frankl found support for his anthropological thesis.

He recognized two basic human possibilities as the characteristics of being a person, the first one is self-distancing, and the second is self-transcending.

He also attributed here the so-called defying power of the human spirit, which enables humans to act in spite of circumstances, conditions and situations.

And parallel to this defying power of the human spirit, he defined gratitude.

Due to the tragic-optimistic "nature" of human being, the individual through self-distancing and self-transcending, through his or her "in spite of" and "thanks to", is able to escape

fate. The fate of things is that they cannot change themselves, stones have no future, they actually only have an extending past.

Trees and plants to not move from their roots, they are earth bound and have to stay wherever they became part of nature.

The fate of animals is that they cannot leave their instinct.

Humans are not things, because their future, by deciding about it, will bring change about.

Humans are no animals, because they will leave their being confined or their being undignified (robbed of their dignity, reduced to be a number, a commodity) and debased.

Frankl's psychology of the concentration camp supports this.

Stones and animal cannot be free and cannot be responsible for their freedom for the other as for themselves and for change.

Humans can, may and ought to.

Humans bring meaning into reality.

Through meaning they become what they are supposed to be, a unique Self.

"After Auschwitz we know what humans are capable of, after Hiroshima we know what is at stake"

Frankl once said.

Some critics of Logotherapy misinterpret Frankl when he speaks about the unconditional nature of the person and about the uniqueness of the spiritual person.

This occurs because the anthropological foundations of Logotherapy have been skipped due to the issues of spiritual and dimensional ontology.

We will not go into these subjects in the current paper, other than to underline that the very possibility to self-transcend relates to the third, the true humane dimension.

Logotherapists therefore regard the psychological, behavioral and biological issues of the individual client as "expressions of personal existence" rather than as disorders in the sense of DSM or ICD.

The features of Frankl's anthropology and of his logotherapy have been supported by scientific

research papers. The inner logic of Frankl's analysis is coherent and helps us to identify analytical possibilities like the nominal Socratic dialogue or Basic ID method.

The above mentioned method is non-invasive, because its goal is to enable the client's consciousness about his or her own meaning connected position within the framework of any current reality.

Such consciousness usually remains in the background of the individual perception in terms of feeling and thought, motivational, emotional and physical and social reactions.

Within a logotherapeutic framework it is by the nature of the therapeutic relationship that a client will first of all "unload" the problematic issues.

The problematic represents the possible individual variations on the tragic triad.

The specific logotherapeutic extra to the field of psychotherapy, one may also call it, the corrective, is that logotherapists are aware of the optimistic triad of the specific client.

The optimistic seems to have vanished from the lives of clients.

At least for the time being of the emotional, social and physical impact of tragic issues.

Logotherapy orients on dignity through meaning.

That is why the so-called nominal Socratic dialogue or the Basic ID exercise are designed to bring the optimistic from the background back on the stage of the individual's life.

The optimistic cannot, like meaning cannot, be prescribed or dictated by the therapist, or, for that matter, be replaced by religious truth, philosophic or political explanations and goals.

Based upon the anthropological foundations of Logotherapy, meaning is the unique personal possibility to bring change into reality.

It would be fatal to focus on the problematic.

The problems brought forward by the client actually represent the lack or loss of meaning.

In a Logotherapy setting we need to deal with this reality, although we also need to surpass it in a rather sophisticated way.

Here it is, that the exercise is introduced to the client.

He or she is not just representing a problem, which feels like having to go through a stubblefield, but he or she is also representing a harvest.

It is our task to find the shed, where that harvest has been brought to.

One way to achieve this is the use of the nominal Socratic Dialogue, or the Basic ID exercise.

We do not mention the goal of the exercise, other than mentioning that each person we know of has a specific memory of the good things in life.

Even if we cannot remember those, we are able to write down six nouns which simply come to mind.

The exercise excludes nouns referring to things we have and to people who play a role in our lives.

The client has experienced that "happiness" is one of such things, otherwise he or she would not be in therapy.

We exclude items like "parents, children, spouses, partner, house, car, boat, happiness and health".

Excluded is what can be described in terms of "having", what we need are nouns referring to what really, truly matter.

Within the framework of dimensional ontology, humans live within the bio-psycho-social situations,

however they *exist* as persons.

Existence is therefore a metaphysical, a dimension that surpasses the physical.

Losses, deprivation, problems do occur within the bio-psycho-social dimensions.

The Nominal Socratic Dialogue or the Basic ID exercise appeals to the spiritual positives within their relationship with the tragic arguments.

When integrated in one single, meaningful statement, the energy from the existential dimension will help the client to cope with and / or to overcome the present problematic issues, as he /she decides to do so.

Remark: It may very well be, that our client lost trust in life because of an apearantly hopeless situation, which is accompanied by grieve, loss, trouble, pain, problems.

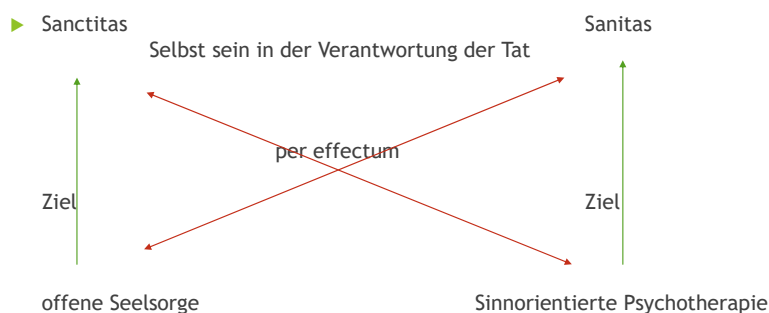
Such situations can be diagnosed in terms of disorder, or even illness.

In Logotherapy, as in its diagnostical toolkit called existential analyses, therapists are working with a kind of “informed anthropological insight”, by means of which they are sure that the unconscious spiritual person remains connected to hope of change.

It is by means of the above mentioned existential-analytical Nominal Socratic Dialogue or Basic ID, that this hope can be mobilized in order to bring change into the individual reality.

The following scheme may illustrate its effects.

## Seelsorge und /als Sinnorientierte Psychotherapie



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The above picture is a revised version of the original Franklian scheme that was first published in “Ärztliche Seelsorge” in 1946.

Neither health nor dignity are commodities, which can be delivered through third parties or bought.

They are “states of balance within a constantly changing reality”, thus, like we showed in the Nominal Socratic Dialogue, more like change agents than static arrangements.

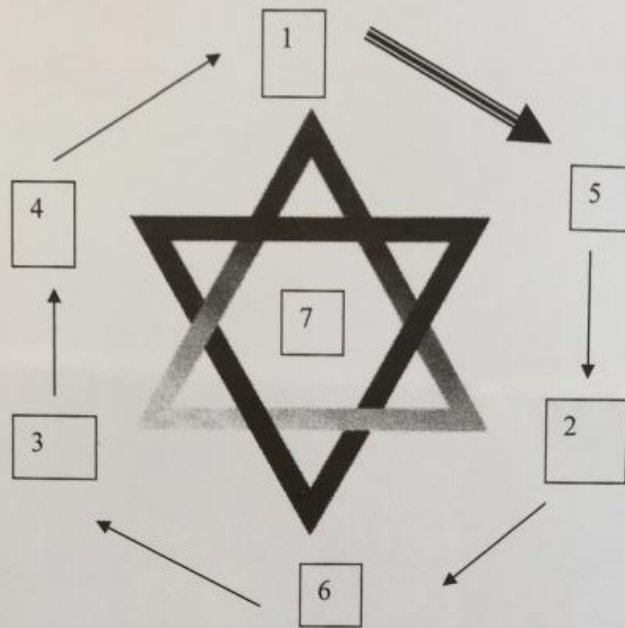
The goal of meaning oriented Psychotherapy is “sanitas”, a state of mental balance within the framework of “reality” (which includes relationships with other persons and social partners). The effect of such effort includes that the person as a responsible Self also takes care of his or her “sanctitas”, a state of integral health and dignity.

If the method is applied within pastoral care, the goal is to reevoke the consciousness of having to ennoble one’s life, due to the divine commandment and promise.

The effect of this includes the responsibility for “sanitas”, which includes the responsibility for mental, physical and socially healthy behavior.

If we as therapists would not “know” about existential hope, which is “You are, whom you can become”, there would be no need for therapy, nor would it make any sense to commit one’s time and effort.

The Specs of the “Basic ID – exercise”.



- 7: die geistige Person, der ich eigentlich bin, unbedingt, ohne wenn und aber.  
 1: Synonym für „mein unbedingtes Ja“, als die Kraftquelle, die alles in Bewegung bringt.  
 2: Synonym für „Hoffnung“.  
 3: Synonym für „Vertrauen“.  
 4: Synonym für „das Unvollendete“, „was ich (dem Leben) noch schulde“.  
 5: Synonym für „sich einsetzen für oder wegen etwas oder jemand“ (Leiden).  
 6: Synonym für „Sterblichkeit“, als die Wahrheit meiner Wirklichkeit.

Diese Dynamik zeichnet mich aus, sie zeigt wer ich bin im Hintergrund meiner Entscheidung, meiner Gefühle und mein Handeln.

Deshalb kann ich einen Satz schreiben, der mit „Ich“ anfängt, und dann alle sieben Stadien (1, 5, 2, 6, 3, 4) aufnimmt, denn diese Person bin ich wahrhaftig und wirklich in diesem Moment, wo das Leben mich fragt.

Hier finde ich meine persönliche Aufgabe, meine Mission für die ich wirklich verantwortlich bin, den gesuchten Sinn.

Die nächsten Schritte sind einfach:

Für meine Erlebniswerte (das sind die positiven Werte aus meiner Lebenserfahrung) schreibe ich jetzt zu jedes Wort aus meiner Ich-Satz drei Adjektive.

Jetzt habe ich also 18 positive Erlebniswerte, die ich geerntet und heimgefahren habe.

Für meine kreativen Werte schreibe zu jede Erlebniswert drei Verben.

Sie beschreiben, was ich tat, als einen spezifischen Erlebniswert eintraf oder zu Stande kam.

Dann finde ich die  $18 \times 3 = 54$  verschiedenen Möglichkeiten, mit der ich zu den positiven Ergebnissen gekommen bin, die Talente, die mich immer wieder zur Verfügung stehen.

- 7: the spiritual person, my unconditional existence, me, without “yes but”.
- 1: Synonym for my “unconditional yes” towards life, the power source that starts all movement and change.
- 2: Synonym for “Hope”
- 3: Synonym for “Trust”
- 4: Synonym for the incomplete, for that “what I still owe (to life, the other)”.
- 5: Synonym for “giving oneself for something or somebody else”, also “suffering”.
- 6: Synonym for “transience”, mortality, the reality of my being.

The above pictured dynamic shows me for whom I am in the background of my decisions, my feelings, my actions.

That is why I can write a line beginning with “I” , and then include all stadia (1, 5, 2, 6, 3, 4) in the right order, because this is who I truly am, my intentions for this moment, my answer to life’s situational request.

Here I do find my personal assignment, the mission statement of me being responsible for realization of the meaning I sought.

The next steps are simple.

- In order to find my true experiential values (the positive ones) I add to each word of my mission statement three adjectives.

In this way, I retrieve 18 positive experiential values, the ones I have harvested and brought home.

- In order to find my creative values, I now add to each of the 18 experiential values three verbs.

They describe what I was doing at the time the positive experiential value appeared (they are the actual companions of what I did right).

Now I have found  $18 \times 3 = 54$  different possibilities, with the help of which I may reach positive outcome, my talents that will always be available for me in my efforts.