

## Neo-Existentialism

Well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a new pattern of human endeavour is starting to emerge. This, in my view, is the preservation of the environment, and tradition, through new technologies. It appears that humanity is applying its intellectual capacities toward preserving nature.

The 1990s-- the “decade of the brain”--was devoted to research in neuroscience, whereby reductionism of the spiritual-, and psychological, to mere physiology were common.

After the modern-, and post-modern times of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 21st century is an era of Neo-existentialism. This new-existentialism is characterized by a new philosophy of being, which attempts to introduce experimentation to validate its hypotheses.

Nowadays, we are coming to realize, that although mental and spiritual experiences have a physical correlate in the areas of the brain, this does not explain the complexity of life.

First of all, the brain processes information at distant areas, at the same time, within an individual person. This gives the individual the experience of the moment.

Second, the question of the meaning of life has not been answered by neuroscience, or by psychology, alone.

The new purpose of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to preserve the environment and life doesn't have a correlate with any brain function, as it belongs to a collective of people, or society in general, rather than to an individual.

Thus, when it comes to the question of where the responsibility to preserve life and the environment comes from, it would be difficult to understand that this purpose came from WITHIN human beings, given the fact that this is a purpose for ANY form of life--and not for human beings alone--and it was there, BEFORE their existence. This particular purpose was present since the time life started in the Universe, and human beings have only been able to acknowledge it through their conscience, in the form of a spiritual experience.

With respect to the intellectual faculties of human beings, and how these are put to the service to life, there is an element of consciousness (or awareness) and freedom to do so. This elevates the capacity of human beings to a spiritual dimension (conscienciousness), in searching for meaning, or finding life purposeful through one's own experience.

Such spirituality belongs to a dimension beyond the physiological-, and the psychological domains. Experimental observation can demonstrate its presence, but doesn't explain its origin.

As stated earlier, the meaning of life was already there before human beings were capable of grasping it, and once it reached consciousness, they had the freedom to accept it.

Philosophically, or through rational thinking, there is a perception that the purpose of life comes from a spiritual being that is greater than the Universe, and points to the existence of God. From the acceptance of God derives the possibility that human beings can have a relationship with God--which dynamics belongs to the domain of theology and religion.

In the area of mental health, spirituality is currently explored with the introduction of spiritual meditation (mindfulness) into cognitive therapy, and the finding that the “way of being”--or the way in which we experience our lives--is what is most important to preserve good physical and mental health.

It would be a disservice to all the people who rely on their spiritual life, to reduce it to mental-, or physiological dimensions, and not to incorporate the spiritual dimension in the context of their therapy, aiming at preserving, or enhancing their mental, or physical well being.

Among the humanistic-existential theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Logotherapy (Meaning-oriented Therapy) incorporates cognitive-, and behavioural concepts and techniques, in addition to ways of helping people find meaning in their lives, through creative, experiential and attitudinal values, in any life circumstances, at a personal level.

Early evidence for the validity of this approach comes from the experience that a spiritually neutral solution to problems, or task, is much poorer, or less effective, than introducing an element of purpose, such as the preservation of life, and the environment. --These are general values which have concrete implications to specific life situations, for example in the case of suicide prevention.

Neo-existentialism places emphasis on validating the spiritual dimension of humanity through experimental research. This would mean, that when we observe a manifestation of spirituality, we can no longer reduce it to the mere physiological-, or psychological events and deny its presence. Neo-existentialism is open to the spiritual reality, and to finding evidence for it through experimental research.

In this new context, Logotherapy can offer guidance in realizing a new purpose through using new technologies to the service of preservation of life, and the environment: (1) through creative values--developing new technologies and bringing people together with expertise in different areas; (2) through experiential values—observing the results of specific interventions and the beauty of blending technology with what is already there in nature; and (3) through attitudinal values--taking a stand toward the preservation of life in all circumstances, and the prevention of the deterioration of the environment.