



## **„...Nevertheless Say YES to Life“**

Literary Collage from the groundbreaking works of  
**Viktor Frankl**

Austrian psychiatrist, Holocaust survivor, founder of the Viennese school of logotherapy

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In the 1920s, Viktor Frankl (1905 - 1997) founded the "Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy", the so-called logotherapy or existential analysis. In his approach to therapy he focused on meaning and value. Having survived the Holocaust as the only one of his immediate family, Frankl reflected upon his experiences in the concentration camps in his famous book *Man's Search for Meaning* which has become one of the ten most influential books in the United States of America. Lesser known is his play *Synchronization in Birkenwald: A Metaphysical Conference*, which he wrote in 1946. On the occasion of Frankl's 85th birthday in 1990, Gregorij von Leitis, Founding Artistic Director of Elysium, presented the American premiere of this play in New York.

Soon after the Holocaust, Frankl advocated for reconciliation as the only way out of the destructive catastrophe of war. The experience of meaning even while suffering, and reconciliation with oneself and with the world as a precondition for healing the world and society: those aspects of Frankl's work are more important than ever in today's broken world.

Viktor Frankl was born in Vienna in 1905 into a Jewish family. He studied medicine and later became a neurologist and psychiatrist. In his early formative years he was in close contact with Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler, but later diverged from Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's individual psychology. In his own approach, the logotherapy, Frankl accentuated the importance of meaning and value. A year before Hitler's invasion of Austria, Frankl opened his own private practice. But right after the "Anschluss" he was immediately prohibited from treating "Aryan" patients. In 1940, Frankl became the head of neurology at the Rothschild hospital, Vienna's last remaining hospital, where Jewish patients could be treated. There he did everything in his power to sabotage the Nazi euthanasia program. He could have gotten a US-visa, but he didn't want to leave his parents behind alone in Vienna.

On September 25, 1942, he, his wife Tilly Grosser and his parents were deported to Theresienstadt. His parents and his wife perished in the Holocaust. On October 19, 1944 Frankl was deported to Auschwitz. On April 27, 1945 he was liberated by the US-army in Türkheim, a satellite camp of Dachau.

After having endured three years of suffering in the concentration camp he returned to Vienna and lectured about his own approach to psychological healing, validating his thesis, that even in the most painful and dehumanizing situation, life has potential meaning. Frankl published more than 39 books which have been translated into 40 languages. He lectured all over the world, and several times was invited as a visiting professor to leading American universities. Viktor Frankl died in 1997.

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