Slide 1

Hello, everyone! My name is Egor. As you know, I’m the third year student of DREC MIPT. In today’s talk I’m planning to give a short-lecture about logotherapy. Logotherapy is a branch of existential psychotherapy, developed by Hungarian psychologist Victor Frankl, which is intended to help people to find their own meaning and to realise it.

There are several reasons, why I have decided to choose this topic.

Firstly, after I firstly have read the main Frankl’s work “Man’s search for meaning”, I was deeply amazed with the ideas of logotherapy. This work seriously influenced on my worldview and I want to share these ideas with you.

Secondly, as Frankl said repeatedly, each time needs its own psychotherapy, and in 21 century society of material wealth existential problems are becoming most pressing, what’s why this information might be relevant for you.

This lecture is divided into 2 parts parts:

1. Biography of Victor Frankl and history of logotherapy creation
2. Main logotherapy ideas, including Frankl’s relation to life, death and love.

I must warn you that the lecture will not be the easiest to grasp, this information can be new for you also. You will probably have a lot of questions. To not accumulate these questions, raise your hands and then ask like you do it during seminars and lectures.

Slide 2 (Frankl’s biography)

Frankl was born in Hungrary. There is no doubt, this country can be named as “The birthplace of psychotherapy”, since is the homeland of two influential physcologists Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler. He will become the owner of the third psychotherapeutic school eventually, after Freud and Adler. In the early age he was a participant of Freud’s psychoanalytic school and Adler’s individual psychology school.

Having studied these two branches, he came to conslution, that Freud’s and Adler’s theories of personality don’t give full description of human’s inner world. To understand the reasons of Frankl’s rejection, let’s find out, what is the main idea of any of these doctrines.

Freud taught, that the only driving force of the person is sexual libido, so he reduce all personality motivation to satisfaction of sexual needs. Along with what, he consider a person as a irrational being, whose consciousness is extremely limited. He didn’t consider ethical and moral sides of human being at all. This is not surprising, since Freud worked only with deeply neurotic individuals.

Alder was Freud apprentice and his theory is similar to Freud psychoanalysis in many ways. However, he was sure, that the main human’s force is attraction to power, to be the first. He is the creator of the well-known term “inferiority complex”. According to Adler, every person from birth has a sense of inferiority, which he seeks to compensate by performing various actions in society. Those who fail on this path develop an inferiority complex.

Frankl noted that these theories do not take into account the most human need - the desire for meanings and their implementation. Freud and Adler consider man as a closed system, the whole meaning of whose existence is reduced to maintaining homeostasis in balance, by satisfying sexual needs and cravings for power. From Frankl’s point of view, a person is an open system that searches for meanings in the external world and implements them. For such views, he was subsequently expelled from both schools of psychology.

Slide 3 (Frankl in concentration camps)

The most dramatic part of Viktor Frankl's life took place in imprisonment - in German concentration camps. He had the opportunity to leave on a visa to the United States, where promising career opportunities were already open to him, but he refused, and stayed with his family, sharing the fate with them. Subsequently, Frankl will write an article "A psychologist in a concentration camp", where he described the life of Auschwitz and the psychological portrait of the prisoner. It is noteworthy that even during his imprisonment, Frankl provided psychotherapeutic assistance and wrote scientific articles. During his imprisonment, he noticed that Freud was wrong when he said that people in a state of hunger would behave the same way, since he did not consider the value-volitional qualities of a person. Frankl's observations completely dispelled these misconceptions, showing that everyone behaves differently in concentration camps, with most becoming pigs, and only a few becoming saints.

Thus, Frankl's theory was confirmed in practice - a person is essentially a strong-willed spiritual being who has free will in making decisions, and is responsible for their consequences. Now let's look at the main provisions of logotherapy.

Slide 4 (Logotherapy principles)

Einstein once wrote: "A person who considers his life meaningless is not only unhappy, he is hardly fit for life at all." A person always has a tension between what "I am" and what "I should become", between reality and the ideal, between being and meaning. Meaning is always ahead of being. It directs the course of events. The drives push us, and the meaning pulls and gives direction.

The meaning is relative, since we are talking about a specific person. But Frankl prefers to talk not about the relativity of meaning, but about its uniqueness. Each person has his own meaning. According to Frankl, the meaning is discovered, not invented. Each situation has only one meaning — its true meaning, and it may not coincide with social ideals. There is no escaping from making decisions. It is better to learn to accept them.

Frankl notes that traditions are collapsing, universal values are falling, and new ones are not being created. Therefore, an increasing number of people are being covered by an existential vacuum. Now the task of education is to develop the ability to make independent decisions. When the Ten Commandments begin to lose their significance, a person must learn to listen to the ten thousand commandments contained in the unique situations that make up his life. And in this he can rely only on himself. You have to rely on your mind and on your conscience. But reason is not omniscient, and conscience can be mistaken. And if there is no way to calculate, it is better to rely on your conscience.

Slide 5(The meaning of life)

First of all, Frankl raises the question of the meaning of life. Explicitly or implicitly, this question worries every person. From the point of view of logotherapy, there is no "life task at all", just as there is no better move in chess. It is necessary to do not "the best", but "the best that you are capable of in this situation". Spiritual problems cannot be described as symptoms. They are not symptoms, but a virtue that expresses the level of meaning achieved by the patient. This is especially true for people who have lost a loved one to whom they have devoted their lives. These people lose their spiritual core and cause special pity. Without it, a person is unable to resist the blows of fate in difficult periods of life. If a person cannot come up with arguments in favor of life, then sooner or later he has thoughts of suicide. Ask yourself the question why you are not thinking about suicide, and you will find the meaning of your existence.

Of course, you can temporarily take a "vacation" from your daily duties and forget yourself, for example, in alcohol. But then life will still claim its rights. If a person forgets the goal and gets carried away with the means, he has a "weekend neurosis" — a feeling of emptiness of his own life.

The pursuit of happiness in itself cannot be the meaning of human existence. A person who strives for happiness, by his very zeal to it cuts off his way to happiness. Any object is attractive, until you began to possess it. For example, the attractiveness of a sexual partner exists as long as a person is in a state of sexual arousal. After the weakening of this feeling, it begins to seem that the partner has lost attractiveness or even never had it.

It is necessary to show the patient that the position of a person, his profession means absolutely nothing. The crucial thing is how he works, copes with his range of responsibilities.

Frankl calls the values that are realized in productive actions "creative". In addition to creative values, there are values that are realized in experiences. These are the "values of experience". They manifest themselves in reverence for works of art. The greatness of life is determined by the greatness of the moment. After all, the height of a mountain range is determined not by the height of the valley, but by the size of the highest peak. In the same way, life peaks determine the meaningfulness of all life. And a single event can retroactively fill all the preceding with meaning.

The third category of values refers to the factors that limit a person's life. These are "relationship values". The way he carries the cross, the courage that he shows in suffering, the virtue that he expresses when he is convicted and doomed — all this is a measure of how much he has taken place as a person. By the way, the way a person behaves in illness also shows what kind of person he is.

Frankl comes to the conclusion that a person's life can never be meaningless in its essence. And while consciousness has not left a person, he is constantly obliged to realize values until the last moment of his existence. And even if he has few opportunities for this, the values of the relationship remain always available to him.

Frankl gave such an example.

The dying patient was paralyzed and unable to act, but he read and enjoyed music. And when even this became unavailable to him, he comforted the sick people in hospital. On the day of his death, which he learned about after overhearing a conversation between doctors, he asked his sister to give an injection in the evening so as not to disturb her at night.

Slide 6(The meaning of death)

Death also makes sense.

If we were immortal, we could safely postpone our affairs for any time, which would make life worthless. Unfortunately, many people, especially neurotics, behave like immortal gods, postponing their affairs. But in the face of death, we must use the time allocated to us as much as possible. Only then life become meaningful. The meaning of human life is based on the principle of the irreversibility of existence. This idea should be brought to the patient so that he takes responsibility for his life.

At first, life is an untouched "material", but then it unfolds, and the "material" becomes less and less. It turns into"clothes". These are our actions, experience. It’s all that we have accumulated on the path of life. And if there is none of this, then the "material" has disappeared irrevocably-it has gone to rags.

Another analogy is drawn by Frankl. A person is like a sculptor who sculpts his life out of stone. And you should act as a sculptor does. He tries to see already in the stone what can be made of it so that there is less waste. In addition, a person does not know how much time he has been allowed. You should not hurry, but you should not stand idle either. It doesn't matter if the work is not completed. It is important what quality it is.

Look at this structure. This is the Sagrada Familia, the famous cathedral in Barcelona. The great Architect Antonio Gaudi did not have time to finish it, and even now the work continues. But despite the incompleteness of this work of art, it is one of the greatest in the whole world.

Slide 7(The meaning of love)

Frankl considers love as an area where it is easy to realize the values of experience. He defines love as the experience of another person in all its originality and uniqueness. The Greeks had about 10 different definitions of love. This fact reflects the diversity of this concept. Let's try to figure out what Frankl means by this.

According to Frankl, there are three layers of personality — physical, mental and spiritual. There are also three possible ways to relate to a person. The most primitive approach applies to the outer layer: this is a sexual attitude. The physical data of a person has a sexual arousal that causes sexual attraction to a partner.

The erotic attitude is one step higher. It is deeper than sexual. Eroticism already enter into the mental sphere of a person. Such an attitude is considered as a strong passion, because in this case we are also passionate about the mental virtues of the partner — the traits of temperament and character.

But an erotic attitude does not enter into the heart of another person. This happens at the third level: at the level of love itself. Love is the final stage of an erotic relationship, as it enters deeply into the personal organization of the partner. Love is entering into a relationship with another person as a spiritual being. The spiritual closeness of the partners seems to Frankl to be the highest achievable form of partnership.

With physical, as well as with erotic attraction, infidelity is guaranteed. And only true love is the guarantee of constancy. Thus, love is something more than an emotional state; love is an action that is directed at the essence of another person. As for this essence, it does not depend on existence. That is why love survives the death of a loved one; in this sense, love is stronger than death. The existence of a loved one can be terminated by death, but his essence does not die.

Frankl warns of the danger of overestimating the importance of beauty for erotic love, since in this case a person is devalued as such. There is something offensive in this, when a woman is characterized as beautiful. A high score in a low category suggests that there is a low score in a higher one. It should be emphasized that when sexuality overtake eroticism then easy pleasure absorbs all interests and slows down the development of personality. That is why Frankl is sure that sexual life is contraindicated for young people who have matured physiologically, but have not matured psychosexually.