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Title

Ikigai and Logotherapy: Parallel paths to meaning

Abstract for

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Abstract

The concepts of ikigai, as developed by Mieko Kamiya, and logotherapy, as formulated by Viktor Frankl, represent two profound approaches to understanding human motivation and the search for meaning in life. Although they originated in different cultural contexts, these theories share remarkable similarities in their core principles and therapeutic applications.

Mieko Kamiya, often referred to as the "mother of Ikigai psychology", introduced the concept of Ikigai in her seminal 1966 work, *Ikigai-ni-Tsuite (On Ikigai)*. Kamiya's research, based largely on her work with leprosy patients, led her to define ikigai as both a source of meaning and a state of mind associated with a sense of purpose. She emphasised that ikigai is deeply personal and can vary greatly from one individual to another.

Similarly, Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, developed in the crucible of his experiences in Nazi concentration camps, posits that the primary motivating force in humans is the search for meaning. Frankl argued that life has meaning in all circumstances and that our primary motivation for living is our will to find that meaning.

Both theories share a forward-looking perspective. Kamiya noted that ikigai involves a clear sense of attitude towards the future and is strongly linked to one's personal values. Frankl's logotherapy also emphasises the importance of finding meaning not only in the present but also in future goals and aspirations.

An important parallel between ikigai and logotherapy is the emphasis on individual responsibility and choice. Kamiya's concept of ikigai encourages the individual to find his or her own path to fulfilment, whereas Frankl's logotherapy emphasises 'freedom of will' - the idea that the individual is free to choose his or her response to life's circumstances.

Both approaches also recognise the therapeutic value of self-transcendence. Kamiya's research found that ikigai is often associated with a connection to something greater than oneself, while Frankl emphasised the importance of self-transcendence in finding meaning through relationships and social contributions.

Interestingly, Kamiya referred directly to Frankl's work in her writings, drawing parallels between ikigai-kan (the sense of ikigai) and Frankl's "sense of meaning". This cross-cultural dialogue demonstrates the universal nature of the search for meaning that transcends cultural and individual differences.

The importance of these theories to contemporary psychology and wellbeing practice cannot be overstated. As society grapples with issues of mental health, personal fulfilment and existential crises, the insights of Ikigai and Logotherapy provide a valuable framework for understanding and addressing these challenges.

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