

The Categorical Values

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Frankl recognizes three ways in which meaning is discovered; these are known as the *categorical values* or, less frequently, the *meaning triad*. They are the creative value, the experiential value, and the attitudinal value. The *creative value* encompasses all acts that give something to life that would not otherwise exist. The creative value may be actualized through work, through hobbies, or through doing good deeds. The *experiential value* includes all experiences of truth and beauty discovered in the world as well as all loving encounters with other human beings. The experiential value may be actualized through nature, art, dance, music, literature, and through relationships of love and acceptance. To illustrate these values Frankl recalls a suicidal companion in a concentration camp who thought that there was nothing more that he could ask of life. Frankl reversed the question by asking the man if life still demanded something of him. The man replied that he had been writing a series of books that had not yet been finished and that he had family members in another country that would be waiting for him if he survived; in other words, he replied with creative and experiential values. However, the *attitudinal value* is considered by Frankl to be superior to both the creative and experiential values. The attitudinal value is actualized through the stance taken toward unavoidable suffering. If one chooses bravery over cowardice, mercy over revenge, or justice over appeasement, then the attitudinal value has been actualized. A meaningful life is a life in which these values are actualized to the greatest possible degree.¹

¹ Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 70; Frankl, *The Feeling of Meaninglessness*, 118; Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 111, 112-115, 141-142.