

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the modern era, visual media have become one of the most powerful tools to communicate ideas, tell stories, and explore human experiences. One of the most popular forms of visual storytelling today is the television series. According to Mittell (2015), a television series is “a dynamic narrative form that develops characters, settings, and themes over time through a series of episodes and seasons.” Through this episodic structure, a serial offers the opportunity to explore psychological and emotional journeys in greater depth; serial storylines are more varied, inspiring, and entertaining than a single movie.

Every human being basically has the urge to find meaning in his or her life. When this meaning is not found or feels lost, a person can experience existential emptiness, a condition in which life feels empty, meaningless, and directionless. This phenomenon is becoming increasingly relevant in modern life, where stress, loss, and suffering often raise questions about the purpose of one's existence. One existential psychology approach that specifically addresses this is logotherapy, developed by Viktor E. Frankl.

Victor Emil Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist and Nazi concentration camp survivor, asserted that the search for meaning is the primary motivation for human life. He believed that although suffering is unavoidable, humans still have the freedom to

choose their attitude towards their suffering. Frankl's experience in a concentration camp, where he lost his entire family but still found meaning to survive, became the basis of logotherapy theory. Logotherapy views that meaning can be found through three main values: experiential value, attitudinal value, and creative value.

In the field of literature and film studies, the logotherapy approach opens up space to analyze fictional characters who face a crisis of meaning and how they seek a way out of their suffering. One contemporary work that represents this theme is the Netflix drama series *After Life* by Ricky Gervais, which was released in 2019. The series follows the life of Tony, a journalist who lost his wife to cancer. The loss leaves him trapped in the emptiness of life, harboring the desire to end his life, and withdrawing from the social world. However, over time, he begins to experience a change in attitude that leads to the search and discovery of a new meaning of life.

The researcher chose the *After Life* series as the object of research because the narrative and psychological development of the characters reflect logotherapy concepts in a real and touching way. The selection of logotherapy theory is based on its high relevance to the main theme in the series, which is the struggle of a human being in facing suffering and finding meaning in his life. Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the existential dynamics experienced by Tony and how the principles of logotherapy can explain his recovery process psychologically and philosophically.

Throughout the *After Life* series, the author tries to understand the journey of the main character, Tony, in searching for the meaning of life after the death of his wife

through the perspective of Logotherapy theory and how Tony's character as the main character in the series, is implemented when facing a meaning of life crisis. This study aims to analyze how Tony's experiences in *After Life* align with the core ideas of Logotherapy, specifically how he faces suffering, navigates existential emptiness, and ultimately searches for the meaning of life, as well as to understand the characterization of how Tony's personality is formed and developed. By understanding Tony's character deeply and fully, the understanding of his process of searching for the meaning of life can be more comprehensive.

1.2 Limitation of the Problem

This study focuses on Tony Johnson's journey to search for meaning in life, the main character in the series *After Life*, created by Ricky Gervais. This study particularly emphasizes the three core concepts of Logotherapy: the will to meaning, existential vacuum, and the three paths to finding meaning—through creative values, experiential values, and attitudinal values. The discussion also examines Tony's character and characterization as part of the analysis. This study is limited to Season 1 and Season 2 of the series. Other characters, side plots, and psychological approaches beyond Logotherapy are not the main focus of this study.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the explanation above, some questions can be formulated as follows:

1. How is the main character and his characterization in the series *After Life*?

2. How does the main character go through the process of searching for meaning in life from the perspective of Logotherapy?

1.4 Research Objective

Based on the Research Question, some Objectives of the Research can be formulated as follows:

1. To examine the depiction of the main character and characterization in the series *After Life*.
2. To examine the main character's process of searching for meaning in life from the perspective of Logotherapy.

