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## **Book review: Eger, E. (2017). *The Choice: Even in hell hope can flower.* London UK: Ebury Pub.**

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In 1944, the year of my birth, 16-year-old Edith Eger was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp. In 2017 Edith writes that "... in my ninety years of life I have never felt so blessed and grateful – or so young! Thank you".

The relevance of *The Choice* to Living Theory research is that it is a story of a lifetime's learning with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Eger writes:

What happened can never be forgotten and can never be changed. But over time I learned that I can choose how to respond to the past. I can be miserable, or I can be hopeful – I can be depressed, or I can be happy. We always have that choice, that opportunity for control. *I'm here, this is now*, I have learned to tell myself, over and over until the panicky feeling begins to ease. (p. 7).

The hope at the heart of *The Choice* is accompanied by a flow of life-affirming energy connected to Edith's love of dance. *The Choice* describes experiences in which resilience, hope and courage, are held together with appalling experiences that negate the values that carry hope for humanity. *The Choice* also explains, in a self-reflexive process, the learning of how to respond to the past in a way that clarifies and communicates the values that carry hope. She continues:

And here you are. Here you are! In the sacred present. I can't heal you – or anyone – but I can celebrate your choice to dismantle the prison in your mind, brick by brick. You can't change what happened, you can't change what you did or what was done to you. But you can choose how you live *now*.

My precious, you can choose to be free. (p. 360).

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Edit Eger lives in a way that shows that the human capacity to choose what you do with what is happening can lead to the discovery of hope in hopelessness and to discovering an answer where there doesn't seem to be one.

I know that most of our experiences in life, as we generate our living-educational-theories, cannot be compared to Auschwitz in which some 1.1 million people died during the four-and-a-half years of its existence; one million of them were Jewish men, women and children. However, Edith Eger's response to what happened to her with her focus on the centrality of choice, in learning how to respond to the past, has a resonance with the choice of personal knowledge in generating a living-educational-theory. I am thinking of our choices in responding to the recognition of Polanyi's (1958) "... the crippling mutilations imposed by an objectivist framework." (p. 381) and of our choice "... to understand the world from our point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising our personal judgement responsibly with universal intent." (p. 327).

I do recommend *The Choice* to Living Theory researchers as it explains Edith Eger's educational influences in her own learning and in the learning of others, with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity, as she responds to the direst of human experiences imaginable.

## References

Polanyi, M. (1958) *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.