

VIKTOR E. FRANKL

LOGOTHERAPY APPROACH TO PERSONALITY

Founder of the third school of Viennese psychiatry, Viktor E. Frankl was born on March 26, 1905, and educated at the University of Vienna where he received his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees, the former in 1930 and the latter in 1949. The World War II years found him in several concentration camps, out of which materialized his *From Death-Camp to Existentialism* in 1959, revised in 1962 as *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*. His speciality since 1936 has been neurology and psychiatry, and since the post-war years he has enjoyed a long tenure as Head of the Department of Neurology at the Poliklinik Hospital at Vienna and as Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Vienna.

In recent years, Frankl has been writing extensively and lecturing at universities throughout the world, especially in the United States, where he spent the 1970-1973 school seasons at the Institute of Logotherapy at the United States International University and the summer of 1972 at Duquesne University. Prior to that time he offered courses at Harvard and Southern Methodist.

Although Frankl is quite fluent in English, having written a number of books and numerous papers in English, most of his books are in German and have not as yet been translated. His first article was published at the age of nineteen at Freud's invitation in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. His first book to appear in English, *Arztliche Seelsorge*, appeared under the title *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (1955; revised, 1965). The book was more than an autobiography; it enunciated the principles of logotherapy. Though Frankl minimizes his concentra-

tion camp experiences of three years duration, those experiences serve for many as credentials of his logotherapeutic theory of personality. Speaking of them, Gordon W. Allport exclaimed: "How could he—every possession lost, every value destroyed, suffering from hunger, cold and brutality, hourly expecting extermination—how could he find life worth preserving? A psychiatrist who personally faced such extremities is a psychiatrist worth listening to." These words by Allport serve as part of the Preface to Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, the best of the autobiographies by the founder of logotherapy. That work includes as well a précis of logotherapy. In 1967 his most widely quoted papers were gathered and published as *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, and two years later an updated version of his views on personality appeared in integrated form under the title *The Will to Meaning* (1969). In 1975, he revised as well as translated his *The Unconscious God*, a work emphasizing his humanistic approach to personality.

One of the most articulate spokesmen for the humanistic theory of personality, Frankl has been in the forefront championing humanistic psychology. Though sympathetic to existentialism and one of the first psychologists to use that term in a psychological context, he is more than an existential psychologist because of his emphasis on optimism, rationality, and meaningfulness in opposition to pessimism, cynicism, irrationality, nihilism, and meaninglessness. The humanistic emphasis of Frankl exceeds even that of Maslow and is readily seen and appreciated in his concepts: unique meanings, meaning-universals or values, noëtic dimension of man, will to meaning, freedom of will, existential frustration, existential neurosis, in addition to *logotherapy*, which means therapy through meaning. His personality theory will challenge others with its adherence to "tension" and refreshingly new concepts such as existential vacuum, self-transcendence, the tragic triad, and the meaning of life. His repertoire of contributions would extend considerably if those related to psychotherapy were included, such as paradoxical intention, dereflexion, and logodrama. Ideas in his mind germinate viably.

THREE PREMISES OF LOGOTHERAPY: FREEDOM OF WILL, WILL TO MEANING, MEANING OF LIFE¹

Insofar as logotherapy is concerned its concept of man is based on three pillars: (1) freedom of will; (2) will to meaning; and (3) meaning of

¹"The Concept of Man in Logotherapy," *Journal of Existentialism*, VI (1965), from pp. 53-55.

life. They are opposed to those three principles which characterize the bulk of current approaches to man, namely, (1) pan-determinism, as I am used to calling it; (2) homeostasis theory; and (3) reductionism, an approach, that is, which—rather than taking a human phenomenon at its face value—traces it back to sub-human phenomena.

Pan-determinism accounts for the fact that the majority of psychologists are preferring either “the machine model,” or “the rat model.” As to the first, I deem it to be remarkable a fact that man, as long as he regarded himself as a creature, interpreted his existence in the image of God, his creator; but as soon as he started considering himself as a creator, henceforth interpreted his existence merely in the image of his own creation, the machine, that is to say, along the lines of LaMettrie’s book “*L’homme Machine*.” Now we may understand how justified Stanley J. Rowland, Jr. was in contending that “the major chasm” is not “between religion and psychiatry” but rather “between those who” take “a methodological and mechanistic approach and those who” take “an existential approach, with special emphasis on the question of life’s meaning.”

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Because if one continues teaching young people that man is nothing but the battleground of the clashing claims of personality aspects such as id, ego and superego, or if one continues preaching that man is nothing but the victim of conditions and determinants, be they biological, psychological or sociological in nature and origin, we cannot expect our students to behave like free and responsible beings. They rather become what they are taught to be, i.e., a set of mechanisms. Thus a pan-deterministic indoctrination makes young people increasingly susceptible of manipulation.

Is this to imply that I deny that man is subject to conditions and determinants? How could this be possible? After all, I am a neurologist and psychiatrist and as such, of course, I am fully aware of the extent to which man is not at all free from conditions and determinants. But apart from being a worker in two fields (neurology and psychiatry) I am a survivor of four camps, that is, concentration camps, and as such I bear witness of the inestimable extent to which man, although he is never free from conditions and determinants, is always free to take a stand to whatever he might have to face. Although he may be conditioned and determined, he is never fully determined, he is not pan-determined.

Man’s intrinsically human capacity to take a stand to whatever may confront him includes his capacity to choose his attitude toward himself, more specifically, to take a stand to his own somatic and psychic conditions and determinants. By so doing, however, he also rises above the level of somatic and psychic phenomena and thereby opens up a dimension of its own, the dimension of those phenomena which, in an at least heuristic contradistinction to the somatic and psychic ones, are termed

noëtic phenomena, or, as I am used to calling this dimension, the noölogical dimension. Man passes this dimension whenever he is reflecting upon himself—or rejecting himself; whenever he is making himself an object—or making objections to himself; whenever he displays his being conscious of himself—or whenever he exhibits his being conscientious. Indeed, conscience presupposes the distinctly human capacity to rise above oneself in order to judge and evaluate one's own deeds in moral terms. And this is certainly something which is not accessible to a beast. A dog which has wet the carpet may well slink under the couch with its tail between the legs; but this is no manifestation of conscience but rather the expression of fearful expectation of punishment and, thus, might well be the result of conditioning processes.

By opening up the noölogical dimension man becomes capable of putting a distance between himself and his own biological and psychological make-up. In logotherapy, we speak of the specifically human capacity of self-detachment. This quality, however, not only enables a human being victoriously to overcome himself in a heroic way but also empowers him to deal with himself in an ironic way. In fact, humor also falls under the category of definitely human phenomena and qualities. After all, no beast is capable of laughing.

In logotherapy, both the capacity of self-detachment and a sound sense of humor are being utilized in the form of a specifically logotherapeutic technique which is called paradoxical intention. The patient is, then, encouraged to do, or wish to happen, the very things he fears.

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Definition of Logotherapy

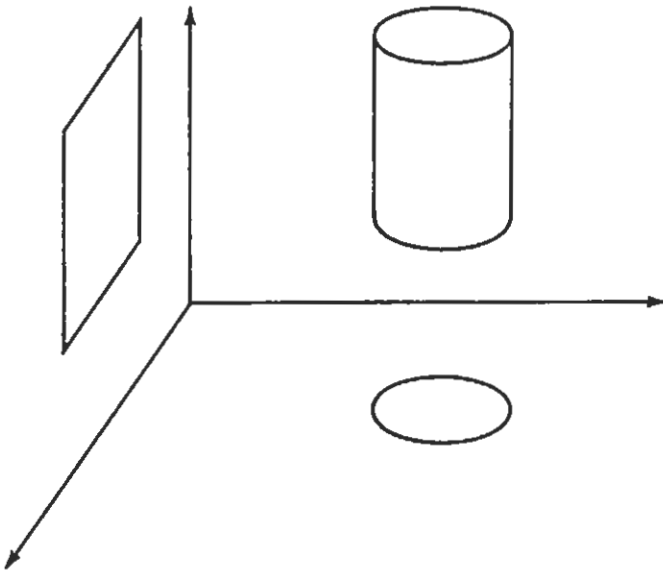
In context with logotherapy, *logos* means meaning as well as spirit. Spirit, however, is not conceived with a religious connotation but rather in the sense of noëtic phenomena or the noölogical dimension. By making therapeutic use of a noëtic phenomenon such as man's capacity of self-detachment, paradoxical intention is logotherapy at its best.

Once more the noölogical dimension was mentioned; but what was the reason that I spoke of a dimension rather than a stratum? Conceiving of man in terms of strata, for example, along the lines of the concepts propounded by Nicolai Hartmann and Max Scheler would disregard and neglect what I should like to call human coexistence of anthropological wholeness and unity on the one hand and ontological differences on the other hand; or, as Thomas Aquinas put it, the "*unitas multiplex*" quality of existence. By anthropological wholeness and unity I mean that man is not composed of somatic, psychic and noëtic components; while by ontological differences I wish to indicate that the somatic, psychic and noëtic modes of being are qualitatively rather than quantitatively different from

each other. This coexistence of both unity and multiplicity in man is taken into account by an anthropological theory which I have developed in logotherapy and called dimensional ontology.

Two Laws of Dimensional Ontology

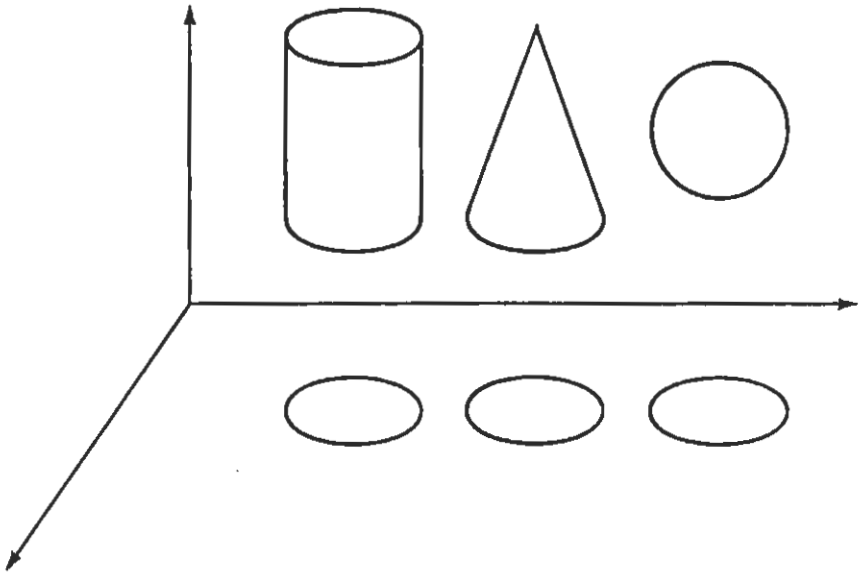
There are two laws of dimensional ontology. Its first law reads: One and the same thing projected into different dimensions lower than its own, yields contradictory pictures.



Imagine a cylinder, say, a cup. Projected out of its three-dimensional space down into the horizontal and vertical two-dimensional planes it yields in the first case a circle and in the second one a rectangle. These pictures contradict one another. What is even more important, the cup is an open vessel contrary to the circle which is a closed figure. Another contradiction.

Let us proceed to the second law of dimensional ontology which reads: Different things projected into one and the same dimension lower than their own, yield ambiguous pictures.

Imagine a cylinder, a cone and a sphere. The shadows they cast upon the horizontal plane depict them as three circles which are indiscriminate, interchangeable and ambiguous inasmuch as we cannot infer whether they belong to a cylinder, a cone or a sphere.



HUMAN MOTIVATION: UNIQUE MEANINGS AND MEANING-UNIVERSALS (VALUES)²

Meaning is relative inasmuch as it is related to a specific person who is entangled in a specific situation. One could say that meaning differs in two respects: first, from man to man, and second, from day to day—indeed, from hour to hour. It is true that if I read a speech, the situation unites me and my audience. But the meaning of the situation is still different. Our tasks are different. They have to listen. I have to talk.

To be sure, I, for one, would prefer to speak of uniqueness rather than relativity. Uniqueness, however, holds not only for a situation but also for life as a whole since life after all is a chain of unique situations. Thus, man is unique in terms of both existence and essence. He is unique in that, in the final analysis, he cannot be replaced. And his life is unique in that no one can repeat it.

There is, therefore, no such thing as a universal meaning of life, but only the unique meaning of individual situations. However, we must not forget that among these situations there are also situations which have something in common, and consequently there are also meanings which are shared by human beings throughout society and, even more, throughout history. Rather than being related to unique situations these meanings refer to the human condition. And these meanings are what is understood

²“What Is Meant by Meaning,” *Journal of Existentialism*, VII (1966), from pp. 21-23.

by values. So that one may define values as those meaning-universals which crystallize in the typical situations a society—humanity—has to face.

By values or meaning-universals man's search for meaning is alleviated inasmuch as, at least in typical situations, he is spared making decisions. But, alas, he has also to pay for this relief and benefit. For, in contrast to the unique meanings pertaining to unique situations, it may well be that two values collide with one another. And, as is well known, value collisions are mirrored in the human psyche in the form of value conflicts, and as such play an important part in the formation of noögenic neurosis.

Let us imagine that the unique meanings referring to unique situations are points, while values or meaning-universals are circles. It is understandable that two values may well overlap with one another whereas this cannot happen to unique meanings. But we must ask ourselves whether two values can really collide with one another, in other words, whether their analogy with two-dimensional circles is appropriate. Would it not be more adequate to compare values with three-dimensional spheres? Two three-dimensional spheres projected out of the three-dimensional space down into the two-dimensional plane may well yield two two-dimensional circles overlapping one another, although the spheres themselves do not even touch on one another. Likewise, the impression that two values collide with one another is due to the fact that a whole dimension is disregarded and this dimension is the hierarchical order of values. According to Max Scheler, valuing implicitly means preferring one value to another. Thus, the rank of a value is experienced together with the value itself. The experience of one value includes the experience that it ranks higher than another. There is no place for value conflicts.

However, this is not to say that the experience of the hierarchical order of values dispenses man from decision-making. Man is pushed by drives. But he is pulled by values. He is free to accept or reject a value he is offered by a situation. It is up to him to take a stand as to whether or not he wishes to realize a value. This is true of the hierarchical order of values as it is transmitted and channeled by moral and ethical traditions and standards. They still have to stand a test, the test of man's conscience, unless he refuses to obey his conscience and suppresses its voice.

One may discern and distinguish three chief groups of values. I have classified them in terms of creative, experiential, and attitudinal values. This sequence reflects the three principal ways in which man can find meaning in life: first, by what he gives to the world in terms of his creation; second, by what he takes from the world in terms of encounters and experiences; and third, by the stand he takes when faced with a fate which he cannot change. This is why life never ceases to hold meaning, since even a person who is deprived of both creative and experiential values is still challenged by an opportunity for fulfillment, that is, by the meaning inherent in an upright way of suffering.

STRUCTURE OF THE PERSONALITY: TRIDIMENSIONAL MAN (SOMATIC, PSYCHIC, NOËTIC)³

One characteristic of human existence is its transcendence. That is to say, man transcends his environment toward the world (and toward a higher world); but more than this, he also transcends his *being* toward an *ought*. Whenever man transcends himself in such a manner, he rises above the level of the somatic and the psychic, and enters the realm of the genuinely human. This realm is constituted by a new dimension, the noëtic; it is the dimension of spirit. Neither the somatic nor the psychic alone constitute the genuinely human; rather, they represent only two sides of the human being. Thus, there can be absolutely no talk of a parallelism in the sense of dualism, nor of an identity in the sense of monism. Nevertheless, in spite of all the ontological variations of the somatic, psychic, and noëtic, the anthropological unity and wholeness of a human being are preserved and saved as soon as we turn from an analysis of existence to what I call a dimensional ontology.

In an exclusively one-sided psychodynamic approach the genuinely human is necessarily portrayed in distortion. Indeed, certain human phenomena will entirely escape one, such as meaning and value. They must disappear from the field of vision as soon as instincts and dynamics are alone considered valid, for the simple reason that values do not drive me, they pull me. A great difference exists between driving and pulling, which we must recognize whenever we seek, in the sense of a phenomenological analysis, an access to the total, unabridged reality of human being.

Furthermore, it must appear questionable to speak of a "moral instinct" in the same sense as of a sexual instinct, or of a "religious instinct" as of an "aggression instinct." This would tend to make us see the essence of something like morality in the satisfying of a moral drive, or in the quieting of the superego, or in the appeasing of conscience. A good man, however, is not good for the sake of his conscience, but for a cause, for the good cause, or, a man is good because of, or for the sake of a person, or for the sake of God. Were a good man really good only in order to have a good conscience, then we would be truly confronted with a case of Pharisaism. To have a good conscience can never be the purpose of our ethical behavior; it is the result. Also, it is scarcely to be assumed that the saints would have become holy if that had been their main concern. Then, they would actually have become perfectionists, and perfectionism is one of the typical hindrances on the way toward perfection. Certainly a good conscience is, as the saying goes, the best pillow; we must, nevertheless, beware of making morality into a sleeping pill and ethics into a tranquilizer.

³"The Spiritual Dimension in Existential Analysis and Logotherapy," *Journal of Individual Psychology*, XV (1959), from pp. 159-64.

The underlying factor here is the conception, or better said the misconception, of the human psyche as dominated by an entropy, an equilibrium principle, in a word, the stipulation that the principle of homeostasis is regulative. This principle proceeds as if the psyche of man were a closed system and as if it were man's paramount concern to maintain or restore certain psychic conditions through the reconciliation and satisfaction of the claims of the id and superego. In this manner such an anthropology slides into a monadology. The true, the normal man is not concerned about some condition in his soul but about objects in the world; he is primarily ordered and directed toward them. Only the neurotic man is no longer objectively oriented; he is primarily interested in his own subjective condition. A psychotherapy which would acknowledge only the principle of homeostasis and would allow itself to be led by a monadological picture of man, would only reinforce neurotic escapism.

Critique of Self-Actualizationism

In this connection we cannot refrain from critical remarks concerning the current catchwords of self-fulfillment and self-actualization. Self-fulfillment and self-actualization cannot possibly be life's final purpose or man's last aim; on the contrary, the more man directs himself toward them, the more he will miss them. This is true for every subjective condition, e.g., pleasure; the more man strives for pleasure, the more it eludes him, and many sexual neuroses have their etiological basis precisely in this law. The hunt for happiness frightens the object away; the pursuit of happiness borders upon a self-contradiction.

Actually, man's concern is not to fulfill himself or to actualize himself, but to fulfill meaning and realize value. Only to the extent to which he fulfills concrete and personal meaning of his own existence will he also actualize himself. Self-actualization occurs by itself—not through intention, but as effect.

When is man so concerned with self-actualization? When does he, in this sense, reflect upon himself? Is not such reflection in each instance an expression of an intention toward meaning that has missed its goal and been frustrated? Does not the forced striving after self-actualization betray a frustrated striving for the fulfillment of meaning? Here the analogy of a boomerang comes to mind. Its purpose, as it is generally supposed, is to return to the hunter who has thrown it. But this is not so; only that boomerang returns to the hunter which has missed its target, the prey. Likewise, only that man comes back upon himself and is intent upon his own condition who has forgotten that outside in the world a concrete and personal meaning awaits him, that out there a task is waiting to be fulfilled by him and him alone. Man is close to himself only to the extent that he is close to the things in the world, to the extent that he stands in and for the world.

Will to Meaning

We maintain: only when the primary, objective orientation is lacking and has run aground, does that interest in one's condition arise which is so strikingly manifest in neurotic existence. Therefore the striving for self-actualization is in no way something primary; rather we see in it a deficient mode and a reduced level of human existence. Man's primary concern is not self-actualization, but fulfillment of meaning. In logotherapy we speak of a will-to-meaning; with this we designate man's striving to fulfill as much meaning in his existence as possible, and to realize as much value in his life as possible.

The will-to-meaning is something elementary, something genuine and authentic, and as such ought to be taken seriously by psychotherapy. But a psychology that designates itself as an unmasking one, is out to unmask this too; it presents man's claim to a maximally meaningful existence as a camouflage of unconscious instincts, and disposes of it as a mere rationalization. What is needed, I would say, is an unmasking of the unmasker! Although in some cases unmasking may be right, the tendency to unmask must be able to stop in front of that which is genuine in man; else, it reveals the unmasking psychologist's own tendency to devalue.

Least of all can psychotherapy afford to ignore the will-to-meaning; instead, calling upon it involves a psychotherapeutic principle of the first rank. This can, under some circumstances, not only effect the preservation of psychic or somatic health but may be outright life-saving. Here not only clinical but other types of experiences, though no less empirical and practical, present themselves. In the tormenting "experiment" (*experimentum crucis*) of war prisons and concentration camps scarcely anything enabled one more to survive all these "extreme situations" (*Grenzsituationen*, in the sense of Karl Jaspers) than the knowledge of a life task. This "experiment" has confirmed Nietzsche's words: "He who has a *why* to live for, can bear almost any *how*." The validity of these words depends, however, upon the fact that such a "why" pertains not just to any situation: it *must* pertain to the unique life task, the singularity of which corresponds to the fact that each man's life is singular in its existence and unique in its essence.

Existential Frustration

The will-to-meaning can become frustrated. In logotherapy we speak of an *existential frustration* since it appears justified to designate as existential that which applies to the meaning of existence, including the will-to-meaning. The feeling of meaninglessness is not pathological; it is something generally human, even the most human of all that there may be in man; it is not something all-too-human, something morbid. We must learn to distinguish between the human and the morbid, lest we confuse two essentially different things, viz., spiritual distress and psychic illness

[Frankl, *From Death-Camp to Existentialism*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 101]. In itself existential frustration is far from being morbid.

A patient of our acquaintance, a university professor of Vienna, had been assigned to us because he had tormented himself with the question of the meaning of his life. It turned out that he suffered from a recurrent endogenous depression; however, he brooded over and doubted the meaning of his life not during the phases of his psychic illness, but rather in the intervals, that is, during the time of healthiness.

Today existential frustration plays a more important role than ever. Man today suffers not only an increasing loss of instinct but also a loss of tradition, and herein may well be one of the causes of existential frustration. We see its effect in a phenomenon which we in logotherapy call *existential vacuum*, that is, inner emptiness, the feeling of having lost the meaning of existence and the content of life. This feeling then spreads and permeates the whole of life.

The existential vacuum may become manifest or remain concealed. It becomes manifest in the condition of boredom. The phenomenon of boredom, incidentally, invalidates the principle of homeostasis as applied to man's psychic life. If complete satisfaction of our needs were our primary aim, then such satisfaction would not result in existential fulfillment but rather in emptiness in the deepest sense of existential vacuum.

When Schopenhauer once said that humanity apparently is doomed to swing back and forth between the two extremes of need and boredom, he was not only quite correct; he seems to have foreseen that in our generation boredom gives us psychiatrists more work than does need, including the sexual need. Increasing automation gives man a greater amount of leisure time than he has previously had and than he knows how to use. Also the aging population is faced with the problem of how to fill its time and with its own existential vacuum. Finally, we can also see many ways in which the will-to-meaning is frustrated in youth and adolescence. Delinquency can only in part be traced to the acceleration of physical development; spiritual frustration, as is more and more being recognized, is also decisive.

Existential frustration can certainly also lead to neurosis. And so we speak in logotherapy of a *noögenic neurosis*, by which we understand a neurosis which has originally and genuinely been caused by a spiritual problem, a moral conflict, or an existential crisis; and we place the noögenic neurosis heuristically over against neurosis in the strict sense of the word, which is by definition a psychogenic illness.

Logotherapy

The specific therapy of noögenic neurosis can only be a psychotherapy which dares to follow man, his sickness and its etiology into the noëtic, spiritual dimension. Such a therapy is logotherapy. When we distinguish between logotherapy and psychotherapy, we use the latter term in the narrow sense, and, at that, intend the distinction only in a heuristic way. *Logos* now means not only *meaning*, but also the *spiritual*. The will-to-

meaning is the subjective side of a spiritual reality in which the meaning is the objective side; at least it is objective insofar as the will is concerned with "finding" meaning and not at all with "giving" it.

Noëtic therapy is, however, not only applicable in cases of noögenic neuroses; rather, a psychogenic neurosis often represents a psychic development that has become rampant because of a spiritual vacuum, so that the psychotherapy will not be complete unless the existential vacuum is filled and the existential frustration is removed.

Logotherapy is more concerned with the attitude of the patient toward the symptom than with the symptom itself; for all too often it is the wrong attitude that is really pathogenic. Logotherapy, therefore, distinguishes different attitude formations [Frankl, *Theorie und Therapie der Neurosen; Einführung in Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse* (Wien: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1936), p. 128], and attempts to bring about within the patient a transformation of attitude; in other words, it is really a conversion therapy (not implying the religious connotation). To this end it provides specific methods and techniques such as *dereflection* and *paradoxical intention* which have been described elsewhere.

Logotherapy attempts to orient and direct the patient toward a concrete, personal meaning. But it is not its purpose to *give* a meaning to the patient's existence; its concern is only to enable the patient to *find* such a meaning, to broaden, so to speak, his field of vision, so that he will become aware of the full spectrum of possibilities for personal and concrete meanings and values.

If the patient is to become conscious of a possible meaning, then the doctor must know and remain conscious of all the possibilities for meaning, above all the meaning of suffering. Suffering from an incurable disease, for example, conceals in itself not only the last possibility for the fulfillment of meaning and the realization of value, but the possibility for deepest meaning and highest value. In this view, life up to the last moment never ceases to have a meaning. Logotherapy, then, will not only aim toward the recovery of the patient's capacity for work, enjoyment, and experience, but also toward the development of his capacity to suffer, viz., his capacity to fulfill the possible meaning of suffering.

DYNAMICS OF PERSONALITY⁴

Man as a finite being, which he basically is, will never be able to free himself completely from the ties which bind him in many respects incessantly to the various realms wherein he is confronted by unalterable conditions. Nevertheless, ultimately there is always a certain residue of freedom left to his decisions. For within the limits—however restricted

⁴"Dynamics, Existence and Values," *Journal of Existential Psychiatry*, II (1961), from pp. 5-7, 11-13.

they may be—he can move freely and only by this very stand which he takes again and again, toward whatsoever conditions he may face, does he prove to be a truly human being. This holds true with regard to biological and psychological as well as sociological facts and factors. Social environment, hereditary endowment, and instinctual drives can limit the scope of man's freedom, but in themselves they can never totally blur the human capacity to take a stand toward all those conditions, to choose an option.

Let me illustrate this by a concrete example. Some months ago I was sitting with a famous American psychoanalyst in a Viennese coffeehouse. As this was a Sunday morning and the weather was fine I invited him to join me on a trip to climb mountains. He refused passionately, however, by pointing out that his deep reluctance against mountain climbing was due to early childhood experiences. His father had taken him as a boy on walking trips of long duration, and he soon began to hate such things. Thus he wanted to explain to me by what infantile conditioning process he was incapacitated to share my hobby of scaling steep rocky walls. Now, however, it was my turn to confess; and I began reporting to him that I, too, was taken on week-end trips by my father and hated them because they were fatiguing and annoying. But in spite of all that, as for myself, I went on to become a climbing guide in an Alpine club.

Whether any circumstances, be they inner or outer ones, have an influence on a given individual or not, and in which direction this influence takes its way—all that depends on the individual's free choice. *The conditions do not determine me but I determine whether I yield to them or brave them.* There is nothing conceivable that would condition a man wholly, i.e., without leaving to him the slightest freedom. Man is never fully conditioned in the sense of being determined by any facts or forces. Rather *man is ultimately self-determining*—determining not only his fate but even his own self for man is not only forming and shaping the course of his life but also his very self. To this extent man is not only responsible^a for what he does but also for what he is, inasmuch as *man does not only behave according to what he is but also becomes according to how he behaves.* In the last analysis, man has become what he had made out of himself. Instead of being fully conditioned by any conditions he is rather constructing himself. Facts and factors are nothing but the raw material for such self-constructing acts, of which a human life is an unbroken chain. They present the tools, the means, to an end set by man himself.

To be sure, such a view of man is just the reverse of that concept which claims that man is a product or effect of a chain of diverse causes. On the

^aOf course, man's responsibility is as finite as his freedom; for, though man is a spiritual being, he remains a finite being. E.g., I am not responsible for the fact that I have grey hair; however, I am certainly responsible for the fact that I did not go to the hairdresser to have him tint my hair (which under the same "conditions" a number of ladies might have done). So even there a certain amount of freedom is left to everyone, even if only the choice of the color of his hair.

other hand, our assertion of *human existence as a self-creating act* corresponds to the basic assumption that a man does not simply "be," but always decides what he will be in the next moment. In every moment the human person is steadily molding and forging his own character. Thus, every human being has the chance of changing at any instant. There is the freedom to change, in principle, and no one should be denied the right to make use of it. Therefore, we never can predict a human being's future except within the large frame of a statistical survey referring to a whole group. On the contrary, an individual personality is essentially unpredictable. The basis for any predictions would be represented by biological, psychological or sociological influences. However, one of the main features of human existence is the capacity to emerge from and rise above all such conditions—to transcend them. By the same token, man is ultimately transcending himself. The human person then transcends himself insofar as he reshapes his own character.

Existential Vacuum and Tension

This has been noted by logotherapists long before. We have known the detrimental impact of what we call a man's "existential vacuum," i.e., the result of the frustration of the above mentioned "will to meaning." The feeling of a total and ultimate meaninglessness of one's life often results in a certain type of neurosis for which logotherapy has coined the term *noögenic* neurosis; that is to say a neurosis of which the origin is a spiritual problem, a moral conflict or the existential vacuum. But other types of neuroses are also invading this vacuum! So that no psychotherapy can be completed, no neurosis of whatsoever kind can be completely and definitely overcome, if this inner void and emptiness in which neurotic symptoms are flourishing has not been filled up by supplementary logotherapy, be it applied unconsciously or methodically.

By this I do not want to give the impression that the existential vacuum in itself represents a mental disease: the doubt whether one's life has a meaning is an existential despair, it is a spiritual distress rather than a mental disease. Thus logotherapy in such cases is more than the therapy of a disease; it is a challenge for all counseling professions. The search for a meaning to one's existence, even the doubt whether such a meaning can be found at all, is something human and nothing morbid.

From the above it can easily be seen how much mental health is based on the presence of an adequate state of tension, like that which arises from the unbridgeable gap between what a man has achieved and what he should accomplish. The cleavage between what I am and what I ought to become is inherent in my being human and, therefore, indispensable to my mental well being. Therefore, we should not be timid and hesitant in confronting man with the potential meaning to be actualized by him, nor evoking his will to meaning out of its latency. Logotherapy attempts to make both events conscious to man: (1) the meaning that, so to speak, waits to

be fulfilled by him, as well as (2) his will to meaning that, so to speak, waits for a task, nay, a mission to be assigned to him. Inasmuch as logotherapy makes the patient aware of both facts it represents an essentially analytical procedure for it makes something conscious; however, not anything psychic but something noëtic, not only the subhuman but the human itself.

To make the patient again aware of a meaning in his life is the ultimate asset in all psychotherapy simply because it is the final requirement in every neurosis. To be charged with the task to fulfill the unique meaning assigned to each of us is nothing to be avoided and feared at all.

The homeostasis principle, however, that underlies the dynamic interpretation of man maintains that his behavior is basically directed toward the gratification and satisfaction of his drives and instincts, toward the reconciliation of the different aspects of his own such as id, ego and super-ego, and toward adaptation and adjustment to society, in one word, toward his own bio-psycho-sociological equilibrium. But human existence is essentially self-transcendence. By the same token, it cannot consist in self-actualization; man's primary concern does not lie in the actualization of his self but in the realization of values and in the fulfillment of meaning potentialities which are to be found in the world rather than within himself or within his own psyche as a closed system.

What man actually needs is not homeostasis but what I call *noödynamics*, i.e., that kind of appropriate tension that holds him steadily oriented toward concrete values to be actualized, toward the meaning of his personal existence to be fulfilled. This is also what guarantees and sustains his mental health whereas escaping from any stress situation would even precipitate his falling prey to the existential vacuum.

What man needs is not a tensionless state but the striving and struggling for something worth longing and groping for. What man needs is not so much the discharge of tensions as it is the challenge by the concrete meaning of his personal existence that must be fulfilled by him and cannot be fulfilled but by him alone. In neurotic individuals, this is not less but even more valid. Integration of the subject presupposes direction toward an object. The tension between subject and object does not weaken but strengthens health and wholeness. If architects want to strengthen a decrepit arch they *increase* the load that is laid upon it for thereby the parts are joined more firmly together. So if therapists wish to foster their patients' mental health they, too, should not be afraid to increase the burden of one's responsibility to fulfill the meaning of his existence.

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE AND FREEDOM⁵

On the biological level, in the plane of biology, we are confronted with

⁵"Determinism and Humanism," *Humanitas*, VII (1971), from pp. 24-27.

the somatic aspects of man, and on the psychological level, in the plane of psychology, with his psychological aspects. Thus, within the planes of both scientific approaches we are facing diversity but missing the unity in man, because this unity is available only in the human dimension and must necessarily disappear within the cross sections through the human reality as they are used by biology and psychology. Only in the human dimension lies the "*unitas multiplex*" as man has been defined by Thomas Aquinas. And this unity now turns out to be not really a "unity in diversity" but rather a unity *in spite of* diversity.

What is true of man's oneness, also holds for his openness. . . .

[Man] is sometimes portrayed as if he were merely a closed system within which cause-effect relations are operant such as conditioned or unconditioned reflexes, conditioning processes or responses to stimuli. On the other hand, being human is profoundly characterized as being open to the world, as Max Scheler, Arnold Gehlen and Adolf Portmann have shown. Or, as Martin Heidegger has said, being human is "being in the world." What I have called the self-transcendence of existence denotes the fundamental fact that being human means relating to something, or someone, other than oneself, be it a meaning to fulfill, or human beings to encounter. And existence falters and collapses unless this self-transcendent quality is lived out. Let me illustrate this by simile. The capacity of the eye to perceive the world outside itself, paradoxically enough, is tied up with its incapacity to perceive anything within itself. In fact, to the extent to which the eye sees itself, for example, its own cataract, its capacity to see the world is impaired. That is to say, in principle the seeing eye sees something other than itself. Seeing, too, is self-transcendent.

That the self-transcendent quality of existence, that the openness of being human is touched by one cross section and missed by another, is understandable. Closedness and openness have become compatible. And I think that the same holds true of freedom and determinism. There is determinism in the psychological dimension, and freedom in the noölogical dimension which is the human dimension, the dimension of human phenomena. As to the body-mind problem, we wound up with the phrase "unity in spite of diversity." As to the problem of free choice, we are winding up with the phrase "freedom in spite of determinism." It parallels the phrase once coined by Nicolai Hartmann, "autonomy in spite of dependency."

As a human phenomenon, however, freedom also is an all too human phenomenon. Human freedom is finite freedom. Man is not free from conditions. But he is free to take a stand to them. The conditions do not completely condition him. For within limits it is up to him whether or not he succumbs and surrenders to the conditions. He may as easily rise above them and by so doing open up and enter the human dimension. As I once put it: As a professor in two fields, neurology and psychiatry, I am fully aware of the extent to which man is subject to biological, psychological and

sociological conditions. But in addition to being a professor in two fields I am a survivor of four camps—concentration camps, that is—and as such I also bear witness to the unexpected extent to which man is capable of defying and braving even the worst conditions conceivable. Sigmund Freud once said, "Let us attempt to expose a number of the most diverse people uniformly to hunger. With the increase of the imperative urge of hunger all individual differences will blur, and in their stead will appear the uniform expression of the one unstilled urge." Actually, however, the reverse was true. In the concentration camps people became more diverse. The beast was unmasked—and so was the saint. The hunger was the same but people were different. In truth, calories do not count.

Ultimately, man is not subject to the conditions that confront him; rather, these conditions are subject to his decision. Wittingly or unwittingly, he decides whether he will face up or give in, whether or not he will let himself be determined by the conditions. Of course, it could be objected that such decisions are themselves determined. But it is obvious that this results in a *regressus in infinitum*. A statement by Magda B. Arnold epitomizes this state of affairs and lends itself as an apt conclusion of the discussion: "All choices are caused but they are caused by the chooser" (*The Human Person*, New York, 1954, p. 40).

Interdisciplinary research covers more than one cross section. It prevents us from one-sidedness. As to the problem of free choice, it prevents us from denying, on the one hand, the deterministic and mechanistic aspects of the human reality and, on the other hand, the human freedom to transcend them. This freedom is not denied by determinism but rather by what I am used to calling pan-determinism. In other words, the alternative really reads pan-determinism versus determinism, rather than determinism versus indeterminism. And as to Freud, he only espoused pan-determinism in theory. In practice, he was anything but blind to the human freedom to change, to improve, for instance, when he once defined the goal of psychoanalysis as giving "the patient's ego the freedom to choose one way or the other" (*The Ego and the Id*, London, 1927, p. 72).

Last but not least, human freedom implies man's capacity to detach himself from himself. I am used to illustrating this capacity of self-detachment, as I call it, by the following story. During World War I a Jewish army doctor was sitting together with his gentile friend, an aristocratic colonel, in a foxhole when heavy shooting began. Teasingly, the colonel said: "You are afraid, aren't you? Just another proof that the Aryan race is superior to the Semitic one." "Sure, I am afraid," was the doctor's answer. "But who is superior? If you, my dear colonel, were as afraid as I am, you would have run away long ago." What counts and matters is not our fears and anxieties as such but rather the attitude we adopt toward them. This attitude, however, is freely chosen.

The freedom of choosing an attitude toward our psychological make-up

even implies the pathological aspects of this make-up. Time and again, we psychiatrists meet patients whose attitude toward what is pathological in them is anything but pathological. I have met cases of paranoia who, out of their delusional ideas of persecution, have killed their alleged enemies. And I have met cases of paranoia who have forgiven their alleged adversaries. The latter have not acted out of mental illness but rather reacted to this illness out of their humanness. To speak of suicide rather than homicide, there are cases of depression who commit suicide, and there are cases who managed to overcome the suicidal impulse for the sake of a cause or a person. They are too committed to commit suicide, as it were.

THE TRAGIC TRIAD: SUFFERING, GUILT, TRANSITORINESS⁶

Whenever speaking of meaning, however, we should not disregard the fact that man does not fulfill the meaning of his existence merely by his creative endeavors and experiential encounters, or by working and loving. We must not overlook the fact that there are also tragic experiences inherent in human life, above all that "Tragic Triad"—if I may use this term—which is represented by the primordial facts of man's existence: suffering, guilt, and transitoriness.

Of course, we can close our eyes to these "existentials." Also the therapist can escape from them and retreat into mere somato- or psychotherapy. . . . This would be the case, for instance, when the therapist tries to tranquilize away the patient's fear of death, or to analyze away his feelings of guilt. With special regard to suffering, however, I would say that our patients never really despair because of any suffering in itself! Instead, their despair stems in each instance from a doubt as to whether suffering is meaningful. Man is ready and willing to shoulder any suffering as soon and as long as he can see a meaning in it.

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I wish to say that it is never up to a therapist to convey to the patient a picture of the world as the therapist sees it, but rather to enable the patient to see the world as it is. Therefore, he resembles an ophthalmologist more than a painter. . . . Also, in reference to meanings and values, what matters is not the meaning of man's life in general. To look for the general meaning of man's life would be comparable to the question put to a chess player: "What is the best move?" There is no move at all, irrespective of

⁶"Logotherapy and the Challenge of Suffering," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, I (1961), from pp. 4-7.

the concrete situation of a special game. The same holds for human existence inasmuch as one can search only for the concrete meaning of personal existence, a meaning which changes from man to man, from day to day, from hour to hour. Also the awareness of this concrete meaning of one's existence is not at all an abstract one, but it is, rather, an implicit and immediate dedication and devotion which neither cares for verbalization nor even needs it in each instance. In psychotherapy it can be evoked by the posing of provocative questions in the frame of a maieutic dialogue in the Socratic sense. I should like to draw your attention to an experience of such a dialogue during the group psychotherapeutic and psychodramatic activities of my clinic as they are conducted by my assistant, Dr. Kurt Kocourek.

It happened that I stepped in the room of the clinic where he was at the moment performing group therapy; he had to deal with the case of a woman who had lost her son rather suddenly. She was left alone with another son, who was crippled and paralyzed, suffering from Little's disease. She rebelled against her fate, of course, but she did so ultimately because she could not see any meaning in it. When joining the group and sharing the discussion I improvised by inviting another woman to imagine that she was eighty years of age, lying on her deathbed and looking back to a life full of social success; then I asked her to express what she would feel in this situation. Now, let us hear the direct expression of the experience evoked in her—I quote from a tape: "I married a millionaire. I had an easy life full of wealth. I lived it up. I flirted with men. But now I am eighty. I have no children. Actually, my life has been a failure." And now I invited the mother of the handicapped son to do the same. Her response was the following—again I am quoting the tape: "I would look back peacefully, for I could say to myself, 'I wished to have children and my wish was granted. I have done my best, I have done the best for my son. Be he crippled, be he helpless, he is my boy. I know that my life was not a failure. I have reared my son and cared for him—otherwise he would have to go into an institution. I have made a fuller life possible for this my son.'" Thereupon I posed a question to the whole group: "Could an ape which is being used to gain serum for poliomyelitis ever grasp what his suffering should be for?" The group replied unanimously, "Of course it cannot." And now I proceeded to put another question: "And what about man? Man's world essentially transcends an ape's "Umwelt." That is why the ape cannot become cognizant of the meaning of its suffering. For its meaning cannot be found in the "Umwelt" of the animal, but only in the world of man. "Well," I asked them, "are you sure that this human world is something like a terminal in the development of the cosmos? Shouldn't we rather admit that there is possibly a world beyond, above man's world, a world, let me say, in which the question of the ultimate meaning of our sufferings could be answered, and man's quest for this super-meaning could be fulfilled?"

TRANSITORINESS AND RESPONSIBILITY⁷

What threatens man is his guilt in the past and his death in the future. Both are inescapable, both he must accept. Thus man is confronted with the human condition in terms of *fallibility and mortality*. Properly understood, it is, however, precisely the acceptance of this twofold human finiteness which adds to life's being worthwhile, since only in the face of guilt does it make sense to improve, and only in the face of death is it meaningful to act.

It is the very transitoriness of human existence which constitutes man's responsibility—the *essence of existence*. If man were immortal, he would be justified in delaying everything; there would be no need to do anything right now. Only under the urge and pressure of life's transitoriness does it make sense to use the passing time. Actually, the only transitory aspects of life are the potentialities; as soon as we have succeeded in actualizing a potentiality, we have transmuted it into an actuality and, thus, salvaged and rescued it into the past. Once an actuality, it is one forever. Everything in the past is saved from being transitory. Therein it is irrevocably stored rather than irrecoverably lost. Having been is still a form of being perhaps even its most secure form.

What man has done, cannot be undone. I think that this implies both activism and optimism. Man is called upon to make the best use of any moment and the right choice at any time: be it that he knows what to do, or whom to love, or how to suffer. This means activism. As to optimism, let me remind you of the worlds of Laotse: "Having completed a task means having become eternal." I would say that this holds true not only for the completion of a task, but for our experiences and, last not least, for our brave sufferings as well.

Speaking figuratively we might say: The pessimist resembles a man who observes with fear and sadness how his wall calendar from which he daily tears a sheet, grows thinner and thinner with the passing days. However, a person who takes life in the sense suggested above, is like a man who removes each leaf, files it carefully after having jotted down a few diary notes on it. He can reflect with pride and joy on all the richness set down in these notes, on all the life he has already lived to the full.

Even in advanced years one should not envy a young person. Why should one? For the possibilities a young person has, or for his future? No, I should say; instead of possibilities in the future, the older person has realities in the past: work done, love loved and suffering suffered. The latter is something to be proudest of—although it will hardly raise envy. . . .

⁷"Existential Dynamics and Neurotic Escapism," *Journal of Existential Psychiatry*, IV (1963), from pp. 27-42.