

## Preface

Dr. Frankl, author-psychiatrist, sometimes asks his patients who suffer from a multitude of torments great and small, "Why do you not commit suicide?" From their answers he can often find the guide-line for his psychotherapy: in one life there is love for one's children to tie to; in another life, a talent to be used; in a third, perhaps only lingering memories worth preserving. To weave these slender threads of a broken life into a firm pattern of meaning and responsibility is the object and challenge of *logotherapy*, which is Dr. Frankl's own version of modern *existential analysis*.

In this book, Dr. Frankl explains the experience which led to his discovery of logotherapy. As a longtime prisoner in bestial concentration camps he found himself stripped to naked existence. His father, mother, brother, and his wife died in camps or were sent to the gas ovens, so that, excepting for his sister, his entire family perished in these camps. 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 has faced such extremity is a psychiatrist worth listening to. He, if anyone, should be able to view our human condition wisely and with compassion. Dr. Frankl's words have a profoundly honest ring, for they rest on experiences too deep for deception. What he has to say gains in prestige because of his present position on the Medical Faculty of the Univer-

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sity of Vienna and because of the renown of the logotherapy clinics that today are springing up in many lands, patterned on his own famous Neurological Policlinic in Vienna.

One cannot help but compare Viktor Frankl's approach to theory and therapy with the work of his predecessor, Sigmund Freud. Both physicians concern themselves primarily with the nature and cure of neuroses. Freud finds the root of these distressing disorders in the anxiety caused by conflicting and unconscious motives. Frankl distinguishes several forms of neurosis, and traces some of them (the noögenic neuroses) to the failure of the sufferer to find meaning and a sense of responsibility in his existence. Freud stresses frustration in the sexual life; Frankl, frustration in the "will-to-meaning." In Europe today there is a marked turning away from Freud and a widespread embracing of existential analysis, which takes several related forms—the school of logotherapy being one. It is characteristic of Frankl's tolerant outlook that he does not repudiate Freud, but builds gladly on his contributions; nor does he quarrel with other forms of existential therapy, but welcomes kinship with them.

The present narrative, brief though it is, is artfully constructed and gripping. On two occasions I have read it through at a single sitting, unable to break away from its spell. Somewhere beyond the midpoint of the story Dr. Frankl introduces his own philosophy of logotherapy. He introduces it so gently into the continuing narrative that only after finishing the book does the reader realize that here is an essay of profound depth, and not just one more brutal tale of concentration camps.

From this autobiographical fragment the reader learns much. He learns what a human being does when he suddenly realizes he has "nothing to lose except

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his so ridiculously naked life." Frankl's description of the mixed flow of emotion and apathy is arresting. First to the rescue comes a cold detached curiosity concerning one's fate. Swiftly, too, come strategies to preserve the remnants of one's life, though the chances of surviving are slight. Hunger, humiliation, fear and deep anger at injustice are rendered tolerable by closely guarded images of beloved persons, by religion, by a grim sense of humor, and even by glimpses of the healing beauties of nature—a tree or a sunset.

But these moments of comfort do not establish the will to live unless they help the prisoner make larger sense out of his apparently senseless suffering. It is here that we encounter the central theme of existentialism: to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and in dying. But no man can tell another what this purpose is. Each must find out for himself, and must accept the responsibility that his answer prescribes. If he succeeds he will continue to grow in spite of all indignities. Frankl is fond of quoting Nietzsche, "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*."

In the concentration camp every circumstance conspires to make the prisoner lose his hold. All the familiar goals in life are snatched away. What alone remains is "the last of human freedoms"—the ability to "choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances." This ultimate freedom, recognized by the ancient Stoics as well as by modern existentialists, takes on vivid significance in Frankl's story. The prisoners were only average men, but some, at least, by choosing to be "worthy of their suffering" proved man's capacity to rise above his outward fate.

As a psychotherapist, the author, of course, wants to know how men can be helped to achieve this distinctively

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human capacity. How can one awaken in a patient the feeling that he is responsible to life for something, however grim his circumstances may be? Frankl gives us a moving account of one collective therapeutic session he held with his fellow prisoners.

At the publisher's request Dr. Frankl has added a statement of the basic tenets of logotherapy as well as a bibliography. Up to now most of the publications of this "Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy" (the predecessors being the Freudian and Adlerian Schools) have been chiefly in German. The reader will therefore welcome Dr. Frankl's supplement to his personal narrative.

Unlike many European existentialists, Frankl is neither pessimistic nor antireligious. On the contrary, for a writer who faces fully the ubiquity of suffering and the forces of evil, he takes a surprisingly hopeful view of man's capacity to transcend his predicament and discover an adequate guiding truth.

I recommend this little book heartily, for it is a gem of dramatic narrative, focused upon the deepest of human problems. It has literary and philosophical merit and provides a compelling introduction to the most significant psychological movement of our day.

GORDON W. ALLPORT

Gordon W. Allport, a professor of psychology at Harvard University, is one of the foremost writers and teachers in the field in this hemisphere. He has written a large number of original works on psychology and is the editor of the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. It is chiefly through the pioneering work of Professor Allport that Dr. Frankl's momentous theory was introduced to this country; moreover, it is to his credit that the interest shown here in logotherapy is growing by leaps and bounds.

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