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A STUDY OF LOGOTHERAPY
vs
some of the
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Independent Study Rel.499
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LOGOTHERAPY
vs
PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

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LOGOTHERAPY
vs
PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Logotherapy is a relatively new psychotherapeutic system that transcends the limits of all previous psychotherapy. It is not the aim of logotherapy to take the place of existing psychotherapy, but only to complement it. It deviates from the "historic " schools of thought insofar as it considers man as a being whose main concern consists in fulfilling a meaning and in actualizing values, rather than in gratification and satisfaction of drives and instincts, or in merely reconciling the conflicting claims of personality, or in the mere adaptation and adjustment to society and environment.¹ Logotherapy regards its assignment as that of assisting the patient to find meaning in his life. It aims at more than a mere change of behavior patterns, but that of restoring man's dignity. The Psychiatric Credo of logotherapy is, "An incurably psychotic individual may lose his usefulness, but yet retain the dignity of a human being."²

Logos is a Greek word denoting "meaning". Logotherapy is "will to meaning" in contrast to Freud's psychology of "will to pleasure", and Adler's "will to power". Logos is not only emerging from existence to find "meaning"- but

also confronting existence. It is less retrospective and less introspective and focuses rather on the future.³

This psychotherapeutic system called logotherapy is highly regarded by those in the professional field of psychology. "In his Logotherapy and the Christian Faith, Professor Donald F. Tweedie observes that...logotherapy will be of particular interest to the typical American, whose outlook is traditionally pragmatic."⁴ Professor Robert C. Leslie of the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California, has stated that it offers a philosophy of life and a method of counseling which is more consistent with a Christian view of life than any other existing system in the current therapeutic world.⁵ Concerning logotherapy, the Los Angeles Times stated, "... the most important contribution to psychiatry since the writings of Freud."⁶

The two great "historic" psychotherapeutic systems created by Freud and Adler respectively are: psychoanalysis, and individual psychology. The psychoanalysis of Freud is concerned with the undoing the consequences of repression. It is the work of the therapist in this field to wrest repressed experiences from the unconsciousness of the patient and to reinstate them in consciousness and thus magnify the power of the ego. Individual psychology

sees the matter somewhat differently. It holds that symptoms represent an effort by the patient to justify himself and escape responsibility for his actions. The aim of the therapist in this school of thought is to help the neurotic person accept responsibility for his situation and condition and thereby strengthening the ego.

Both psychoanalysis and individual psychology err in that each sees only one aspect of human existence- whereas the two aspects must be taken together to yield a true picture of man. Consciousness and responsibility must be brought together in order to understand the wholeness of the human being. By pure deduction, we recognize that there is a void in the "historic" science of psychotherapy- an empty space that awaits filling. What is missing in these two schools of thought is a form of psychotherapy that unites these two powerful forces-consciousness and responsibility- in the life of a human being by looking beneath the psychic malaise of the neurotic and recognizing and respecting his "spiritual" struggles. Logotherapy is the technique developed by Dr. Viktor Emil Frankl that attempts to do this.⁷

Dr. Frankl is an author-psychiatrist. He is presently on the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna, head of the department of Neurology at the Poliklinik Hospital

in Vienna, and president of the Austrian Medical Society of Psychotherapy. He has been visiting professor at the Harvard Summer School and the Southern Methodist Summer Session; and guest lecturer at the Royal Society of Medicine in England. At the invitation of Freud, the noted psychologist, Dr. Frankl's first article was published in 1924 in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis.

In his book, Man's Search for Meaning, Dr. Frankl explains his experience which led to his discovery of logotherapy. As a longtime prisoner in bestial Nazi death camps, he found himself stripped to "naked existence". In these experiences when all the familiar goals in life are snatched away, there alone remains "the last of human freedoms"- the ability to choose one's attitude toward his circumstances. The theory of logotherapy which Dr. Frankl developed in 1946 and later refined came as a result of those harrowing years.⁸

According to Gordon W. Allport, logotherapy is an "existential psychiatry". The existential view of man emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual, his quest for values and meaning, and his freedom for self-direction and self-fulfillment. Existential analysis is particularly concerned with making men conscious of their responsibility- since being responsible is one of the essential grounds of human existence. Logotherapy is

actually the only school in the field of existential psychiatry which has succeeded in developing a psychotherapeutic technique. However, logotherapy exceeds and surpasses existential analysis because it is concerned not only with being, but also with "meaning".⁹

In contrast to many other therapies, logotherapy is based on a philosophy of life with three fundamental assumptions which form a chain of interconnecting links: freedom-of-will, will-to-meaning, and meaning-of-life.

Logotherapy recognizes that the freedom of a finite being such as man is a freedom within limits. Man is not free from the conditions of his life, whether they be biological, or psychological, or sociological in nature. But it does declare that he is free to take a stand toward these conditions. He always retains the freedom to choose his attitude toward them. Rollo May in his book, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, agrees with this tenet as he challenges the behavioral scientist to be less concerned with becoming a "rigorous scientist" and more concerned with the real human problem- man's challenge to maintain an ultimate, unique spiritual self-identity with full self-responsibility in an environment which shapes and determines his behavior to an increasing degree. Dr. Frankl, as has already been noted, calls this ability to choose one's attitude toward his circumstances "the last of human free-

doms." Dr. Frankl takes issue on this point with psychoanalysis on what he calls their "pan-determinism." By this he means their view of man which disregards this freedom and capacity to take a stand toward his conditions. He labels this as an "erroneous and dangerous assumption." Man, he affirms, does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will become in the next moment.¹⁰

At this point, we need to consider the fact that logotherapy is directed essentially to the aspect of personality that remains healthy. In cases of psychosis it is applied in a different way than it is with neuroses. For that aspect of the personality that has become diseased, logotherapy recognizes the need for other treatments-such as drugs and shock therapy.¹¹

The second fundamental assumption of logotherapy concerns will-to-meaning. Man needs something to live for-with most people this is fact not faith. This will-to-meaning is closely tied in with man's values and ideals. There are some authors who contend that meanings and values are nothing but man's own inventions and are simply used by him as defense mechanisms.

Man in his conflict with the meanings and values in his life can become frustrated. Logotherapy speaks of this as "existential frustration". This frustration can also result in neuroses. For this type of neuroses, logotherapy

has coined the term "noögenic neuroses" in contrast to psychogenic neuroses. This is a logotherapeutic term which denotes anything pertaining to the "spiritual" core of man's personality.¹²

Logotherapy views man life in three dimensions: the somatic, the mental, and the spiritual. The spiritual dimension cannot be ignored for it is what makes us human. In fact, only someone who can see this spiritual side of man and relate to his spiritual agony can properly diagnose and be of any real help to man in his search for a will-to meaning. However, it must be kept in mind that within the frame of logotherapy "spiritual" does not have a religious connotation but refers to the specifically human dimension.

Hitherto psychotherapy has given too little attention to the spiritual reality of man. Psychoanalysis has had as its goal to help bring about a compromise between the demands of the unconscious and the requirements of reality. This "reality principle" often decrees that certain values and ideals be totally renounced. On the other hand, individual psychology demands of the patient a reshaping of reality; "to the id's "must" it opposes the ego's "will." Dr. Frankl says that it is only as we look at the total psycho-physico-spiritual entity which is man that we will be able to help him achieve wholeness and health.¹³

In logotherapy these spiritual issues of man's aspirations are dealt with sincerely and earnestly instead of (as in psychotherapy) being traced back to the unconscious roots and sources and thus being dealt with in "instinctual" terms. A logotherapist is not entitled consciously to influence the patient's decision as to how to interpret his own ideals and values, but he should never seek to abolish or depreciate the spiritual aspirations of another as he seeks to help him find a will-to-meaning. Nietzsche's statement underscores this conviction of Frankl's: "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how."

After discussing the freedom-to will and will-to-meaning, meaning-of-life itself becomes the topic. The problem of meaning brings one to face his responsibility, and responsibility implies a sense of obligation. Life teaches most people that we are not here to simply enjoy ourselves. In the final analysis, it turns out that the "will-to-pleasure" and the "will-to-power" are derivatives of the meaning-of-life. The pleasure drive and the power drive are never satisfied within themselves, but find their fulfillment as by products.¹⁵

In helping a patient find meaning-of-life, logotherapy confronts him with his own personal responsibility and helps him to discover and find ways to actualize the po-

tential meaning of his life. It suggests three different ways that this may be done: (1) by doing a deed, (2) by experiencing a value, and (3) by suffering.

The first is quite obvious, it is what we give to life. It is expressed through one's creative works of achievement or accomplishment. The second is what we take from the world. This is in terms of experiencing something, such as a work of nature or culture; and also by experiencing someone through love. The third way is through the stand that one takes toward a fate that he no longer can change.¹⁶

Logotherapy emphasizes the necessity of man giving of himself to life. Everyone has a specific task that is unique. Within that area man is indispensable and irreplaceable. It is important that he become conscious of this uniqueness and singularity and assume the responsibility for actualizing his potential in that area.

In helping a person find meaning-of-life by experiencing a value, there is no greater way than through love. Love is the only way one can become fully aware of the essence of another human being. By loving a person one is enabled to see his real self and even more, his potential. Furthermore, by his love the person is enabled to become aware of these potentials and even to actualize them.

As logotherapy endeavors to help a person find meaning-of-life through suffering, it recognizes as conceivable

that there is still another dimension possible- a world beyond man's world in which the question of an ultimate meaning of human suffering would find an answer. This is spoken of as supra-meaning. The logotherapist points out that what matters above all in suffering is the attitude one takes upon himself. It is when one is confronted with in an inescapable, unavoidable situation that he is given the chance to fulfill the deepest meaning of life and actualize the highest value.

There is a special technique developed by logotherapy, called "paradoxical intention", which helps patients face their realistic fears. In this approach, the patient is instructed to intend precisely that which he fears. This technique makes use of the human capacity for self-detachment that is inherent in a sense of humor. When one can laugh at himself it is valuable therapy.¹⁷ A statement consistent with this was made by Gordon Allport; "The neurotic who learns to laugh at himself may be on the way to self-management, perhaps to cure."¹⁸ Very often after single sessions of this technique, Frankl says, people with real phobias are able to free themselves.

Dr. Frankl has asserted from time to time that logotherapy is not a religious therapy, but the writer recognizes that this is a therapy that opens the door to relig-

ion; and she also agrees with Robert Leslie in that it offers a philosophy of life and a method of counseling which is more consistent with a Christian view of life than any other existing system in the current therapeutic world.

Logotherapy has had, and apparently will continue to have a tremendous impact on the whole field of psychology and psychiatry.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Viktor Emil Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 105.
- 2 Ibid., p. 136.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 97-101.
- 4 Viktor Emil Frankl, The Doctor and The Soul (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), p. 177.
- 5 Robert C. Leslie, Jesus and Logotherapy (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), preface, pp.7-9.
- 6 Frankl, The Doctor and The Soul, pp. 177-8.
- 7 Donald F. Tweedie, Logotherapy and the Christian Faith (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), pp.38-44.
- 8 Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, preface.
- 9 Viktor Emil Frankl, The Unconscious God (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), pp. 19-24.
- 10 Viktor Emil Frankl, Psychotherapy and Existentialism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), pp. 1-5.
- 11 Frankl, The Doctor and The Soul, p. 210.
- 12 Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, pp. 99-100.
- 13 Frankl, The Doctor and The Soul, pp. 1-18.
- 14 Ibid., pp. 21-31.
- 15 Frankl, Psychotherapy and Existentialism, p. 6
- 16 Ibid., pp. 14-5.
- 17 Frankl, The Doctor and The Soul, pp. 94-131.
- 18 Gordon W. Allport, The Individual and His Religion, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 92.

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DR. FRANKL'S PERSONAL "SPIRITUAL" EXPERIENCE

Dr. Frankl's personal "spiritual" experience is consistent with the psychotherapeutic system which he has developed. In fact, logotherapy came ~~as a~~ result of his own harrowing experiences in Nazi death camps.

Dr. Frankl lists three phases in the mental reaction one has to prison life: the period following admission; the period when he is well entrenched in camp routine; and the period following his release and liberation. The symptom that characterizes the first phase is shock. Along with this shock comes a "delusion of reprieve". He said that he, along with the other prisoners, clung to shreds of hope and believed to the last moment that it would not be so bad. "We soon, in desperation, acquired a strange kind of humor." Then this was replaced with a sensation of intense curiosity, a curiosity concerning one's fate. A main symptom of the second phase of Dr. Frankl's experiences was that of apathy. It was a necessary mechanism of self-defense. This is the blunting of the emotions and the feelings that one could not care anymore. By means of this insensibility one soon surrounded himself with a very necessary protective shell.

During these phases one is enabled to endure the hunger,

humiliation, fear and deep anger at injustices by closely guarded images of beloved persons, by religion, by a grim sense of humor, and even by glimpses of the beauties of nature- a tree or a sunset. In spite of all the enforced physical and mental primitiveness of life, it was possible for "spiritual" life to deepen. Sensitive people who were used to a rich intellectual life were able to retreat to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom.¹

One of Dr. Frankl's moving experiences of such spiritual depth came when he was on an icy death march. He relates that as they were being marched on an icy road from one camp to another, that he looked up into the sky where the stars were fading and the pink light of the morning was coming up behind a dark bank of clouds and his mind envisioned his wife's image. It was an uncanny acuteness. Real or not, her look was at that moment more luminous than the rising sun. He says that, "A thought transfixed me: and for the first time in his life he grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart. That is, that "The salvation of man is through love and in love." ² At this time Dr. Frankl did not know if his wife were still alive; but he knew one thing and knew it well- love goes far beyond the physical person of the beloved and finds its deeper meaning in the

spiritual being, his inner self.

Dr. Frankl's most meaningful relationship to God seemed to come to him in what he describes as the third stage of a prisoner's mental reactions. This is the period after his liberation. The writer relates this in Dr. Frankl's own words.

" One day, a few days after the liberation, I walked through the country past flowering meadows, for miles and miles, toward the market near the camp. Larks rose to the sky and I could hear their joyous song. There was no one to be seen for miles around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the lark's jubilation and the freedom of space. I stopped, looked around, and up to the sky-- and then I went down on my knees. At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world-- I had but one sentence in mind--always the same: ' I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space'. How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence memory can no longer recall. But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being." ³ "The crowning experience of all, for the homecoming man, is the wonderful feeling that, after all he has suffered, there is nothing he need fear any more--except his God." ⁴

This account of Dr. Frankl's experience with God, which he has so graciously shared with his readers, would certainly tell us that he is not anti-religious. Yet, he constantly reminds his readers that his therapy is not religious; and the "spiritual" that he speaks of in his theory does not have a religious connotation, but refers to the specifically human dimension. However, Dr. Frankl has referred to and quoted scripture to his patients. On one occasion he quoted from the Psalms, "Thou has kept count of my tossings; put Thou my tears in Thy bottle! Are they not in Thy book?"⁵ (Psalms 56:8).

According to Logotherapy, one can discover the meaning of life in three different ways: First, by doing a deed; Second, by experiencing a value; Third, by suffering. In commenting on these Dr. Frankl has this to say: "An active life serves the purpose of giving man the opportunity to realize values in creative work, while a passive life of enjoyment affords him the opportunity to obtain fulfillment in experiencing beauty, art, or nature or love. But there is also purpose in that life which is almost barren of both creation and enjoyment and which admits of but one possibility of high moral behavior: namely in man's attitude toward his existence, an existence restricted by external forces. A creative life and a life of enjoyment are banned to him. But not only creativeness and enjoyment are meaningful. If there

is a meaning left in life at all, there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete."⁶ Dr. Frankl says that it is in these experiences of suffering that man has the chance to exercise the "last of all human freedoms"- his attitude toward his suffering. These difficult external situations give man the opportunity to grow "spiritually" beyond himself.

Gordon Allport, psychiatrist and author, has this to say about Dr. Frankl: " Unlike many European existentialists, Frankl is neither pessimistic nor anti-religious. On the contrary,.....he takes a surprisingly hopeful view of man's capacity to transcend his predicament and discover an adequate guiding truth."⁷

Donald Tweedie, psychiatrist and author, views Dr. Frankl's personal relationship to God as a bit ambiguous. On one hand, he says Dr. Frankl speaks of the mysterious simultaneity of absolute distance between God and man; and on the other hand, of God's absolute intimate closeness and potential presence.⁸

The writer, too, feels that Dr. Frankl is a bit ambiguous about his relationship to God. The endurance of his suffering is in definite contrast to the victory experienced by Corrie ten Boom, a Christian Dutch lady, in the midst of identical situations. Corrie ten Boom was in Nazi death

camps for a period of nine months, and in her book, The Hiding Place, she tells of victory after victory as the power and presence of God was made real to her through the person of The Lord Jesus Christ.⁹

In conclusion, the writer views Dr. Frankl as a man standing on another peak (such as he spoke of concerning his development of a more meaningful therapy built upon former therapeutic systems), brought there by God to whom he prayed for the purpose of viewing the "promised land"-- a land that has to do with God's covenant relationship to His people, a nation of people to which Dr. Frankl belongs. (Strangely enough, Corrie ten Boom along with her family were taken prisoners by the Germans for befriending the Jews in Holland in 1943 and 1944.) I trust that a man of such intellect, compassion, humility, and a deep sense of the reality of God will have the veil lifted from his eyes (Matthew 13:14) and with the "spirit of grace and supplications" look upon Him whom they have pierced, and come to a fuller, more complete knowledge of God through Him (Jesus). (Zechariah 12:10). Perhaps then, Dr. Frankl will develop another therapeutic system that will have even greater and more far-reaching effects on the entire psychotherapeutic world.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Viktor Emil Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp.6-28.
- 2 Ibid., p. 36.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 89-90.
- 4 Ibid., p. 93.
- 5 Ibid., p. 122.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 66-7.
- 7 Ibid., p. xli.
- 8 Donald F. Tweedie, Logotherapy and the Christian Faith (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), pp. 175-6.
- 9 Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, The Hiding Place (New York: Guideposts Associates, Inc., 1971), pp. 128-204.