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From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy

THE EXPRESSION depth-psychology is much in favor today. But we must ask ourselves whether it is not high time to examine human existence, even within psychotherapy, in all its many-layered extent; to look not only for its depths, but for its heights as well. To do so we would have deliberately to reach out not only beyond the sphere of the physical, but also beyond that of the psychic, and take in the realm of what we shall in this book call the mind or the human spirit. By that term—*Geist* in German—we mean the core or nucleus of the personality.

Hitherto psychotherapy has given too little attention to the spiritual reality of man. For the aim of the psychotherapist should be to bring out the ultimate possibilities of the patient. Not to penetrate his deepest secrets, but to realize his latent values—remembering the aphorism of Goethe, which might well be adopted as the maxim of psychotherapy: “If we take

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people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat them as if they were what they ought to be, we help them to become what they are capable of becoming.”

As we see it, this final requirement is fulfillment. Between the reshaping of the outer life and the inner fulfillment of the individual, there is a fundamental difference. If to shape life is a geometrical magnitude, then to fulfill life is a vector magnitude. It has direction, it is directed toward the assigned, reserved, imposed value-potentialities of each individual human person. And the realization of those value-potentialities is what life is all about.

To make these distinctions clear by an example, let us imagine a young person who has grown up in poverty-stricken circumstances. Instead of being content with the narrowness and deprivations of these circumstances, and adjusting to them, let us assume that he imposes his personal will upon the outer world and so “reshapes” his life that he can, say, further his education and enter a profession. Assume

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further that he follows his aptitudes and inclinations, studies medicine and becomes a physician. A tempting offer is made to him of a lucrative post which will also provide him with a fashionable private practice. Here is the way to secure mastery over his life and win an outwardly rich existence. But suppose also that this young man's talent lies in a special branch of his profession, which branch he will have to give up if he takes the good post that is being offered to him. Such a choice would ensure him a successful life, but would deny him inner fulfillment. He might be prosperous and indeed enviable—might own a substantial home, drive an expensive car, and afford all kinds of luxuries. But when he devoted some thought to the question, this person would know that somehow his life had gone awry. Encountering another man who, renouncing wealth and all its pleasures, had remained faithful to his true vocation, our young man would have to confess to himself, in Hebbel's words: "The man I am greets mournfully the man I might have been."

ON THE other hand we can also very well imagine our young man passing up a splendid worldly career, doing without the things it would offer, and dedicating himself to his chosen field—and in so doing finding the meaning of his life. His inner fulfillment would come from accomplishing precisely what he, and perhaps only he, could do best. From this point of view a humble country doctor who is firmly rooted in his locality may seem a greater man than many of his successful metropolitan colleagues. Similarly, the theoretician in a remote outpost of science may nevertheless be doing more heroic service than many of the more active figures who stand "in

the midst of life," allegedly carrying on the battle against death. For on the battle fronts where science carries on the struggle against the unknown, the theoretician may be performing a unique and irreplaceable service, small though his sector of the front may be. And in the uniqueness of this personal achievement no one can supplant him. He has found his place and filled it—and thereby he has fulfilled himself.

By pure deduction, then, we may say that we have discovered a blank area in the science of psychotherapy, an empty space which awaits filling. For we have shown that psychotherapy as it has hitherto been conceived needs to be supplemented by a procedure which operates, as it were, beyond the fields of the Oedipus complex and the inferiority complex. Or, to put the matter more generally: beyond all affect-dynamics. What is still missing is a form of psychotherapy which gets underneath affect-dynamics, which sees beneath the psychic malaise of the neurotic his spiritual struggles. What we are concerned with is a *psychotherapy in terms of the mind*.

Psychotherapy was born when the attempt was first made to look behind physical symptoms for their psychic causes—to discover, in other words, their psychogenesis. Now, however, a further step must be taken: we must look beyond psychogenesis, past the affect-dynamics of neurosis, in order to see the distress of the human spirit—and to try to alleviate this distress. We are well aware that in so doing the doctor assumes a position fraught with intricate problems, for it then becomes necessary for the doctor to take a stand on the question of values. The moment the doctor commits himself to such a "psychotherapy in terms of the mind" his own philosophy necessarily comes to the fore—whereas previously his

outlook remained hidden behind his role as doctor. Previously the only obvious philosophical tenet that entered into the doctor's work was the tacit affirmation of the value of health. This tenet as the ultimate guiding principle of medicine is, however, always taken as self-evident. The doctor need only refer to the mandate given him by society. He has been installed in his office, after all, precisely for the preservation of health.

EVERY psychotherapist knows how often in the course of his psychiatric work the question of the meaning of life comes up. It helps us little to know that the patient's feeling of futility and philosophical despair has developed psychologically in this or that fashion. No matter that we may be able to disclose the inferiority feelings which were the psychic origin of his spiritual stress; no matter that we may "trace" the patient's pessimistic view of life back to certain complexes, and even convince him that his pessimism springs from these and these alone—in reality we are only talking around the patient's problem.

What is needed here is to meet the patient squarely. We must not dodge the discussion, but enter into it sincerely. We must attack these questions on their own terms, with the weapons of the mind. Our patient has a right to demand that the ideas he advances be treated on the philosophical level. In dealing with his arguments we must honestly enter into these problems and renounce the temptation to go outside them, to argue from premises drawn from biology or perhaps sociology. A philosophical question cannot be dealt with by turning the discussion toward the pathological roots from which the question stemmed, or by hinting at the morbid consequences of philosophical

pondering. That is only evasion, beating a retreat from the plane upon which the question is posed—the plane of the mind—when we should remain steadfastly on that plane and fight to achieve an intellectual position with the proper intellectual weapons. If only for the sake of philosophical fairness, we ought to fight with the same weapons. A doctor should not prescribe an arsenic cure for the despair of a man who is grappling with intellectual problems. Rather, with the tools of a "psychotherapy in terms of the mind" he will attempt to give the patient intellectual support, to provide him with some spiritual anchorage.

What the whole problem comes down to is the fallacy of psychologism, for such we must call the pseudo-scientific procedure which presumes to analyze every act for its psychic origin, and on that basis to decree whether its intellectual content is valid or invalid. Such an attempt is doomed to failure from the start. For the individuality of all ideas can never be ignored. It is philosophical dilettantism to rule out, for example, the existence of a divine being on the ground that the idea of God arose out of primitive man's fear of powerful natural forces. It is equally false to judge the worth of a work of art by the fact that the artist created it in, say, a psychotic phase of his life. A genuine intellectual achievement or cultural phenomenon may sometimes be put to secondary uses, as it were—may serve motives and interests essentially alien to it. But such individual or social misuse should not be allowed to overcast our view of the work in itself. It is throwing out the baby with the bathwater to repudiate the inner validity and the unique value of an artistic creation or religious experience simply because these may be used by an individual for his own neurotic pur-



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poses, or by a culture for its own decadent ends. Such a critical method is reminiscent of the man who, confronted with a stork, exclaimed: "Why, I thought storks didn't exist." Because the stork has a "secondary" use as the bearer of babies in the nursery myth, shall we therefore assume that the bird itself is a fable?

IF ONLY for exploratory purposes, therefore, we must continue to maintain that psychotherapy as such is exceeding its scope in dealing with philosophical questions since, as we have shown, the special categories of psychopathology—namely "health" and "sickness"—have no bearing on the truth or validity of ideas. Once psychotherapy ventures a judgment in this regard, it instantly falls into the error of psychologism. If, therefore, we want to combat the psychologicistic deviations of existing psychotherapy and put a stop to their dangerous invasions, it is necessary to supplement psychotherapy by a new procedure. In the field of philosophy, psychologism has been overcome by the critical methods of logicism; in the field of psychotherapy, psychologism must now be overcome by a method which, following this analogy, we shall call *logotherapy*. To this logotherapy would be assigned the task we have described as "psychotherapy in terms of the mind." Logotherapy must *supplement* psychotherapy; that is, it must fill the void whose existence we have mentioned. By the use of logotherapy we are equipped to deal with philosophical questions within their own frame of reference, and can embark on objective discussion of the intellectual distress of human beings suffering from psychic disturbances.

Editor's Note. The detailed application of logotherapy (and its possible use and meaning by the pastor) are analyzed in the following chapters of this important book.