

ON LOGOTHERAPY AND EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS

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LOGOTHERAPY" and "Existential Analysis" are two names designating one and the same thing. The latter name has also been used as an English translation of Binswanger's *Daseinsanalyse*. However, "Existential analysis" in this paper stands for *Existenzanalyse*—a school of thought different from the one originated by Binswanger.

What does existence mean? It means a certain kind of being—the specific manner of being of which man and man alone is capable. It is characterized above all by the ability of this being to transcend himself; that is to say, to emerge spiritually above the level of his own psychic and physical conditions, thus also becoming apt to oppose himself by virtue of what is called in Existential Analysis: psycho-noetic antagonism. This antagonism, as a matter of fact, is a potential one. It can be actualized, if necessary, but does not have to be. Insofar as this being called man is enabled to objectify, and even to oppose himself, he might be called a spiritual being. By contrast, animals are representatives of mere psychophysical being. We will encounter this potential psycho-noetic antagonism again later, when speaking of what we call the therapeutic method of paradoxical intention. This therapeutic device essen-

tially consists in appealing to the patient to change his attitude toward his neurotic symptoms. Emerging oneself spiritually above one's own psychophysical condition might also be called the existential act. By this very act man enters the spiritual dimension of being, nay, he even creates this dimension as a dimension of its own. Of course, man does not cease to be an animal, too, in the same way that an airplane can move on the ground, but begins to prove itself an airplane only when it elevates itself into the air, into the third dimension. Man, too, begins to behave as man only as soon as and as long as he proves to be able to move within the spiritual dimension!

As you see, I am speaking of dimensions and not of layers of being, as formerly and generally has been done. For, in my opinion, the only way to cope with the age-old psychophysical problem in man without disrupting his wholeness and unity seems to be an approach which I have termed "Dimensional Ontology." This means that we no longer speak of the physical, psychological and spiritual layers, because as long as we do so it would appear that the layers could be separated from one another. On the other hand, if we try to understand body, psyche, and mind

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as different dimensions of one and the same being, its wholeness is not in the least destroyed. Such a dimensional interpretation refrains from seeing the whole phenomenon as though it were composed of many elements.

Let me demonstrate by an example. This glass on the table before me, if projected out of three-dimensional space into a two-dimensional plane, would appear as a circle. The same glass, projected into its side view and seen in profile, would appear as a rectangle. Now, nobody will claim that the glass is "composed" of a circle and a rectangle. In the same way we cannot look at man as if he were composed of different layers; but we can best grasp the mysterious simultaneity of his indestructible wholeness and unity on one hand and, on the other, of irreducibly and incomparably different things, like bodily, psychic, and mental processes, by the image of dimensions and projections. This dimensional-ontologic way seems to me the only one capable of rescuing man's wholeness without sacrificing or arguing away the undeniable and insurmountable differences between the dimensions to which man belongs.

In addition, such a dimensional approach affords, as far as I can see, the only chance of understanding some apparent contradictions which are quite deceptive. However, these deceptions necessarily occur. I cannot enter, of course, into a discussion of the questions involved. I just want to draw your attention again to the analogy with which we started. Although the glass is an open vessel, its ground-plan shows a closed circle. Dimensionally viewed, however, it becomes clear that this contradiction is but an apparent one, as well as that this apparent contradiction must necessarily occur. Now, it is the same thing with man. In the frame of

reference of neurology, for example, man necessarily appears as "nothing but" a "closed" system without any place left for something like a soul. We must beware of the self-deception that this dimension of neurology is the only one which exists. As long as I have to examine a patient neurologically I have to "behave as if" he existed only in this dimension. But when I put my reflex hammer aside, I broaden my view again, I encounter him as man to man, I to Thou. I follow him into the fullness of dimensions, and into the wholeness of a human being, and this means of a somato-psycho-spiritual being, who again will become perceptible. Science is compelled to limit its view, to disregard the fullness of phenomena it has to deal with and to ignore those dimensions with which it has not to deal. But the scientist himself must know what he is doing. He must know that he is "doing as if . . .", and this means that his work is, to a certain extent, based upon the indispensable fiction of an uni-dimensional reality.

In connection with logotherapy, Logos is intended to signify "the spiritual and, beyond that, the meaning," for logotherapy focuses on the search for the meaning of human existence. Such a search is an important undertaking in psychotherapy since the lack of awareness of life's meaning is among the most important causes of emotional frustration in our time. But man's concern about a meaning in life, which should be worthy of life, is in itself by no means a sign of disease. Whether explicit or implicit, this is an intrinsically human question. Challenging the meaning of life can, therefore, never be taken as a manifestation of morbidity or abnormality. It is rather the truest expression of the state of being human, the mark of the most human

nature in man. We can easily imagine highly developed animals or insects—say, bees or ants—which in many aspects of their social organization actually are superior to man. But we can never imagine any such creature raising the question of the meaning of its own existence and thus challenging this existence. It is reserved for man alone to find his very existence questionable, to experience the whole dubiousness of being. More than such faculties as power of speech, conceptual thinking, or walking erect, this factor of doubting the significance of his own existence is what sets man apart from animals.

The problem of meaning in its extreme form can literally overwhelm a person. It takes on this overwhelming urgency particularly at puberty when the essential uncertainty of human life is suddenly revealed to young people maturing and struggling intellectually. I remember my science teacher in junior high school explaining that the life of organisms, and of man as well, was in the final analysis nothing but a process of oxidation, of combustion. I suddenly sprang to my feet and passionately threw at him the question: "If that's so, then what kind of meaning does life have?" I had grasped the truth that man exists on a different plane of being from, say, a candle that stands on the table and burns down until it sputters out. But man possesses a totally different form of being. Human existence takes the form of historical existence. And this frame of reference is always governed by a meaning, although that meaning may be unspoken and perhaps altogether inexpressible. The activity of an anthill can be called purposeful, but not meaningful. And where meaning is absent, the historical factor cannot be present. An ant "nation" has no "history." Concern about the mean-

ing of one's life, this spiritual distress, may have very little connection with psychic disease. Besides, a man can be ill, even mentally ill, and yet be right. In short, two and two also make four when a paranoic says so.

Psychoanalysis emphasizes the Pleasure Principle, or, as we might also term it, the will to pleasure, as a motivating factor. Adlerian psychology stresses the need for superiority. This again we might identify with the will to power. Logotherapy on the other hand focuses its interest on what I should like to call *the will to meaning*. For deep down, in my opinion, man is neither dominated by the will to pleasure nor by the will to power, but by the deepseated, innate striving and struggling for a higher ultimate meaning to his existence.

This will to meaning can be frustrated. This condition I call existential frustration and oppose it to sexual frustration, which has so often been incriminated as an etiology of neuroses. And I must say that today existential frustration seems to me to play at least as great a part in the formation of neuroses as the sexual one formerly did.

Adler's individual psychology has made us conversant with the important part played in the formation of neuroses by what it calls the sense of inferiority. Well, it appears to me that today something else is playing at least as important a part: what I would call the sense of meaninglessness. Thus, not the feeling of being less valuable than others, but the feeling that life no longer has any meaning, I see as of crucial importance.

What threatens contemporary man is the alleged meaninglessness of his life or, as one might call it, the existential vacuum within him. And when does this vacuum open up, when does it appear, when does this so often latent

vacuum become manifest? In the state of boredom. And now we can understand the actual meaning of Schopenhauer's words when he said that mankind was apparently doomed to vacillate eternally between the two extremes of want and boredom. In actual fact, boredom is nowadays giving us—and certainly us psychiatrists—more problems to solve than want, even the so-called sexual want. And this problem of boredom presenting a threat to mental health is becoming increasingly discussed. For the second industrial revolution—as automation is being called—will probably lead to an enormous increase in the leisure hours of the average worker. Many of these people will not know what to do with all that free time.

It is the will-to-meaning that a psychotherapist should evoke. Again and again we have seen that an appeal to continue life, to survive the most unfavorable conditions, can be made only when such survival appears to have a meaning. That meaning must be specific and personal, a meaning which can be realized by this one person alone. For we must never forget that every man is unique in the universe.

The American psychiatrist Nardini¹ pointed out that American soldiers taken prisoner by the Japanese were more likely to survive their miserable situation if they had a positive view of life, directed toward a goal worthy of survival.

But surely Nietzsche put this truth in the most concise terms when he said, "He who knows a Why of living surmounts almost every How." In these words I see a motto for all psychotherapy. In the last resort, man should not ask, "What is the meaning of my life?" but should realize that it is not up to him to question. It is he who is ques-

tioned by life, he who has to answer—to answer for life. His role is merely to respond, to be responsible.

I was saying before that existential frustration—man's lack of knowledge about a meaning to his existence, which alone can make life worth living—is capable of creating neuroses. I call such neuroses *noogenic* neuroses—that is to say, neuroses with their roots not in psychological complexes and traumata, but in spiritual conflicts and ethical problems, but I would certainly never maintain that every neurosis is noogenic. The head of the psychotherapy out-patient department of the Neurological Policlinic in Vienna noted that twelve per cent of the cases were noogenic neuroses.² Ruth Volhard and D. Langen³ in their report on the psychotherapy out-patient department of the Neuropsychiatric Clinic at Tübingen University, under Professor Kretschmer, found roughly the same percentage.

However, when a neurosis really is noogenic, spiritually-rooted, it requires a psychotherapy having a spiritual basis, and that is what I call logotherapy, in contrast to psychotherapy in the narrower sense of the word.

Now let us ask: How can Existential Analysis give meaning to a seemingly meaningless life? First of all there must be no imposition of the personal philosophy of the doctor, of his personal concept of values, on the patient. The logotherapist must be careful to see that the patient does not shift his responsibility onto the doctor. Logotherapy aims at awakening the patient's feeling for being responsible and with this responsibility the patient must push forward independently toward the concrete meaning of his personal existence, must choose it on his own, search for it and find it. Existential Analysis is the psychotherapeutical method which

seeks to help him to find meaning to his existence, to discover possibilities of value. According to logotherapeutic teachings, there are three kinds of values: Creative Values, Experiential Values, and Attitudinal Values.

We have seen that there exists not only a will to pleasure and a will to power, but also a will to meaning. Now we see further: We have not only the possibility of giving meaning to life by creative acts and by the experience of Truth, Beauty and Kindness, of Nature, Culture and of human beings in their uniqueness and individuality, by the experience of love. We have not only the possibility of making life meaningful by creating and loving, but also by suffering, so that when we can no longer change our fate by action, what matters is the right attitude toward fate. Where we can no longer control our fate and reshape it, we must be able to accept it. Even a man who finds himself in the most dire distress, in which neither activity nor creativity can bring values to life nor experience give meaning to it, can still give his life meaning by the way and manner in which he faces his fate, in which he takes his suffering upon himself. Precisely in this he has been given a last chance to realize values.

Thus, life has a meaning to the last breath. For the possibility of realizing attitudinal values—by the very attitude with which we face our suffering—is there to the very last moment. Now we can understand the wisdom of Goethe when he said: "There is no condition which cannot be ennobled either by a deed or by suffering." But we should add that the right kind of suffering is in itself a deed, nay, the highest achievement which has been granted to man. Thus, even where man must renounce the realization of creative and experi-

ential values he can still achieve something. I should like to illustrate my point by the following case.

A nurse in my department suffered from a tumor which was shown by laparotomy to be inoperable. In her despair the nurse asked me to visit her and our conversation revealed that the cause of her despair was not so much her illness as it was her incapacity to work. She had loved her profession above everything and now she could no longer follow it. Hence, her despair. What should I say? Her situation was really hopeless; she died a week later. Nevertheless, I tried to help her understand that to work eight hours or ten hours or God knows how many hours a day is no great thing. Many people can do that. But to be as eager to work as she was and to be incapable of working yet not despairing would be an achievement few could attain. And then I asked her, "Are you not really being unfair to all those thousands of sick people to whom you have dedicated your life as a nurse? Are you not being unfair if you now act as if the life of a sick or incurable person—that is to say, of someone incapable of working—were without meaning?" I said, "If you despair in your situation, then you are behaving as if the meaning of our life consisted in being able to work so and so many hours a day, but in so doing you take away from all sick and incurable people the right to life and the justification for their existence."

I should like to quote another case of a colleague, an old general practitioner, who turned to me because he still could not get over the loss of his wife who had died two years earlier. His marriage had been very happy and he was very depressed. I asked him quite simply: "Tell me, what would have happened if you had died instead

of your wife, if she had survived you?" "That would have been terrible," he said. "Quite unthinkable. How my wife would have suffered." "Well, you see," I answered, "your wife has been spared that, and it was you who spared her, though, of course you must now pay by surviving and mourning her." In that very moment his mourning had been given a meaning—the meaning of sacrifice. The depression was overcome. I know that may sound as if I had given him small consolation, but I am quoting this case because I believe that an appeal to the meaning of life, even in extreme situations, is justified.

Thus, I have shown when logotherapy is a specific therapy and when it can be effective though non-specific. As such, it is to be used not only by the neurologist or by the psychiatrist, but by every doctor. The surgeon, for example, needs it just as much when faced with inoperable cases, or with those that he must maim by amputation; likewise the orthopedist who is confronted with problems of what I call medical ministry when he is dealing with cripples; finally, the dermatologist when dealing with disfigured patients, the physician when dealing with incurables, and the gynecologist when dealing with steriles.

In all these cases there is, of course, more at stake than psychotherapy has hitherto aimed at. Its aims have been the capacity to work and to enjoy life. Medical ministry is concerned with the capacity to suffer. Yet the meaning of human existence is threatened not only by suffering, but also by death. Does it not completely cancel out the meaning of our life? By no means. As the end belongs to the story, so death belongs to life. If life is meaningful, then it is so whether it is long or short, whether a man can live in his children

or dies childless. If the meaning of life consisted in reproduction, then every generation would find its meaning only in the next generation. Hence, the problem of meaning would be postponed from one generation to another but never solved. If the life of each generation of men has no meaning, is it not likewise meaningless to perpetuate something that has no meaning?

Let us not forget that what is past is not lost, but on the contrary, stored and saved from transitoriness. Usually, man only considers the stubble field of transitoriness and overlooks the full granaries of the past, wherein he has saved once and for all his deeds, his joys and also his steadfast suffering.

Having been is also a kind of being, perhaps the surest kind. And all effective action in life may, in this view, appear as a salvaging of possibilities by actualizing them.

Time that has passed is certainly irrecoverable, but what has happened within that time is unassailable and inviolable. The passing of time is therefore not only thievery, but trusteeship. Any philosophy which keeps in mind the transitoriness of existence need not be pessimistic. To express this point figuratively we might say: The pessimist resembles a man who observes with fear and sadness that his wall calendar, from which he daily tears a sheet, grows thinner with each passing day. On the other hand, the person who takes life in the sense suggested above is like a man who removes each successive leaf from his calendar and files it neatly and carefully away with its predecessors—after first having jotted down a few diary notes on the back. 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. What will it matter to him if he notices

that he is growing old? Has he any reason to envy the young people whom he sees, or wax nostalgic for his own youth? What reasons has he to envy a young person? For the possibilities that a young person has, the future that is in store for him? "No, thank you," he will think. "Instead of possibilities, I have realities in my past, not only the reality of work done, but of love loved and of suffering suffered. These are the things of which I am most proud, though these are things which cannot inspire envy."

The leading maxim of existential analysis might be put thus: live as if you were living for the second time and had acted as wrongly the first time as you are about to act now. Once an individual really puts himself into this imagined situation, he will instantaneously become conscious of the full gravity of the responsibility that every man bears throughout every moment of his life, the responsibility for what he will make of the next hour, for how he will shape the next day.

Logotherapy gives unavoidable suffering the status of a positive value. According to Edith Weisskopf-Joelson, of Purdue University, such a value system may help counteract certain trends in our present-day civilization where the incurable sufferer is given very little opportunity to be proud of his unavoidable and inescapable suffering and to consider it ennobling rather than degrading.⁴ Thus, the burden of the unhappy is increased, since he is not only unhappy, but also ashamed of being unhappy.

As can be seen from above, happiness is not explicitly considered a value in the logotherapeutic philosophy. Rather, it is considered a by-product of the attainment of other values. People can attain happiness more easily when they don't strive for it intentionally.

It was mentioned above that striving for happiness might not be conducive to its attainment. We can see again and again in sexual neuroses, the more a man strives for pleasure, the less pleasure he achieves. And vice versa. The harder he tries to evade unpleasure, or suffering, the deeper he plunges himself into additional suffering. Logotherapy teaches that just as intention may prevent the occurrence of a desirable psychic event, counter-action may increase the intensity of an undesirable event. Similarly, the more a person tries to fight neurotic symptoms the more intensely the symptoms will manifest themselves. Therefore, it is often wise, to avoid striving intentionally toward desirable goals, such as happiness, sexual potency or sleep and to act as if one were striving intentionally toward such undesirable goals as neurotic symptoms. The latter I call *paradoxical intention*. The patient is sometimes, in certain cases, encouraged not only to accept the neurotic symptoms but even to try to exaggerate them. Thus, the patient increasingly learns to put himself "above" the symptom, by virtue of that psycho-neoctic antagonism I mentioned before!

As we see, the logotherapist is not primarily concerned with treating the individual symptom or the disease as such. Rather, he sets out to transform the neurotic's attitude toward his neurosis. For it is this attitude which in some cases has built up a basic disturbance into clinical symptoms of illness. And this attitude, at least in milder cases or in the early stages, is quite subject to correction.

Logotherapy and Existential Analysis presuppose a concept of man which has a place for meaning and value and spirit, the place they actually deserve. In a word, they presuppose a concept of man as a free and responsible spirit-

ual being—responsible for the realization of values and the fulfillment of meaning, the concept of man as a being directed toward meaning! Of man's spirituality we have already spoken. The spiritual dimension is that into which we have to follow him if we want to attain a proper comprehension of his specifically human nature.

Now, I want to stress the difference between freedom and responsibility, for the neglect of this difference is for me the main mistake of the existential philosophy. Freedom means freedom *from* something. But responsibility involves a twofold reference to the world of objectively given things insofar as we are always responsible 1) *for* something and 2) *to* something. Now, what we are responsible for is the meaning to be fulfilled by ourselves, the values to be realized by ourselves. As I have pointed out already, each person has to fulfill a specific meaning, has to realize specific values. But the question of what man is responsible to cannot be answered in a general way, at least by ourselves as psychotherapists. For this question, too, has to be answered in a personal way and we are not allowed to take responsibility for answering it for our patients. On the contrary, we have to educate them to the ability to shoulder their responsibility! As we have to refrain from imposing our own worldview on them, we can but simply state that there are the following possible answers to the question: Man is responsible to society; to his conscience; to God, who stands behind this conscience, who is the speaker from whom the "voice" of conscience stems.

This latter is the answer given by the religious man who, as we see, actually does not feel responsible to *something* but to *somebody*, to a personal or, better, suprapersonal entity. According to

Karen Horney, "man, by his very nature, strives toward self-realization, and his set of values evolves from such striving."⁵ But if I am allowed to add something to this statement, I should like to say that only to the degree to which man accomplishes certain specific tasks in the surrounding world will he fulfill himself.

In this connection I should like to point out that *nihilism* is not a philosophy which says that there is only nothing, nihil, and therefore no being. Nihilism is that attitude toward life which says that being has no meaning. A nihilist is a man, who considers being and, above all, his own existence meaningless. But apart from this academic and theoretical nihilism there is also a practical, as it were, "lived" nihilism. There are people—and this, as we have seen, is more manifest today than ever before—who consider their own life meaningless, who can see no meaning in their personal existence and therefore think it valueless.

Nihilism has held a distorting mirror with a distorted image in front of their eyes. Accordingly, they are "nothing but," either an automaton of reflexes, a bundle of drives, a psychic mechanism or simply a product of economic environment. Nothing but that is left of man. The human essence in any case has already been removed. And let us not forget that nihilism—or, as I prefer to call it *homunculism*—can make history and has already done so. We have only to remember how the conception of man as "nothing but" the product of heredity and environment or, as it was then termed, "Blood and Soil," pushed us all into historical disasters.

We have seen that life, every life, in every situation and to the last breath, has a meaning, retains a meaning. This

is equally true of the life of a sick person, even the mentally sick. The so-called life not worth living does not exist. And even the manifestations of psychosis conceal a real spiritual person, unassailable by mental disease. Only the possibilities of communication with the outside world and of self-expression are inhibited by the disease; the nucleus of man remains indestructible. The schizophrenic, as well as the manic-depressive, has a remnant of freedom with which he can confront his illness and realize himself, not only in spite of it but because of it. And if this were not the case it would be futile to be a psychiatrist.

There is, therefore, and I hope I have shown it, no reason to doubt the meaning of even the most miserable life. Life has an *unconditional* meaning. Perhaps the deepest experience I personally had in a concentration camp was that, while the concern of most people was, "Will we survive the camp? For, if not, all this suffering has no sense," the question for me was, "Has all this suffering, this dying around us, a meaning? For if not, then ultimately there is no sense to surviving."

For a life whose meaning stands or falls on whether one escapes with it or not—a life, that is, whose meaning depends upon happenstance—would not really be worth living at all. But life has an unconditional meaning and we need an unconditional *belief* in it. This is essential more than ever in a time like ours, when man is threatened by existential frustration, by frustration of the will to meaning, by the unfulfilled claim to a meaning for man's existence, by the existential vacuum.

But psychotherapy can only have an absolute belief in the meaning of life—every life—if it starts with the right kind of philosophy, if it chooses the

right philosophy. Modern psychoanalysts, particularly here in the United States, have already understood and agreed that a psychotherapy without a conception of the world, however unconscious, cannot exist. It is all the more important to make the psychoanalyst himself conscious of his often unconscious image of man. A psychoanalyst of all people should realize the danger of leaving it unconscious. In any case, this is the only way for him to straighten out his image of man, distorted as it was by the influences of the past century: when he realizes that what he has often taken as a starting point is really a caricature of man and not a true image and that it is necessary to correct his image of man. But it would remain nothing but a caricature of man as long as he considers man "nothing but" a being that is "driven," or just satisfies the conflicting claims of Id and Superego drives by compromise.

That is precisely what I have attempted to do with logotherapy: to supplement, not supplant, the existing psychotherapy and thereby make the underlying image of man into a whole, a total image of true man, an image in all its dimensions, thus doing justice to that reality which belongs only to man and is called existence. At any rate, logotherapy is no substitute for psychotherapy, but its complement.

I am, of course, aware of the fact that you may now reproach me with having produced a caricature of that image of man I have pretended to correct. And perhaps there is something in it. Perhaps I am onesided and perhaps I exaggerate when I sense the threatening danger of nihilism, of homunculum, behind many a theory and unconscious philosophical system of modern psychotherapy. Perhaps I am hypersensitive to the slightest sugges-

tion of nihilism. But if that is the case, please understand that I am so only because I have had to overcome nihilism within myself. And that is perhaps why I am so capable of finding it out, wherever it may hide.

And if I may be allowed to tell tales out of the school of my own existential self-analysis, perhaps I can see the mote so well in the other's eyes because I have had to tear the beam out of my own.

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