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The Philosophy Of Logotherapy

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOGOTHERAPY

A thesis submitted for honors to the Department of Philosophy by Kirk C. Morgan
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of Philosophy.

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April 6, 1970
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .................................................. page 1

Chapter I ..................................................... page 4

Chapter II
  Part I .................................................... page 12
  Part II .................................................... page 20

Chapter III .................................................. page 31

Conclusion ................................................... page 40

Epilogue ....................................................... page 42
The first question that may be asked upon seeing the title of this paper is "What is Logotherapy?" I might reply as did Dr. Viktor Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist who founded logotherapy, when asked to answer this question in one sentence by an American psychoanalyst. Frankl replied with a question asking the psychoanalyst to state in one sentence the essence of psychoanalysis. He said, "During psychoanalysis the patient must lie down on a couch and tell you things that sometimes are very disagreeable to tell." Frankl then retorted, "In logotherapy the patient may remain sitting erect, but he must hear things that sometimes are very disagreeable to hear."

This was meant facetiously, but it can be used to point out some things about logotherapy. Whereas psychoanalysis stresses introspection and retrospection, logotherapy stresses the future and what is yet to be accomplished. It is a psychotherapy which strives to bring a person to an awareness of his position in the world, help him find the specific meaning of his existence, and show him the necessity of accepting the responsibility for living in the light of this meaning.

As early as 1938 Dr. Frankl wrote concerning "Existensanalyse" which is translated into English as existential-analysis. Another psychologist, Ludwig Binswanger, then developed a school of psychology called "Daseinanalyse", also translated as existential-analysis. In order to avoid confusion, Frankl calls his school logotherapy in English. He takes it from the Greek "logos" which can be translated as meaning, thus making logotherapy a therapy of meaning.
Frankl was later able to test whether his idea that life had meaning was theoretical or actual for him. Being a Jew he spent time in Dachau and Auschwitz, two of the most dreaded death-camps of World War II. In his stay of over two years he was able to live his convictions and help others to do the same. He states that during this time his concern was different than the concerns of most of his comrades.

Their question was, "Will we survive the camp? For, if not, all this suffering has no meaning." The question which beset me was, "Has all this suffering, this dying around us, a meaning? For if not, then ultimately there is no meaning to survival; for a life whose meaning depends upon such a happenstance—whether one escapes or not—ultimately would not be worth living at all."

When he was released from the camp he wrote down some of his experiences in what is now the book, *Man's Search For Meaning*. When he was imprisoned he had taken along a nearly completed manuscript outlining his concepts which was destroyed by the camp officials. He soon came to the conviction that his specific reason for living in such a state was to be able to live his theories and to proclaim them when released. Despite the twenty to one odds against even surviving the camps, he set out to reconstruct his manuscript on bits and scraps of paper, scribbling notes in secret and hiding the pieces until they could be recovered. Subsequently they were, and he published them in a book entitled *The Doctor and the Soul*.

In this work Dr. Frankl, who has a doctorate in philosophy as well as the psychiatric degree, advocates the philosophy behind
logotherapy and shows how it is used in practice to confront people with a specific meaning for their life in contrast to nihilistic philosophies greatly advocated by many today.

This paper will attempt to explain this philosophy and hopefully give an idea of what logotherapy is all about, including some personal observations on the subject.

1. *Man's Search For Meaning*, p. 133
In this chapter I will attempt to show the origins of logotherapeutic theory; first from other psychotherapies, then from existential philosophy.

Much of what underlies the system and goals of logotherapy is derived from the psychotherapies of Freud and Adler. The former called psychoanalysis and the latter called individual psychology are the first two schools of Viennese Psychotherapy, and Frankl's school following upon this has been called the third. Frankl himself analyzes these systems for what they contribute to logotherapy and as a basis of comparison.

First in regard to their views on the general nature of man, they offer two very different conceptions.

Freud compared the essential achievement of psychoanalysis with the draining of the Zuider Zee. Just as the engineers endeavor to win fertile soil where once the waters rolled, so psychoanalysis strives to conquer new territory for the "ego" from the dark domain of the "id". That is to say, consciousness shall replace the unconscious; material previously thrust into the unconscious shall be redeemed by the overcoming of "repressions". Psychoanalysis is therefore concerned with undoing the consequences of repression—reversing, that is, the processes of making psychic material unconscious. The concept of repression is of central importance within the psychoanalytic scheme. The chief task of analytic therapy is to wrest repressed experiences from the unconscious, to reinstate them in consciousness and so magnify the power of the ego.

Adler has a different view of this, however.

The key concept of this scheme is that of "arrangement"—which plays a part analogous to that assigned by Freud to repression. Arrangement is the process by which the neurotic seeks to clear himself of guilt. Instead of relegating something to the unconscious, he seeks to relieve himself of the responsibility. The symptom, as it were, assumes the responsibility which the patient therefore need no
longer bear. Individual psychology thus holds that symptoms represent an effort by the patient to justify himself to society or (an aildi) to clear himself in his own eyes. The aim of individual-psychological therapy is to make the neurotic person accept responsibility for his symptoms, include them within his personal sphere of responsibility, and thus strengthen the ego."

These two schools then point out different aspects of man: that he is conscious, and that he is responsible. As we shall see, logotherapy recognizes both of these aspects of man, and integrates them into a complete person.

In addition to their pictures of the general nature of man, these schools differ in their views of psychic illness. Freudian interpretation recognizes only the sexual content of psychic strivings. This pen-sexualism embraces the extreme view that all psychic energy is sexual. It recognizes the validity of psychic strivings (particularly when viewing neurotic symptoms) but reduces them all to one form—sexuality.

Individual psychology does not limit itself solely to sexuality, but also recognizes will to power, status drive and social interest. However, it maintains that psychic strivings do not have a meaning in themselves, but are rather means to an end—that is they constitute an "arrangement" in a man whereby he can clear himself of guilt.

According to logotherapy the former view has depth and the latter has width. Both are needed and logotherapy recognizes the validity of psychic strivings and the variation in these strivings.

A third comparison between psychoanalysis and individual psychotherapy comes in terms of the goals each sets for itself. From the viewpoint of logotherapy these are viewed as stages along the way.
Freudian theory is the first stage.

Its alleged goal is to help bring about a compromise between the demands of the unconscious on the one hand and the requirements of reality on the other. It attempts to adjust the individual with his private drives to the outer world, to reconcile him to reality. This "Reality principle" frequently decrees that certain drives be totally renounced.²

The second state is Adler's individual psychology.

Beyond mere adjustment, it demands of the patient a courageous reshaping of reality, to the id's "must" it opposes the ego's "will".³

Logotherapy takes much from these psychotherapies. From psychoanalysis, logotherapy takes the concepts that man is conscious, that he has genuine psychic strivings, and that he must adjust himself to the world. From individual psychology, it takes the ideas that man is a responsible being, that he has many and diverse psychic strivings, and in contrast to Freud that he must use courage and reshape reality to his own ends as well as adjust himself to the world.

In the view of Frankl, logotherapy goes beyond mere psychotherapy, however. To him the psychotherapies of Freud and Adler, even though they complement and add to each other, still leave something to be desired.

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 is a vector magnitude. It has direction, it is directed toward the value-potentialities of each individual human person. And the realization of those value-potentialities is what life is all about.⁴

This presupposes a philosophy of life beyond that maintained by either Freud or Adler. The origins of this philosophy will be seen next.
As we've seen, logotherapy goes beyond the concepts contained in the psychotherapies of Freud and Adler. It contains other concepts which are derived from existential philosophy, and are directly opposed to some tenets of these psychotherapies. As Frankl sees it, existentialism complements the good but limited basis provided by psychoanalysis and individual psychology.

One area in which existentialism corrects Freud and Adler is what Frankl calls their attitude of "nothing-but-ness". This is their tendency to look at man from a reductionist viewpoint in terms of preconceived theories. It is a form of naturalism called psychologism.

Everywhere, psychologism sees nothing but masks, insists that only neurotic motives lie behind these masks. Art, it asserts, is "in the final analysis nothing but" flight from life or from love. Religion is merely primitive man's fear of cosmic forces. All spiritual creations turn out to be "mere" sublimations of the libido or, as the case may be, compensations for inferiority feelings or means for achieving security. The great creator in the realm of the spirit are then dismissed as neurotics. After we have been put through such a course of "debunking" by psychologism we can with complete complacency say that Goethe or Augustine, for instance, was "really only" a neurotic. This point of view sees nothing for what it is; that is to say, it really sees nothing. Because something at one time was a mask, or nothing but a means to an end, does that make it forever a mask, or nothing but a means to an end? Can there never be anything immediate, genuine, original?

A counter viewpoint to this psychologism is known as phenomenology. This school of thought was started by Edmund Husserl who attempted to reground the philosophy of his time, which was strongly influenced by positivism and naturalism.

Phenomenology advocates the study of facts or direct experiences of facts, or the phenomenon of a human life in its wholeness, at face value, without excluding any factors that may not fit in with a preconceived frame of reference. For example, a chair, to an introspectionist, is an arrangement of lights,
colors, and tactual qualities; to physical science it is a mass occupying space; but to a phenomenologist it is just what one perceives it to be, a chair, someplace to sit."

Logotherapy uses this philosophy when it views people. Frankl notes that more people are coming to psychiatrists these days with problems they used to take to their clergyman—questions concerning the meaning and value of life.

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, at face value. 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. If only for the sake of philosophical fairness, we ought to fight with the same weapons. A doctor should not prescribe a tranquilizer cure for the despair of a man who is grappling with spiritual problems. Rather, with the tools of a "psychotherapy in spiritual terms" he will attempt to give the patient spiritual support, to provide him with some spiritual anchorage.

This points out a new aspect of man apparently lost in psychotherapy before:

What is lost is the dimension that allows man to emerge and rise above the level of the biological and psychological foundations of his existence. This is an important issue, for transcending these foundations and thereby transcending oneself signifies the very act of existing. Self-transcendence, I would say, is the essence of existence; and existence, in turn, means the specifically human mode of being. To the extent to which this mode of being exceeds the psychological frame of reference, the appropriate and adequate approach to existence is not psychological but existential."

Self-transcendence as the specifically human mode of existence implies that man can go beyond the essence, beyond what he is. This is closely
aMn to Sartre's concept that existence precedes essence. "There is at least one being in whom existence preceded essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and... this being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality." According to Sartre man first "appears on the scene" then proceeds to define himself, and he will make himself what he is to be.

Frankl does not agree that man defines his own essence, but does say that given the limitations imposed by his essence, he does decide in large part what he is to be, and he does this by transcending himself. In order for a man to transcend himself he must choose values and goals for his life that are outside of himself. Frankl is fond of quoting Max Scheler who says, "Only he who loses himself—in a worthy cause—can gain a genuine self", and Karl Jaspers who says, "What a person is, he achieves through the cause which he makes his own". This involves two more themes of existentialism—one, that man is free, and two, that a man is singular and unique. For logotherapy, these two go hand in hand, for a man is always deciding from moment to moment according to his own particular situation what he is to do and to become.

Existential philosophy, at least in its emphases that are of particular interest to the psychotherapist, has demonstrated that the existence of man is, in its essence, uniquely concrete and subjective. "The factors of uniqueness and singularity are essential constituents of the meaningfulness of human existence.... For the presentation of human life as singular and unique is an implicit summons to man to actualize in their own lives these unique and singular possibilities". Max Scheler has described such opportunity for responsible action as dealing with "situational values" that must be realized in the one single opportunity of the particular situation. If one does not use the one unique moment for constructive action, then that particular situational value is never attained or realized. It is of course followed by
other situations, but these can never be the same as the one which was passed up. Frankl states the matter in these words: "The meaning of human existence is based upon its irreversible character". The philosophy is eminently religious at this juncture in reminding man that he travels the way of life but once, and in one direction. 11.

Opportunities always arise and a man is free to act upon them, but with this freedom he has a responsibility he cannot avoid. He is responsible for his actions, no matter what it is, even the action of not taking any action. Freedom emphasizes the inner values, and responsibility relates them to outer realities.

Thus existential philosophy has contributed to logotherapy the ideas of the worth of a man in his singularity and uniqueness, his freedom to actualize his potential, and his responsibility to do so. In the next chapter I will endeavor to point up how these existential concepts are emphasized in the theory of logotherapy.
1. The Doctor and the Soul, pp. 3-4
2. Ibid., p. 4
3. Ibid., pp. 7-8
4. Ibid., p. 8
5. Ibid., p. 8
6. Ibid., pp. 15-16
7. The Search for Meaning, p. 51
8. The Doctor and the Soul, p. 11
9. Psychotherapy and Existentialism, p. 74
10. The World's of Existentialism, p. 136
11. The Search for Meaning, p. 49
12. of. The Search for Meaning, p. 50
CHAPTER II

It is a lame creature who calleth himself a physician and he be void of philosophy and know her not. — Paracelsus

In this chapter I intend to show the basic philosophy of logotherapy as existential analysis. Part I shall look at this in general terms, while Part II shall look at it in more specific life situations.

PART I

Gordon W. Allport has called logotherapy a form of "existential psychiatry", and I have attempted to show some of how Frankl considers both psychotherapy and existential philosophy to have contributed to logotherapeutic theory. Frankl says logotherapy organizes the theory underlying its practice under three main headings:

I. Freedom of Will
II. Will to Meaning
III. Meaning of Life.

Basic to and essential for the entire set of assumptions that logotherapy works on is the assumption that man is endowed with a free will. This is determined by referring man to the immediate data of his experience which yields to the phenomenological approach.

Needless to say, the freedom of a finite being such as man is a freedom within limits. Man is not free from conditions, be they biological or psychological or sociological in nature. But he is, and always remains, free to take a stand toward these conditions; he always retains the freedom to choose his attitude toward them. Man is free to rise above the plane of somatic and psychic determinants of his existence. By the same token a new dimension is opened. Man enters the dimension of the noetic in counterdistinction to the somatic and psychic phenomena. He becomes capable of taking a stand not only toward the world but also toward
Maltese is a being capable of reflecting on, and even rejecting himself. He can be his own judge, the judge of his own deeds. In short, the specifically human phenomena linked with one another, self-consciousness and conscience, would not be understandable unless we interpret man in terms of a being capable of detaching himself from himself, leaving the "plane" of the biological and psychological, passing into the "space" of the noological.

The terms poetic and noological in reference to the specifically human dimension come from the Greek "noos" meaning mind or spirit. This dimension could be called the spiritual dimension also, but Frankl prefers not to use that term in English because of the religious connotations. These connotations are not present as he uses the term.

The "will to meaning" may be contrasted both with Freud's "will to pleasure" concept and Adler's "will to power" concept.

In the last analysis, it turns out that both the will to pleasure and the will to power are derivatives of the original will to meaning. Pleasure...is an effect of meaning fulfillment; power is a means to an end. A certain amount of power, such as economic or financial power, is generally a prerequisite for meaning fulfillment. Thus we could say that while the will to pleasure mistakes the effect for the end, the will to power mistakes the means to an end for the end itself.²

However, Frankl says that we are not justified in speaking of wills to pleasure and power, because they are described as unwilling and unconscious, and thus are not on the volitional level. Freud, in particular, urged that motives not be taken at their face value. In this context, Frankl speaks of Freud's concept of the reality principle, which is the capacity of reacting to the demands of the environment, and adjusting behavior accordingly. This is, according
to Freud, an extension of the pleasure principle. Freud maintains that
the reverse could even better be held, for ultimately Freudian theory
presents man as striving to keep equilibrium by satisfying drives and
instincts. This makes reality an instrument to be used in the process
of fulfilling these desires.

What has been sacrificed, however, and hence totally eliminated
in this view of man, is the fundamental fact which lends
itself to a phenomenological analysis—namely, that man is
a being encountering other beings and reaching out for meanings
to fulfill... And this is precisely the reason why I speak
of a will to meaning rather than an need for meaning or a drive
to meaning. If man were really driven to meaning he would
embark on meaning fulfillment solely for the sake of getting
rid of this drive, in order to restore homeostasis within
himself. At the same time, however, he would no longer be
really concerned with meaning itself but rather with his own
equilibrium and thus, in the final analysis, with himself.3

Similarly when man is involved in attempting to actualize himself,
he finds that it cannot be made a matter of direct intention. Instead
it is a side effect of meaning fulfillment. To quote Karl Jaspers
again, "What man is, he ultimately becomes through the cause which he
has made his own".

A man is then oriented to meaning by his will to meaning.

The meaning which a being has to fulfill is something beyond
himself, it is never just himself. Only if this oneness is
retained by meaning, can meaning exert upon a being that demand
quality which yields itself to a phenomenological analysis of
our experience of existence. Only a meaning which is not just,
an expression of the being itself represents a true challenge.4

Man not only is oriented toward meaning but confronts this meaning
within his own existence.

Once meaning orientation turns into meaning confrontation,
that stage of maturation and development is reached in which
freedom—that concept so much emphasized by existentialist
philosophy—becomes responsibility. Man is responsible for
the fulfillment of the specific meaning of his personal life.

Logotherapy sees in responsibility the very essence of human existence. Since man is responsible for fulfilling his specific life's meaning, he has an obligation to obey his conscience, that is his sense of responsibility. Even though man is subject to error, he must still obey his conscience. He must take the risk of committing himself to a cause not worthy of the commitment.

The final question remains—since man is responsible for fulfilling the meaning of his existence, what is the meaning of his existence, and how does he find it.

The question of the meaning of life can be approached in various ways. At the start let us set aside the problem of the meaning and purpose of the world as a whole, or our perplexity at the destiny we experience; our protest against the events that befall us. For the positive answers to all these questions fall into the special pretenses of religion. For the religious man who puts his faith in Providence, there may well be no such problems. For the rest of mankind, the first concern must be to put the question in some fitting form. We must first determine whether it is even permissible to ask about the meaning of the whole, whether such a question itself is meaningful. Actually our interrogation must be confined to the meaning of a part. We cannot begin to question the "purpose" of the universe. Purpose is transcendental to the extent that it is always external to whatever "possesses" it. We can therefore at best grasp the meaning of the universe in the form of a super-meaning, using the word to convey the idea that the meaning of the whole is no longer comprehensible and goes beyond the comprehensible. This concept of meaning would serve as a parallel to the Kantian postulate of reason; our minds require its existence at the same time that it is to our minds unfathomable.

Logotherapy approaches the question as it applies to individual, personal lives. Its task is to help people find meanings for their particular lives. To this end it often becomes necessary to remove erroneous conceptions of the direction of life. For example, many say that the goal for any human action is pleasure or happiness.
This overlooks the intentional quality of all psychic activity. In general, men do not want pleasure; they simply want what they want. Human volition has any number of ends, of the most varied sorts, whereas pleasure would always take the same form whether secured by ethical or unethical behavior. Hence it is evident that adopting the pleasure principle would, on the moral plane, lead to a leveling of all potential human aims. It would become impossible to differentiate one action from another, since all would have the same purpose in view. A sum of money disbursed on good food or given in alms could be said to have served the same purpose: in either case the money went to remove unpleasurable feelings within the spender.7

Frankl teaches that pleasure is but a condition of life, having no reference but itself. As an end in itself it makes life meaningless, for the meaning of existence is outside of that existence. Frankl says, "Life itself teaches most people that we are not here to enjoy ourselves".3 But he is also told by people that they experience happiness in love, art or perhaps in watching a sunset, and never that life is meaningful in these joys.

Joy, however, may make life meaningful only if it itself has meaning. Its meaning cannot lie within itself. In fact it lies outside of itself. For joy is always directed toward an object. Scheler has already shown that joy is an intentional emotion—in contrast to mere pleasure, which he reckons among non-intentional emotions in a category he calls "conditional" emotions. Pleasure, that is, is an emotional condition. Here we are again reminded of Erwin Straus's concept of the "presentist" mode of life. In that mode a person remains in the conditional state of pleasure (say, in intoxication) without reaching out to the realm of objects—which in this case would be the realm of values. Only when the emotions work in terms of values can the individual feel pure "joy". This is the explanation of why joy can never be an end in itself; it itself, as joy cannot be purposed as a goal. How well Kierkegaard expressed this in his maxin that the door to happiness opens outward. Anyone who tries to push this door to happiness open thereby causes it to close still more. The man who is desperately anxious to be happy thereby cuts off his own path to happiness. Thus in the end all striving for happiness—for the supposed "ultimate" in human life—proves to be in itself impossible.9
Life has meaning in terms of values, values which exist independently of the person comprehending them. However, people are unique and individual, so how do values which are objective and independent of people apply to them?

Objective values become concrete duties, are cast in the form of the demands of each day and in personal tasks. The values lying back of these tasks can apparently be reached for only through the tasks. It is quite possible that the whole, of which all concrete obligations are a part, never becomes visible to the individual person, who is limited by the perspective of his day-to-day responsibilities. Every human person constitutes something unique; each situation in life occurs only once. The concrete task of any person is relative to this uniqueness and singularity. Thus every man at any given moment can have only one single task. But this very singularity constitutes the absoluteness of his task. The world of values is therefore seen from the perspective of the individual, but for any given situation there is only one single perspective, which is the appropriate one. Accordingly, absolute rightness exists not in spite of but because of the relativity of individual perspectives.

For each man then, there exists a task for which his uniqueness and singularity is particularly fitted.

But if one should object that he does not know the meaning of his life, that the unique potentialities of his existence are not apparent to him, then we can only reply that his primary task is just this: to find his way to his own proper task, to advance toward the uniqueness and singularity of his own meaning in life. As for this matter of each man's inner potentialities—in other words, how a man is to go about learning what he ought to be from what he is—there is no better answer than that given by Goethe: "How can we learn to know ourselves? Never by reflection, but by action. Try to do your duty and you will soon find out what you are. But what is your duty? The demands of each day." 15

Frankl continues and states that what one's demands are not important. No matter how large or small they are, no matter in what they consist; the important thing is to satisfy them. One who fulfills his daily duties in ordinary life may be greater than one who has
great impact through his actions but who isn’t sufficiently aware of his responsibility.

The person who works at his daily tasks and realizes the values therein, is actualizing what Frankl calls "creative" values. This is the first of the forms of values that logotherapy says is possible to men. The second set are realized in experience and are called "experiential" values.

These latter are realized in receptivity toward the world—for example, in surrender to the beauty of nature or art. The fullness of meaning which such values bring to human life must not be underestimated. The higher meaning of a given moment in human existence can be fulfilled by the mere intensity with which it is experienced, and independent of any action....For even though only a single moment is in question—the greatness of a life can be measured by the greatness of a moment: the height of a mountain range; is not given by the height of some valley, but by that of the tallest peak. In life, too, the peaks decide the meaningfulness of the life, and a single moment can retroactively flood an entire life with meaning.

There is yet a third set of values which are potentially the most meaningful of all.

Life proves to be basically meaningful even when it is neither fruitful in creation nor rich in experience. The third group of values lies precisely in a man’s attitude toward the limiting factors upon his life. His very response to the restraints upon his potentialities provides him with a new realm of values which surely belong among the highest values. Thus an apparently impoverished existence—one which is poor in creative and experiential values—still offers a last, and in fact the greatest opportunity for the realization of values. These values we will call attitudinal values. What is significant is the person’s attitude toward an unalterable fate. The opportunity to realize such attitudinal values is therefore always present whenever a person finds himself confronted by a destiny toward which he can act only by acceptance. The way in which he accepts, the way in which he bears his cross, what courage he manifests in suffering, what dignity he displays in doom and disaster, is the measure of his human fulfillment.
Thus life is never meaningless, no matter what the circumstances, for attitudinal values at least are available to a man as long as he is conscious. Furthermore, as long as he is conscious, he is responsible, so a man is always responsible for his life, and in this responsibility he must realize that his life is never hopeless. One cannot sit back and do nothing because of circumstances, or because of his own shortcomings.

No man is justified in insisting upon his own inadequacy—that is, in demeaning his own potentialities. No matter how discontented with himself a person may be, no matter how he torments himself with brooding on his own failings and how sternly he sits in judgment upon himself—the very fact that he is doing so proves that he is not so poor a creature as he thinks he is. ...a man's moral self-condemnation assumes an ideal of personality, his private ought-to-be. Thus, the man who judges himself harshly has caught sight of a value and is taking part in the world of values. The moment he is able to apply the standard of an ideal to himself, he cannot be entirely valueless any longer. For by that fact he has reached a level of ethical values by which he is redeemed from worthlessness.¹⁴

Up to this point we have seen how logotherapy views life as generally meaningful, and meaningful for every person no matter what his state in life. Every person is individual and unique, and each person's meaning must be discovered by him for his situation in life. Logotherapy, then, cannot be content with merely analyzing life in general and stating its meaning, it must involve itself in the existential, day-to-day questions that confront men where they are. Now logotherapy views man in the situations of death, guilt, suffering, work and love will be treated next.
He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how.

--- Nietzsche

PART II

Logotherapy claims that life is meaningful. It says that life's meaning lies in the values to be realized in life—be they creative, experiential, or attitudinal. These values, although in the world, in the way they confront Man transcend it, and are objective. Man, too, although transcending the world by means of incorporating these values into his life, is in the world and faces them through existential situations. While values are eternal, man exists in time and space, and because of this experiences his finitude.

One of the ways he does this is through what Frankl calls the "tragic triad of human existence", consisting of death, guilt, and suffering. Of these three the first might be said to relate to the future, the second to the past, and the third to the present.

The major tenet of logotherapy is that life has meaning. In view of this how does the tragic triad fit into the life of meaning?

Death for many cancels out any meaning to life.

Now, does death really decrease the meaningfulness of life? On the contrary. For what would our lives be like if they were not finite in time, but infinite? If we were immortal, we could legitimately postpone every action forever. It would be of no consequence whether or not we did a thing now; every act might just as well be done tomorrow or the day after or a year from now or ten years hence. But in the face of death as absolute finis to our future and boundary to our possibilities, we are under the imperative of utilizing our lifetimes to the utmost, not letting the singular opportunities—whose "finite" sum constitutes the whole of life—pass by unused.

Death, then, does not cancel life's meaning but actually contributes
to it. It also adds to one's responsibility in life, and responsibility, for Frankl, is the essence of human life. Indeed, "The meaning of human existence is based on its irreversible quality."16. Life is like a stone slab out of which a man must create sculpture.

We need only imagine that the sculptor has a limited span of time at his disposal for completing his work of art—but that he is not informed when his deadline is. Thus he never knows when he is going to be "called away", whether the summons may not come in the very next minute. He is therefore forced to use his time well in any case—lest his work remain abortive.17.

If time runs out on him, though, it doesn't mean that all his work is meaningless. After all some of the most beautiful symphonies are the "unfinisheds".

Others state that life does indeed have meaning but it is in raising children and giving them a good life. Frankl says this is perpetually postponing the meaning of any generation to the next generation; hence, making it meaningless because no generation would have meaning.

Either life has a meaning and retains this meaning whether it is long or short, whether or not it reproduces itself; or life has not meaning, in which case it takes on none, no matter how long it lasts or can go on reproducing itself.18.

In view of death, then, one acts, accomplishes deeds, and actualizes values to be preserved and saved. Once passed by they can never be returned to, and the opportunity is lost, but if actualized they are preserved forever.

Closely related to the meaning of death is the meaning of guilt. As it is meaningful to act in the face of death, it is meaningful to improve one's acts in the face of guilt. Guilt comes from the knowledge of having acted incorrectly in the past. Here a man failed his respons-
ibility, and he knows the action cannot be changed.

What man has done cannot be undone. Whereas he is responsible for what he has done, he is not free to undo it. As a rule, being human implies being free and responsible. In the exceptional case of guilt, however, man still is responsible but no longer free. While arbitrariness is freedom without responsibility, guilt is responsibility without freedom—without freedom, that is except for the freedom to choose the right attitude to guilt. Through the right attitude unchangeable suffering is transmuted into a heroic and victorious achievement. In the same fashion, a man who has failed by a deed cannot change what happened, but by repentance he can change himself.79

Its meaning is in this: that it calls man to improve himself. Everything is in the man's attitude. A right attitude here is a right attitude to himself.

Both death and suffering emphasize the responsibility in man, and in regard to both of these Viktor Frankl says: "In general, 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."20

The third member of the tragic triad is suffering and for many this is the most mystifying of them all. Logotherapy maintains that there is meaning even there. Our attitude toward suffering is what is crucial. Its meaning can only be seen when we accept it.

Ultimately, however, this meaning cannot be grasped by merely intellectual means, for it supersedes essentially—or to speak more specifically, dimensionally—man's capacity as a finite being. I try to indicate this fact by the term "super-meaning." This meaning necessarily transcends man and his world and, therefore, cannot be approached by merely rational processes. It is rather accessible to an act of commitment which emerges out of the depth and center of man's personality and is thus rooted in his total existence. What we have to deal with is not an intellectual or rational process, but
a wholly existential act which perhaps could be described by what I call Unvertrauen zum Dasein, "the basic trust in Being." 21.

For those who aim toward the goal of success, this idea of suffering as meaningful may seem especially mysterious. However, if we consider our value judgments in life, many actions are considered to have dignity independently of whether or not they are successful.

The untenability of the cult of success becomes obvious as soon as we consider the moral problem of sacrifice. Insofar as a sacrifice is "calculated", performed after careful reckoning of the prospects of its bringing about a desired end, it loses all ethical significance. Real sacrifice occurs only when we run the risk of having sacrificed in vain. Would anyone maintain that a person who plunges into the water to save someone has acted less ethically, or unethically, because both are drowned? Do we not rather presuppose this risk when we assign a high ethical standing to the rescuer's action? Consider what a high ethical rating we place upon the life of a man who has fought vainly but heroically—and has died heroically but not vainly. 22.

Since Frankl says success is not the criterion of determining whether or not suffering has meaning, what is it about suffering that renders our attitudes toward it capable of meaningfulness?

Suffering has a meaning in itself. In suffering from something we move inwardly away from it, we establish a distance between our personality and this something. As long as we are still suffering from a condition that ought not to be, we remain in a state of tension between what actually is on the one hand and what ought to be on the other hand. And only while in this state of tension can we continue to envision the ideal... Suffering, therefore, establishes a fruitful, one might say a revolutionary, tension in that it makes for emotional awareness of what ought not to be. 23.

Thus, "Suffering is intended to guard man from apathy, from psychic rigor mortis." As long as man experiences suffering he experiences imperfection and knows that something more can be done.

Suffering and guilt when faced squarely are hard on the feelings,
both physical and emotional, and for that reason many try to escape them by dulling the feelings. Very often this is done through narcotization or intoxication, but this does not get rid of the problem, only an unpleasant feeling of it, and that only temporarily. Narcotization, or dulling of the feelings in general, Frankl says, leads only to spiritual anestheisia.

But just as surgical anestheisia can induce death, so spiritual anestheisia can lead to a kind of spiritual death. Consistent suppression of intrinsically meaningful emotional impulses because of their possible unpleasant tone ends in the killing of a person's inner life. A sense of the meaning of emotional experiences is deeply rooted in human beings, as the following example indicates. There is a type of melancholia in which sadness is conspicuous by its absence. Instead, the patients complain that they cannot feel sad enough, that they cannot cry out their melancholy, that they are emotionally cold and inwardly dead. Such patients are suffering from what we call melancholia anesthesica. Anyone acquainted with such cases knows that greater despair can scarcely exist than the despair of such persons because they are unable to be sad.25

Anesthesia is also a type of sleep or inactivity, but human life when inactive becomes boring. This is also very unpleasant, but to escape it, one must be active. However, "activity does not exist for the purpose of our escaping boredom; rather, boredom exists so that we will escape inactivity and do justice to the meaning of our life."26

Life, then, seems to be a struggle to avoid boredom or suffering, unless one either kills himself or accepts all the elements as meaningful because life itself is meaningful. In doing the latter, one can ennoble himself immensely. Frankl warns us, however, not to accept all suffering as unavoidable. If someone merely endures what he can change, he is not actualizing the potential values there,
whereas, to endure the inevitable is everything. The latter could be called noble misfortune, while the former could be called ignoble misfortune, for it is nobody's fault but the person's own.

The meaning of life, we have said, is not to be questioned but to be responded to, for we are responsible to life. It follows from this that the response should be given not in words, but in acting, by doing. Moreover, the correct response depends upon the situation and the person in all his concreteness. The response, so to speak, must have incorporated that concreteness into itself. The right response will therefore be an active response within the actual conditions of everyday living, within the area of human responsibility. 27

The consciousness of one's responsibility arises out of his awareness of a personal task—a "mission". As long as creative values are primary in this task, their actualization usually coincides with a person's work, which in turn "usually represents the area in which the individual's uniqueness stands in relation to society and thus acquires meaning and value." 28

Frankl emphasizes the word "usual" here, for in work one's value is to the society, not to the job as such. Thus while one's work is the usual means for fulfilling one's unique potentialities, it is still true that this or that particular occupation is not necessarily the one. The work does not make a person indispensable, but does give him the chance to make himself indispensable. What a person brings to his job—any job—as a personality, as a human being, is what gives him his particular role. Almost anyone can fulfill the pure mechanics of a job; what goes beyond this is the person's individuality. Frankl maintains that every job allows for this, even assembly line mass
producers, for one still relates to his fellow workers and also produces something for another's use which he can personally be proud of.

He also warns us not to conceive of work as a means to the end of earning money, for that is not an end either. In this case livelihood overshadows life. People who do substitute the means for the end find their lives meaningless when Sunday comes around or when they become unemployed. Then they don't know what to do; and worse, if this attitude is continued, studies show that people tend to become apathetic. Frankl states that what underlies this "is a false identification of one's calling with the life task to which one is called."29. The creative satisfactions of life are not identical with one's work, and one must not devote oneself to his work to the exclusion of pleasure, not vice versa. Frankl believes that both are neurotic conditions. Such persons should realize that "Where love is lacking, work becomes a substitute; where work is lacking, love becomes an opiate."30.

In the light of the above, love is shown to be a complement to work; whereas the latter realizes creative values, love has its worth in the experiential realm of values.

Love is living the experience of another person in all his uniqueness and singularity....In love the beloved person is comprehended in his very essence, as the unique and singular being that he is; he is comprehended as a Thou, and as such is taken into the self. As a human person he becomes for the one who loves him indispensable and irreplaceable without having done anything to bring this about. The person who is loved "can't help" having the uniqueness and singularity of his self—that is, the value of his personality—realized. Love is not reserved, is unmerited—it is simply grace.31.

Love also has other value besides grace. It opens one to the
experience of values in general. Love does not make one blind but seeing in the realm of values. Also through love, a new, unique and singular life can enter into the world.

According to Frankl, as man is a physical-psychic-spiritual being, he can have three different attitudes toward love, corresponding to each dimension. The first, and most primitive is the sexual attitude which is concerned purely with the physical attractiveness of the other person. The second step, which Frankl calls the erotic attitude—using erotic in this special sense—is what is commonly called infatuation. Beyond the physical traits of a person, one is also attracted by the person's character traits. This is still not the core of a person's being, however, for character traits are shared by many, and are what a person "has" rather than what he "is".

The third level is love itself where one becomes aware of the spiritual dimension and finally sees the person in his totality—as himself. "Love, then, is an entering into a direct relationship with the personality of the beloved, with the beloved's uniqueness and singularity."32.

When one loves, he is not satisfied with an exact duplicate physically and psychically of the beloved; he wants the beloved himself. One who is infatuated may be able to accept this duplicate, but the object of a true love is irreplaceable and inexchangeable.

It follows from this that true love is its own warrant of permanence. For a physical state passes, and a psychological state is also impermanent. Sexual excitement is only temporary; the sex drive vanishes promptly after gratification. And infatuation, too, is seldom of long duration. But the
spiritual act by which the person comprehends the spiritual core of another outlasts itself; to the degree that the content of that act is valid, it is valid once and for all.... Love is more than an emotional condition; love is an intentional act. What it intends is the essence of the other person. This essence is ultimately independent of existence; ...in that sense we can understand why love is "stronger" than death. The existence of the beloved may be annihilated by death, but his essence cannot be touched by death. His unique being is, like all true essences, something timeless and thus imperishable."

For this reason, then, the attitude of "having" a woman, or "having" a man is not love. It is superficial eroticism at best. Sex is indeed a mature expression of self and mutuality in love however, for it is an expression of a spiritual intention.

The consuming idea concerning love is that there is no such thing as unrequited love. As one loves, he realizes experiential values, and as values only enrich a person, when one loves he enriches himself whether it is returned or not. So much the better if it is, though. Then not only do two instead of just one realize these values, but each sees the other in terms of potentialities as well as actualities, and each wants to become as the other sees him; so both improve creatively as well. As Goethe says, "If we take man as he is, we make him worse, if we take him as he ought to be, we help him become it."

Now that logotherapy has been seen in some existential situations, the question remains: what does it do as a therapy for people with existential neuroses in these areas? This topic will be considered in the next chapter.
cf. *Phenomenology Pure and Applied*, p. 43

1. *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 3
6. *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 25
19. *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, p. 90
20. *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 52
21. *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, pp. 56-7
22. *The Doctor and the Soul*, p. 85
24. The Doctor and the Soul, p. 88
25. Ibid., p. 89
26. Ibid., p. 89
27. Ibid., p. 94
28. Ibid., p. 95
29. Ibid., p. 99
30. Ibid., p. 102
31. Ibid., p. 106
32. Ibid., p. 108
33. Ibid., pp. 109-10

** cf. Phenomenology Pure and Applied, p. 54
CHAPTER XXI

In this chapter I will attempt to show how logotherapy analyzes a few neurotic and psychotic conditions in the light of existential analysis, and then uses the insights gained in the treatment of patients having these symptoms.

Psychotherapy endeavors to bring instinctual facts to consciousness. Logotherapy, on the other hand, seeks to bring to awareness the spiritual realities. As existential analysis it is particularly concerned with making man conscious of their responsibility—since being responsible is one of the essential grounds of human existence. If to be human is, as we have said, to be conscious and responsible, then existential analysis is psychotherapy whose starting-point is consciousness of responsibility.

Viktor Frankl has noted a phenomenon in the modern world which is on the increase. This phenomenon is characterized by meaninglessness or a lack of a sense of direction to one's life. Frankl terms this the "existential vacuum" or "existential frustration". This spiritual distress is a sign of something very human and is not a mental disease. However, it sometimes manifests itself in neurotic symptoms. These are called existential neuroses by Dr. Frankl.

He has developed specific therapy beyond psychotherapeutic means to deal with a person who has these problems. These neuroses affect the noetic dimension of man as well as his physical and psychic dimensions. Logotherapeutical means treat this dimension, whereas other psychotherapies miss it. Frankl realizes, of course, that neurosis has more dimensions than just the existential, and accordingly does not treat a person with only logotherapeutic techniques, for
these are for a person's nastic dimension, where he takes a particular attitude toward his disease. To see how logotherapy does treat a person, let us look at some of these neuroses in the light of existential analysis.

Logotherapy looks at a neurotic symptom as a direct expression of the person first, and secondly as a means to an end. What the symptom expresses differs with each person, but when it is used as a means to an end, as for example in keeping a person from doing something, it is subordinated to the particular expression.

Anxiety neurosis manifests itself in phobic reactions. A person exhibits fear of heights (acrophobia), closed in places (claustrophobia) and so forth. Frankl says this is often a condensation of an existential fear onto some concrete entities. This existential anxiety is a fear of death and at the same time of life generally. What is needed is a sense of obligation to life, and in fulfilling this life becomes meaningful. Also with a sense of accomplishment for life, the "pang of conscience" disappears and death is no longer fearful.

The anxiety neurotic tries to seek absolute security because he is afraid of life as a whole. This absolute security is impossible so he seeks a specific area in which to have it. Perhaps he will avoid heights, open-spaces, or something similar. He is unable to accept the provisionality of human existence in reality, and so exaggerates a subjective reality as his existence.

The obsessive neurotic having an existential root for his sufferings also strives for security. He wants to have 100% order in all of life,
and intellectually he is then secure. Human cognition cannot see the order in everything, however, so the obsessive neurotic again condenses this attitude to a specific area. One may compulsively wash his hands, another may greatly emphasize punctuality, and a third make sure everything in her house is spotlessly clean.

Two points are stressed here by Frankl: one, that a person is not responsible for his obsessional ideas; but two, that he is responsible for his attitude toward those ideas. What Frankl says lies behind the obsessional neurotic's ideas is the lack of a normal sense of obviousness. For the normal person it is obvious that 2+2=4, but perhaps for the neurotic there is an irrational residue of thought left over after thinking this out. This is intolerable for him so he must set out to destroy it instead of just disregarding it as most people do. Thus he undertakes the process of thought over again, which leaves less residue, but never destroys it completely. Corresponding to this lack of a sense of the obvious in intellectual activity is a lack of instinctive certainty in volitional activity. This causes scrupulosity and must be compensated for by special alertness and special conscientiousness. It can also lead to forced artificial self-scrutiny due to his lack of confidence in himself. Thus he becomes compulsive in one area in trying to maintain perfection there and/or indecisive in even trivial matters because he doesn't have the certainty he wants to make the decision. His sense of responsibility is also weak or he would realize that while the choices for action presented don't seem good, not to act at all is to choose nothing and to make the most unscrupulous decision of all.
Another problem having the same basis is that of endogenous depression or melancholia. Physically melancholia is a low in the vital processes, no less and no more. An existential anxiety accompanies this however, that Frankl says goes beyond the physical and psychic levels.

What the vital low, the physiological basis of melancholia, produces is solely a feeling of insufficiency. But more than the physiological illness has come into play when this insufficiency is experienced as a feeling of inadequacy in the face of a task. An animal, too, can have anxiety, but only a human being can have conscientious anxiety and guilt feelings. For only the human being is faced with obligations that arise out of the responsibility of his being. Human psychoses are inconceivable in an animal; hence the element of humanity, of existentiality, must be crucial to these psychoses. The organic condition underlying psychoses is always transposed into the properly human sphere before it becomes the psychotic experience.*

This existential anxiety is similar to the previous one in that there is fear of death due to a feeling of a lack of accomplishment in life. This is greatly exaggerated, aggravated by the physical low, and the gap between what he is and what he should be becomes an abyss in the eyes of the melancholiacs. Stung in his conscience, that is in his sense of responsibility, and seeing his life goal as unattainable, he loses his sense of aim and sense of the future.

Steeped as he is in a feeling of his own insufficiency, the melancholiac becomes blind to the values inherent in his own being. This valuational blindness is later extended to the world around him as well. That is, while at first blindness may be called central, affecting only his own ego, it can progress centrifugally and lead to the blotting out of the valuational shadings of the whole of reality. But as long as the person's ego alone is affected, the melancholiac feels a drastic drop in his own value compared to that of the world. This explains the violent inferiority feeling of the melancholiac. The melancholiac feels himself as worthless and his own life as meaningless.5
Existential analysis may also be used in cases of schizophrenia. Interviewing many schizophrenic patients, Frankl found that they all share a common element in their experiences—they experience themselves as objects. One may feel he is the object of a movie camera, another the object of a person’s thinking and so forth. This is a delusional feeling of the “experience of pure objectness”.

The schizophrenic experiences himself as if he, the subject, were transformed into an object. He experiences himself thinking, watching, observing, influencing, listening, eavesdropping, seeking, and persecuting, taking still or moving pictures, etc., the schizophrenic experiences all these acts and intentions, these psychic functions, as if they were being rendered in the passive; he “is being” observed, “is being” thought about, etc. In other words, in schizophrenia there takes place an experiential passivizing of the psychic functions. We consider this to be a universal law of the psychology of schizophrenia.

Another aspect of schizophrenia, which Frankl calls “hypotonia of consciousness”, taking the term from Berze, is like the thought of the somnolent person who falls asleep with uncompleted thoughts. The thoughts are there, but only in a skeletal form and are not filled out.

With both of these factors in mind, we see that Frankl interprets schizophrenia as limiting the ego both in terms of consciousness and responsibility. Thus the schizophrenic person experiences himself as no longer fully human, no longer really “existent”.

If in conclusion we survey the findings of special existential analysis concerning the essential differences among the obsessional-neurotic, melancholic, and schizophrenic modes of experience, we may sum up as follows: The obsessional neurotic suffers from hyper-awareness. The schizophrenic suffers from hypotonia of consciousness. The schizophrenic experiences a restriction of the ego both qua consciousness and qua responsibility (experience of pure objectness as principle of
passivizing). This is a basic distinction between the schizotypic and the melancholic. For the morbidity of the melancholic could be understood in existential-analytic terms only as a shaping of the disease process by the human person—that is, as a mode of humanness. In the schizophrenic, however, existential analysis has shown that the person’s very humanness is also affected, is itself shaped by the disease process. Nevertheless, even for the schizophrenic there remains that residue of freedom toward fate and toward the disease which man always possesses, no matter how ill he may be, in all situations and at every moment of life, to the very last.5

One method developed by Frankl to deal with the existential aspects of some of these problems in people is that known as paradoxical intention. This is used particularly with anxiety neuroses and obsessive neuroses. In the former case an individual may be so anxious about his anxiety that what he fears he helps bring about, as in the case of an erythrophobic person who is afraid of blushing when entering a room full of people and will do so at exactly that instant. An obsessive neurotic fighting against his obsessions parallels this. The harder he fights the worse the obsession becomes, and the more fearful he becomes of actualizing his obsession, especially one to commit suicide or homicide.

A third parallel can be seen in the case of neurotics fighting for something—as in the sexual neurotic intending to gain pleasure through sexual intercourse. The more he concentrates on the act itself, rather than his partner, the more difficult the pleasure is to find.

Paradoxical intention invites the person in such a case to intend exactly what he fears. For example, in the first case mentioned, it would have the person deliberately try to blush as much as possible
when entering the room. This requires no small amount of courage on
the part of the patient, and it is often necessary to use much persuasion
prior to paradoxical intention to get the patient to try it. The idea
is to reverse the patient's attitude toward his phobia or obsessions and
this in itself often takes the wind out of the phobia's or obsession's
sails.

This procedure, however, must make use of the specifically human
capacity for self-detachment inherent in a sense of humor.
That is why paradoxical intention is carried out in an humorous
setting as possible. This enable the patient to put himself
at a distance from the symptom, to detach himself from his
neurosis.

Frankl believes humor to be in the noetic dimension of man, thus
making it a specifically human quality.

The humorous formulations of its method are based on a
restoration of basic trust in being (or, as I have called
it in German, Unvertrauen zum Dasein). What transpires is
essentially more than a change of behavior patterns; rather,
it is an existential reorientation (existentielle Umschaltung).

As with any other psychotherapeutic method, paradoxical intention
is no panacea, but one study reported an 83.2% cure or considerable
improvement in the cases reviewed.

Another method used by Frankl is called de-reflection. Its purpose
is to counteract the compulsion to self-observation (called hyper-reflection
by logotherapists) and observed in many neurotics especially those
displaying anticipatory anxiety. It is also often true with those
having insomnia when not only do they attempt to force themselves to
sleep but watch to see if they indeed are doing so.

While paradoxical intention has the patient ridicule his symptoms,
de-reflection has him ignore them by focusing his attention elsewhere.
De-reflection can only be attained to the degree to which the patient's awareness is directed toward positive aspects. The patient must be de-reflected from his disturbance to the task at hand. He must be reoriented toward his specific vocation and mission in life. In other words, he must be confronted with the logos of his existence. It is not the neurotic's self-concern, whether pity or contempt, which breaks the vicious circle; the cue to cure is self-commitment.8

This follows the philosophy of logotherapy exactly in that it makes the person centered in the only thing which integrates his life—the meaning of it.

In conclusion it must be remembered that logotherapy attempts to change a person's attitude toward his neuroses in so far as he is responsible for his attitudes. There are four possible attitudes here.

I. Wrong Passivity: This is the fleeing from situations feared as in anxiety neuroses or phobic reactions.

II. Wrong Activity: This is the fighting against obsessive ideas due to a fear of their control over one; or the struggle for something which should not be made an end in itself.

III. Right Passivity: Instead of fleeing or fighting his symptoms, one uses paradoxical intention and is able to laugh at them.

IV. Right Activity: This is the use of de-reflection to ignore one's symptoms by refocusing his attention and striving for the unique meaning of his life.

Thus we see that in its practice, logotherapy is consistent with its philosophy, and uses techniques which enable a person to transcend himself and direct his attention to the meaning and responsibility of his life. To enable him to reach that goal is precisely the purpose of existential analysis and logotherapy.
1. The Doctor and the Soul, p. 20
2. Ibid., pp. 162-3
3. Ibid., p. 164
4. Ibid., p. 169
5. Ibid., p. 174
6. Ibid., p. 181
7. Ibid., p. 193
8. Ibid., p. 208

* cf. The Doctor and the Soul, p. 168
The physician who is also a philosopher is like unto the gods.

—Hippocrates

A joke sometimes heard about the medical profession has a world famous surgeon leaving the operating room and smiling broadly as he says, "The operation was a success!" Then as he moves on he says, "Unfortunately, the patient died."

This is only a joke, but quite seriously Viktor Frankl asks us if when a surgeon has finished in the operating room his responsibility ends. What if the patient commits suicide later because he cannot bear to live as a cripple? Or, in another case is the psychiatrist limited to showing a patient why he's afraid of open spaces? Frankl says no. "The aim of psychotherapy, especially psychoanalysis, has been secular confession; the aim of logotherapy, especially existential analysis, is medical ministry."¹

Medical ministry is not intended as a substitute for religion or psychotherapy, but as a supplement to both. It is for the man whom religion cannot provide security and whose psychic problems extend into the spiritual, or metaphysical realm.

Many psychiatrists note that more and more people are coming to psychotherapists with problems they used to take to ministers, priests, or rabbis—problems concerning their meaning in life. A doctor is licensed by the state to maintain people's health in the community. When a person comes to a doctor with questions profoundly disturbing him, Frankl states it is the doctor's duty to work for the patient's health in body, mind, and spirit, in any way possible. For a healthy soul, a healthy philosophy is essential—one that shows a person's specific goal in life.
The doctor is not like the clergyman, however, in that he cannot prescribe certain doctrines to one of similar belief. The patient must discover his meaning for himself, with the doctor only showing the necessity for finding this meaning. Perhaps he can help indirectly by suggesting directions or reducing choices to common denominators, but ultimately the choice is the patient's own. What values he chooses are entirely up to him so long as he chooses some.

The rule is general and does admit of exceptions, though. For example if the doctor is working with a potential suicide where it might be fatal to leave the decision making entirely to the patient, the doctor should and must come into the process until the patient is able to carry it again.

Medical ministry should also be used where "fated" conditions exist, as where one has an incurable disease, or is permanently crippled, and the like. It can also be used with people caught in the grip of social evils, as with the unemployed or poverty stricken people. These people must be made to see that life's meaning does not consist in whether or not one can see, whether or not one is working at a stimulating job, but solely in the opportunities, or even better, challenges life presents to each individual in his own situation. There is no situation exclusive of this!

1. The Doctor and the Soul, p. 220
When delving into any thinker such as Viktor Frankl, one tends to apply some things to himself and see whether they seem to fit or not. At this point I would like to share some of the personal impressions I've had studying Viktor Frankl.

At one point speaking of consciousness of responsibility he says:

It is by no means lacking in imperative ness: once that consciousness has been awakened in an individual, he will spontaneously and automatically seek, find, and traverse the way to his particular goal.

From what he says elsewhere, I believe he is talking about an awareness in depth. Granted there are different degrees of awareness, but I dispute his statement here that one will "automatically" seek his goal once he is aware of his responsibility.

He's certainly had more experience than I have in this regard, and he may know something I do not, but that statement certainly seems untrue. Judging from my own self-experience and observing those around me, I would say that many people find that although they realize their responsibility to reach a certain goal, they do not want to, and thus do not seek it. Frankl apparently assumes that awareness and desire go hand in hand. It reminds me of Socrates saying that all men would seek the right once they knew what it was. Frankl also seems inconsistent with this statement in view of his emphasis on the freedom of will. Man can then reject meaning if he is as free as Frankl insists he is.

Another impression I have is that he definitely writes more as a psychiatrist than a philosopher, and he writes on a common sense level rather than on the level of formal argument. What he states as true he backs up by appealing to real-life experiences. Granted he
refers to this as the phenomenological viewpoint, but he nonetheless treats phenomenology as if it is only a technical term for common sense. He also backs up his statements more with case histories than argument—some of them quite dubious to my mind for demonstrating his point.

Again, he takes a rather didactic approach. Instead of presenting his case and letting the reader decide, as he urges a logotherapist to do with a patient, he attempts to win over the reader to his point of view. I would like to say that I do accept his concepts that man is free, that he wants to find meaning in his life, that he confronts this meaning outside himself as a challenge to be met. And because of his freedom it is his responsibility to himself to fulfill this meaning. Though this fulfillment of meaning he will find his own fulfillment.

Finally, although I criticize his presentation somewhat, it remains impressive to me that he can truly state his views with conviction, for he lived them in a concentration camp, and he only emerged stronger in his convictions. This has shaped his views perhaps too much, but even this he admits candidly.

I am quite aware of the fact that you may now reproach me for having produced a caricature of that image of man which I have contended I would correct. And perhaps there is something in it. Perhaps I have really been one-sided; perhaps I have exaggerated when I sensed the threatening danger of nihilism.... behind many a theory and unconscious philosophical system of modern psychotherapy; perhaps I am really hypersensitive to the slightest suggestion of nihilism. But if that is the case, please understand that I am hypersensitive only because I have had to overcome nihilism within myself. And that is perhaps why I am so capable of smelling 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 in the other's eye as well because I have had to tear the beam out of my own. 

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2. Psychotherapy and Existentialism, pp. 130-1
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