TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER,

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Preface

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

In this book, Dr. Frankl explains the experience which led to his discovery of logotherapy. As a longtime prisoner in bestial concentration camps he found himself stripped to naked existence. His father, mother, brother, and his wife died in camps or were sent to the gas ovens, so that, excepting for his sister, his entire family perished in these camps. How could he—every possession lost, every value destroyed, suffering from hunger, cold and brutality, hourly expecting extermination—how could he find life worth preserving? A psychiatrist who personally has faced such extremity is a psychiatrist worth listening to. He, if anyone, should be

your knowledge. Then you will live to see that in the long run—in the long run, I say! —success will follow you precisely because you had *forgotten* to think of it."

The reader may ask me why I did not try to escape what was in store for me after Hitler had occupied Austria. Let me answer by recalling the following story. Shortly before the United States entered World War II, I received an invitation to come to the American Consulate in Vienna to pick up my immigration visa. My old parents were overjoyed because they expected that I would soon be allowed to leave Austria. I suddenly hesitated, however. The question beset me: could I really afford to leave my parents alone to face their fate, to be sent, sooner or later, to a concentration camp, or even to a so-called extermination camp? Where did my responsibility lie? Should I foster my brain child, logotherapy, by emigrating to fertile soil where I could write my books? Or should I concentrate on my duties as a real child, the child of my parents who had to do whatever he could to protect them? I pondered the problem this way and that but could not arrive at a solution; this was the type of dilemma that made one wish for "a hint from Heaven," as the phrase goes.

It was then that I noticed a piece of marble lying on a table at home. When I asked my father about it, he explained that he had found it on the site where the National Socialists had burned down the largest Viennese synagogue. He had taken the piece home because it was a part of the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. One gilded Hebrew letter was engraved on the piece; my father explained that this letter stood for one of the Commandments. Eagerly I asked, "Which one is it?" He answered, "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land." At that moment I decided to stay with my father and my mother upon the land, and to let the American visa lapse.

VIKTOR E. FRANKL

Vienna, 1992

in his strength to carry on, and, once lost, the will to live seldom returned.

When one examines the vast amount of material which has been amassed as the result of many prisoners' observations and experiences, three phases of the inmate's mental reactions to camp life become apparent: the period following his admission; the period when he is well entrenched in camp routine; and the period following his release and liberation.

The symptom that characterizes the first phase is shock. Under certain conditions shock may even precede the prisoner's formal admission to the camp. I shall give as an example the circumstances of my own admission.

Fifteen hundred persons had been traveling by train for several days and nights: there were eighty people in each coach. All had to lie on top of their luggage, the few remnants of their personal possessions. The carriages were so full that only the top parts of the windows were free to let in the grey of dawn. Everyone expected the train to head for some munitions factory, in which we would be employed as forced labor. We did not know whether we were still in Silesia or already in Poland. The engine's whistle had an uncanny sound, like a cry for help sent out in commiseration for the unhappy load which it was destined to lead into perdition. Then the train shunted, obviously nearing a main station. Suddenly a cry broke from the ranks of the anxious passengers, "There is a sign, Auschwitz!" Everyone's heart missed a beat at that moment. Auschwitz—the very name stood for all that was horrible: gas chambers, crematoriums, massacres. Slowly, almost hesitatingly, the train moved on as if it wanted to spare its passengers the dreadful realization as long as possible: Auschwitz!

With the progressive dawn, the outlines of an immense camp became visible: long stretches of several rows of barbed wire fences; watch towers; search lights; and long columns of ragged human figures, grey in the greyness of dawn, trekking along the straight desolate roads, to what destination we did not know. There were isolated shouts and whistles of command. We did not know their meaning. My imagination led me to see gallows with people dangling on them. I was horrified, but this was just as well, because step by step we had to become accustomed to a terrible and immense horror.

Eventually we moved into the station. The initial silence was interrupted by shouted commands. We were to hear those rough, shrill tones from then on, over and over again in all the camps. Their sound was almost like the last cry of a victim, and yet there was a difference. It had a rasping hoarseness, as if it came from the throat of a man who had to keep shouting like that, a man who was being murdered again and again. The carriage doors were flung open and a small detachment of prisoners stormed inside. They wore striped uniforms, their heads were shaved, but they looked well fed. They spoke in every possible European tongue, and all with a certain amount of humor, which sounded grotesque under the circumstances. Like a drowning man clutching a straw, my inborn optimism (which has often controlled my feelings even in the most desperate situations) clung to this thought: These prisoners look quite well, they seem to be in good spirits and even laugh. Who knows? I might manage to share their favorable position.

In psychiatry there is a certain condition known as "delusion of reprieve." The condemned man, immediately before his execution, gets the illusion that he might be reprieved at the very last minute. We, too, clung to shreds of hope and believed to the last moment that it would not be so bad. Just the sight of the red cheeks and round faces of

words were misleading. One prisoner, the doctor of a block, of huts and a man of some sixty years, told me how he had
entreated Dr. M to let off his son, who was destined for
gas. Dr. M coldly refused.)

"But one thing I beg of you"; he continued, "shave daily, if at all possible, even if you have to use a piece of glass to do it . . . even if you have to give your last piece of bread for it. You will look younger and the scraping will make your cheeks look ruddier. If you want to stay alive, there is only one way: look fit for work. If you even limp, because, let us say, you have a small blister on your heel, and an SS man spots this, he will wave you aside and the next day you are sure to be gassed. Do you know what we mean by a 'Moslem'? A man who looks miserable, down and out, sick and emaciated, and who cannot manage hard physical labor any longer . . . that is a 'Moslem.' Sooner or later, usually sooner, every 'Moslem' goes to the gas chambers. Therefore, remember: shave, stand and walk smartly; then you need not be afraid of gas. All of you standing here, even if you have only been here twenty-four hours, you need not fear gas, except perhaps you." And then he pointed to me and said, "I hope you don't mind my telling you frankly." To the others he repeated, "Of all of you he is the only one who must fear the next selection. So, don't worry!"

And I smiled. I am now convinced that anyone in my place on that day would have done the same.

I think it was Lessing who once said, "There are things which must cause you to lose your reason or you have none to lose." An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior. Even we psychiatrists expect the reactions of a man to an abnormal situation, such as being committed to an asylum, to be abnormal in proportion to the

But even they kept on reminding us that an ordinary laborer did several times as much work as we did, and in a shorter time. But they did see reason if they were told that a normal workman did not live on 10-1/2 ounces of bread (theoretically—actually we often had less) and 1-3/4 pints of thin soup per day; that a normal laborer did not live under the mental stress we had to submit to, not having news of our families, who had either been sent to another camp or gassed right away; that a normal workman was not threatened by death continuously, daily and hourly. I even allowed myself to say once to a kindly foreman, "If you could learn from me how to do a brain operation in as short a time as I am learning this road work from you, I would have great respect for you." And he grinned.

Apathy, the main symptom of the second phase, was a necessary mechanism of self-defense. Reality dimmed, and all efforts and all emotions were centered on one task: preserving one's own life and that of the other fellow. It was typical to hear the prisoners, while they were being herded back to camp from their work sites in the evening, sigh with relief and say, "Well, another day is over."

It can be readily understood that such a state of strain, coupled with the constant necessity of concentrating on the task of staying alive, forced the prisoner's inner life down to a primitive level. Several of my colleagues in camp who were trained in psychoanalysis often spoke of a "regression" in the camp inmate—a retreat to a more primitive form of mental life. His wishes and desires became obvious in his dreams.

What did the prisoner dream about most frequently? Of bread, cake, cigarettes, and nice warm baths. The lack of having these simple desires satisfied led him to seek wish-fulfillment in dreams. Whether these dreams did any good

is another matter; the dreamer had to wake from them to the reality of camp life, and to the terrible contrast between that and his dream illusions.

I shall never forget how I was roused one night by the groans of a fellow prisoner, who threw himself about in his sleep, obviously having a horrible nightmare. Since I had always been especially sorry for people who suffered from fearful dreams or deliria, I wanted to wake the poor man. Suddenly I drew back the hand which was ready to shake him, frightened at the thing I was about to do. At that moment I became intensely conscious of the fact that no dream, no matter how horrible, could be as bad as the reality of the camp which surrounded us, and to which I was about to recall him.

Because of the high degree of undernourishment which the prisoners suffered, it was natural that the desire for food was the major primitive instinct around which mental life centered. Let us observe the majority of prisoners when they happened to work near each other and were, for once, not closely watched. They would immediately start discussing food. One fellow would ask another working next to him in the ditch what his favorite dishes were. Then they would exchange recipes and plan the menu for the day when they would have a reunion—the day in a distant future when they would be liberated and returned home. They would go on and on, picturing it all in detail, until suddenly a warning was passed down the trench, usually in the form of a special password or number: "The guard is coming."

I always regarded the discussions about food as dangerous. Is it not wrong to provoke the organism with such detailed and affective pictures of delicacies when it has somehow managed to adapt itself to extremely small rations

inner self. Whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of importance.

I did not know whether my wife was alive, and I had no means of finding out (during all my prison life there was no outgoing or incoming mail); but at that moment it ceased to matter. There was no need for me to know; nothing could touch the strength of my love, my thoughts, and the image of my beloved. Had I known then that my wife was dead, I think that I would still have given myself, undisturbed by that knowledge, to the contemplation of her image, and that my mental conversation with her would have been just as vivid and just as satisfying. "Set me like a seal upon thy heart, love is as strong as death."

This intensification of inner life helped the prisoner find a refuge from the emptiness, desolation and spiritual poverty of his existence, by letting him escape into the past. When given free rein, his imagination played with past events, often not important ones, but minor happenings and trifling things. His nostalgic memory glorified them and they assumed a strange character. Their world and their existence seemed very distant and the spirit reached out for them longingly: In my mind I took bus rides, unlocked the front door of my apartment, answered my telephone, switched on the electric lights. Our thoughts often centered on such details, and these memories could move one to tears.

As the inner life of the prisoner tended to become more intense, he also experienced the beauty of art and nature as never before. Under their influence he sometimes even forgot his own frightful circumstances. If someone had seen our faces on the journey from Auschwitz to a Bavarian camp as we beheld the mountains of Salzburg with their

summits glowing in the sunset, through the little barred windows of the prison carriage, he would never have believed that those were the faces of men who had given up all hope of life and liberty. Despite that factor—or maybe because of it—we were carried away by nature's beauty, which we had missed for so long.

In camp, too, a man might draw the attention of a comrade working next to him to a nice view of the setting sun shining through the tall trees of the Bavarian woods (as in the famous water color by Diirer), the same woods in which we had built an enormous, hidden munitions plant. One evening, when we were already resting on the floor of our hut, dead tired, soup bowls in hand, a fellow prisoner rushed in and asked us to run out to the assembly grounds and see the wonderful sunset. Standing outside we saw sinister clouds glowing in the west and the whole sky alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colors, from steel blue to blood red. The desolate grey mud huts provided a sharp contrast, while the puddles on the muddy ground reflected the glowing sky. Then, after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said to another, "How beautiful the world *could* be!"

Another time we were at work in a trench. The dawn was grey around us; grey was the sky above; grey the snow in the pale light of dawn; grey the rags in which my fellow prisoners were clad, and grey their faces. I was again conversing silently with my wife, or perhaps I was struggling to find the *reason* for my sufferings, my slow dying. In a last violent protest against the hopelessness of imminent death, I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom. I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious "Yes" in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose. At that moment a light was lit in a distant farmhouse, which stood on the horizon as if painted there, in the midst of the miser-

death. I thought that it would doubtless be more to the purpose to try and help my comrades as a doctor than to vegetate or finally lose my life as the unproductive laborer that I was then.

For me this was simple mathematics, not sacrifice. But secretly, the warrant officer from the sanitation squad had ordered that the two doctors who had volunteered for the typhus camp should be "taken care of" till they left. We looked so weak that he feared that he might have two additional corpses on his hands, rather than two doctors.

I mentioned earlier how everything that was not connected with the immediate task of keeping oneself and one's closest friends alive lost its value. Everything was sacrificed to this end. A man's character became involved to the point that he was caught in a mental turmoil which threatened all the values he held and threw them into doubt. Under the influence of a world which no longer recognized the value of human life and human dignity, which had robbed man of his will and had made him an object to be exterminated (having planned, however, to make full use of him first—to the last ounce of his physical resources)—under this influence the personal ego finally suffered a loss of values. If the man in the concentration camp did not struggle against this in a last effort to save his self-respect, he lost the feeling of being an individual, a being with a mind, with inner freedom and personal value. He thought of himself then as only a part of an enormous mass of people; his existence descended to the level of animal life. The men were herded—sometimes to one place then to another; sometimes driven together, then apart—like a flock of sheep without a thought or a will of their own. A small but dangerous pack watched them from all sides, well

versed in methods of torture and sadism. They drove the herd incessantly, backwards and forwards, with shouts, kicks and blows. And we, the sheep, thought of two things only—how to evade the bad dogs and how to get a little food.

Just like sheep that crowd timidly into the center of a herd, each of us tried to get into the middle of our formations. That gave one a better chance of avoiding the blows of the guards who were marching on either side and to the front and rear of our column. The central position had the added advantage of affording protection against the bitter winds. It was, therefore, in an attempt to save one's own skin that one literally tried to submerge into the crowd. This was done automatically in the formations. But at other times it was a very conscious effort on our part—in conformity with one of the camp's most imperative laws of self-preservation: Do not be conspicuous. We tried at all times to avoid attracting the attention of the SS.

There were times, of course, when it was possible, and even necessary, to keep away from the crowd. It is well known that an enforced community life, in which attention is paid to everything one does at all times, may result in an irresistible urge to get away, at least for a short while. The prisoner craved to be alone with himself and his thoughts. He yearned for privacy and for solitude. After my transportation to a so-called "rest camp," I had the rare fortune to find solitude for about five minutes at a time. Behind the earthen hut where I worked and in which were crowded about fifty delirious patients, there was a quiet spot in a corner of the double fence of barbed wire surrounding the camp. A tent had been improvised there with a few poles and branches of trees in order to shelter a half-dozen corpses (the daily death rate in the camp). There was also a shaft leading to the water pipes. I squatted on the wooden

cigarettes were distributed, we were photographed and joy reigned supreme. Now there was no need for us to risk running toward the fighting line.

In our excitement we had forgotten the third body, so we carried it outside and dropped it into the narrow grave we had dug for the three corpses. The guard who accompanied us—a relatively inoffensive man—suddenly became quite gentle. He saw that the tables might be turned and tried to win our goodwill. He joined in the short prayers that we offered for the dead men before throwing soil over them. After the tension and excitement of the past days and hours, those last days in our race with death, the words of our prayer asking for peace, were as fervent as any ever uttered by the human voice.

And so the last day in camp passed in anticipation of freedom. But we had rejoiced too early. The Red Cross delegate had assured us that an agreement had been signed, and that the camp must not be evacuated. But that night the SS arrived with trucks and brought an order to clear the camp. The last remaining prisoners were to be taken to a central camp, from which they would be sent to Switzerland within forty-eight hours—to be exchanged for some prisoners of war. We scarcely recognized the SS. They were so friendly, trying to persuade us to get in the trucks without fear, telling us that we should be grateful for our good luck. Those who were strong enough crowded into the trucks and the seriously ill and feeble were lifted up with difficulty. My friend and I—we did not hide our rucksacks now—stood in the last group, from which thirteen would be chosen for the next to last truck. The chief doctor counted out the requisite number, but he omitted the two of us. The thirteen were loaded into the truck and we had to stay behind. Surprised, very annoyed and disappointed, we blamed the chief doctor, who excused himself by saying that he had been tired and distracted. He said that he had thought we

still intended to escape. Impatiently we sat down, keeping our rucksacks on our backs, and waited with the few remaining prisoners for the last truck. We had to wait a long time. Finally we lay down on the mattresses of the deserted guard-room, exhausted by the excitement of the last few hours and days, during which we had fluctuated continually between hope and despair. We slept in our clothes and shoes, ready for the journey.

The noise of rifles and cannons woke us; the flashes of tracer bullets and gun shots entered the hut. The chief doctor dashed in and ordered us to take cover on the floor. One prisoner jumped on my stomach from the bed above me and with his shoes on. That awakened me all rightl Then we grasped what was happening: the battle-front had reached us! The shooting decreased and morning dawned. Outside on the pole at the camp gate a white flag floated in the wind.

Many weeks later we found out that even in those last hours fate had toyed with us few remaining prisoners. We found out just how uncertain human decisions are, especially in matters of life and death. I was confronted with photographs which had been taken in a small camp not far from ours. Our friends who had thought they were traveling to freedom that night had been taken in the trucks to this camp, and there they were locked in the huts and burned to death. Their partially charred bodies were recognizable on the photograph. I thought again of Death in Teheran.

Apart from its role as a defensive mechanism, the prisoners' apathy was also the result of other factors. Hunger and lack of sleep contributed to it (as they do in normal

at his own funeral. His life had seemed to him absolutely without future. He regarded it as over and done, as if he had already died. This feeling of lifelessness was intensified by other causes: in time, it was the limitlessness of the term of imprisonment which was most acutely felt; in space, the narrow limits of the prison. Anything outside the barbed wire became remote—out of reach and, in a way, unreal. The events and the people outside, all the normal life there, had a ghostly aspect for the prisoner. The outside life, that is, as much as he could see of it, appeared to him almost as it might have to a dead man who looked at it from another world.

A man who let himself decline because he could not see any future goal found himself occupied with retrospective thoughts. In a different connection, we have already spoken of the tendency there was to look into the past, to help make the present, with all its horrors, less real. But in robbing the present of its reality there lay a certain danger. It became easy to overlook the opportunities to make something positive of camp life, opportunities which really did exist. Regarding our "provisional existence" as unreal was in itself an important factor in causing the prisoners to lose their hold on life; everything in a way became pointless. Such people forgot that often it is just such an exceptionally difficult external situation which gives man the opportunity to grow spiritually beyond himself. Instead of taking the camp's difficulties as a test of their inner strength, they did not take their life seriously and despised it as something of no consequence. They preferred to close their eyes and to live in the past. Life for such people became meaningless.

Naturally only a few people were capable of reaching great spiritual heights. But a few were given the chance to attain human greatness even through their apparent worldly failure and death, an accomplishment which in ordinary circumstances they would never have achieved. To the

others of us, the mediocre and the half-hearted, the words of Bismarck could be applied: "Life is like being at the dentist. You always think that the worst is still to come, and yet it is over already." Varying this, we could say that most men in a concentration camp believed that the real opportunities of life had passed. Yet, in reality, there was an opportunity and a challenge. One could make a victory of those experiences, turning life into an inner triumph, or one could ignore the challenge and simply vegetate, as did a majority of the prisoners.

Any attempt at fighting the camp's psychopathological influence on the prisoner by psychotherapeutic or psychohygienic methods had to aim at giving him inner strength by pointing out to him a future goal to which he could look forward. Instinctively some of the prisoners attempted to find one on their own. It is a peculiarity of man that he can only live by looking to the future— *sub specie aeternitatis.* And this is his salvation in the most difficult moments of his existence, although he sometimes has to force his mind to the task.

I remember a personal experience. Almost in tears from pain (I had terrible sores on my feet from wearing torn shoes), I limped a few kilometers with our long column of men from the camp to our work site. Very cold, bitter winds struck us. I kept thinking of the endless little problems of our miserable life. What would there be to eat tonight? If a piece of sausage came as extra ration, should I exchange it for a piece of bread? Should I trade my last cigarette, which was left from a bonus I received a fortnight ago, for a bowl of soup? How could I get a piece of wire to replace the fragment which served as one of my shoelaces? Would I get to our work site in time to join my usual working party or would I have to join another, which might have a brutal

who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the "why" for his existence, and will be able to bear almost any "how."

The opportunities for collective psychotherapy were naturally limited in camp. The right example was more effective than words could ever be. A senior block warden who did not side with the authorities had, by his just and encouraging behavior, a thousand opportunities to exert a far-reaching moral influence on those under his jurisdiction. The immediate influence of behavior is always more effective than that of words. But at times a word was effective too, when mental receptiveness had been intensified by some outer circumstances. I remember an incident when there was occasion for psychotherapeutic work on the inmates of a whole hut, due to an intensification of their receptiveness because of a certain external situation.

It had been a bad day. On parade, an announcement had been made about the many actions that would, from then on, be regarded as sabotage and therefore punishable by immediate death by hanging. Among these were crimes such as cutting small strips from our old blankets (in order to improvise ankle supports) and very minor "thefts." A few days previously a semi-starved prisoner had broken into the potato store to steal a few pounds of potatoes. The theft had been discovered and some prisoners had recognized the "burglar." When the camp authorities heard about it they ordered that the guilty man be given up to them or the whole camp would starve for a day. Naturally the 2,500 men preferred to fast.

On the evening of this day of fasting we lay in our earthen huts—in a very low mood. Very little was said and

every word sounded irritable. Then, to make matters even worse, the light went out. Tempers reached their lowest ebb. But our senior block warden was a wise man. He improvised a little talk about all that was on our minds at that moment. He talked about the many comrades who had died in the last few days, either of sickness or of suicide. But he also mentioned what may have been the real reason for their deaths: giving up hope. He maintained that there should be some way of preventing possible future victims from reaching this extreme state. And it was to me that the warden pointed to give this advice.

God knows, I was not in the mood to give psychological explanations or to preach any sermons—to offer my comrades a kind of medical care of their souls. I was cold and hungry, irritable and tired, but I had to make the effort and use this unique opportunity. Encouragement was now more necessary than ever.

So I began by mentioning the most trivial of comforts first. I said that even in this Europe in the sixth winter of the Second World War, our situation was not the most terrible we could think of. I said that each of us had to ask himself what irreplaceable losses he had suffered up to then. I speculated that for most of them these losses had really been few. Whoever was still alive had reason for hope. Health, family, happiness, professional abilities, fortune, position in society—all these were things that could be achieved again or restored. After all, we still had all our bones intact. Whatever we had gone through could still be an asset to us in the future. And I quoted from Nietzsche: *"Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich starker."* (That which does not kill me, makes me stronger.)

Then I spoke about the future. I said that to the impartial the future must seem hopeless. I agreed that each of us could guess for himself how small were his chances of survival. I told them that although there was still no typhus

about not treading down the young crops. He became annoyed, gave me an angry look and shouted, "You don't say! And hasn't enough been taken from us? My wife and child have been gassed—not to mention everything else—and you would forbid me to tread on a few stalks of oats!"

Only slowly could these men be guided back to the commonplace truth that no one has the right to do wrong, not even if wrong has been done to them. We had to strive to lead them back to this truth, or the consequences would have been much worse than the loss of a few thousand stalks of oats. I can still see the prisoner who rolled up his shirt sleeves, thrust his right hand under my nose and shouted, "May this hand be cut off if I don't stain it with blood on the day when I get home!" I want to emphasize that the man who said these words was not a bad fellow. He had been the best of comrades in camp and afterwards.

Apart from the moral deformity resulting from the sudden release of mental pressure, there were two other fundamental experiences which threatened to damage the character of the liberated prisoner: bitterness and disillusionment when he returned to his former life.

Bitterness was caused by a number of things he came up against in his former home town. When, on his return, a man found that in many places he was met only with a shrug of the shoulders and with hackneyed phrases, he tended to become bitter and to ask himself why he had gone through all that he had. When he heard the same phrases nearly everywhere—"We did not know about it," and "We, too, have suffered," then he asked himself, have they really nothing better to say to me?

The experience of disillusionment is different. Here it was not one's fellow man (whose superficiality and lack of feeling was so disgusting that one finally felt like creeping into a hole and neither hearing nor seeing human beings any more) but fate itself which seemed so cruel. A man who

for years had thought he had reached the absolute limit of all possible suffering now found that suffering has no limits, and that he could suffer still more, and still more intensely.

When we spoke about attempts to give a man in camp mental courage, we said that he had to be shown something to look forward to in the future. He had to be reminded that life still waited for him, that a human being waited for his return. But after liberation? There were some men who found that no one awaited them. Woe to him who found that the person whose memory alone had given him courage in camp did not exist any more! Woe to him who, when the day of his dreams finally came, found it so different from all he had longed for! Perhaps he boarded a trolley, traveled out to the home which he had seen for years in his mind, and only in his mind, and pressed the bell, just as he has longed to do in thousands of dreams, only to find that the person who should open the door was not there, and would never be there again.

We all said to each other in camp that there could be no earthly happiness which could compensate for all we had suffered. We were not hoping for happiness—it was not that which gave us courage and gave meaning to our suffering, our sacrifices and our dying. And yet we were not prepared for unhappiness. This disillusionment, which awaited not a small number of prisoners, was an experience which these men have found very hard to get over and which, for a psychiatrist, is also very difficult to help them overcome. But this must not be a discouragement to him; on the contrary, it should provide an added stimulus.

But for every one of the liberated prisoners, the day comes when, looking back on his camp experiences, he can no longer understand how he endured it all. As the day of his liberation eventually came, when everything seemed to

the rule rather than the rule itself. In these cases we have actually to deal with pseudovalues, and as such they have to be unmasked. Unmasking, however, should stop as soon as one is confronted with what is authentic and genuine in man, e.g., man's desire for a life that is as meaningful as possible. If it does not stop then, the only thing that the "unmasking psychologist" really unmasks is his own "hidden motive"—namely, his unconscious need to debase and depreciate what is genuine, what is genuinely human, in man.

EXISTENTIAL FRUSTRATION

Man's will to meaning can also be frustrated, in which case logotherapy speaks of "existential frustration." The term "existential" may be used in three ways: to refer to (1) *existence* itself, i.e., the specifically human mode of being; (2) the *meaning* of existence; and (3) the striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence, that is to say, the *will* to meaning.

Existential frustration can also result in neuroses. For this type of neuroses, logotherapy has coined the term "noogenic neuroses" in contrast to neuroses in the traditional sense of the word, i.e., psychogenic neuroses. Noogenic neuroses have their origin not in the psychological but rather in the "noological" (from the Greek *noos* meaning mind) dimension of human existence. This is another logotherapeutic term which denotes anything pertaining to the specifically human dimension.

NOOGENIC NEUROSES

Noogenic neuroses do not emerge from conflicts between drives and instincts but rather from existential problems.

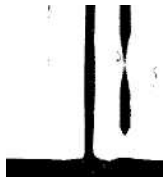
They lack the awareness of a meaning worth living for. They are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called the "existential vacuum."

THE EXISTENTIAL VACUUM

The existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century. This is understandable; it may be due to a twofold loss which man has had to undergo since he became a truly human being. At the beginning of human history, man lost some of the basic animal instincts in which an animal's behavior is imbedded and by which it is secured. Such security, like Paradise, is closed to man forever; man has to make choices. In addition to this, however, man has suffered another loss in his more recent development inasmuch as the traditions which buttressed his behavior are now rapidly diminishing. No instinct tells him. what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism).

A statistical survey recently revealed that among my European students, 25 percent showed a more-or-less marked degree of existential vacuum. Among my American students it was not 25 but 60 percent.

The existential vacuum manifests itself mainly in a state of boredom. Now we can understand Schopenhauer when he said that mankind was apparently doomed to vacillate eternally between the two extremes of distress and boredom. In actual fact, boredom is now causing, and certainly bringing to psychiatrists, more problems to solve than distress. And these problems are growing increasingly crucial, for progressive automation will probably lead to an enor-



THE MEANING OF LOVE

Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these potentialities. By making him aware of what he can be and of what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true.

In logotherapy, love is not interpreted as a mere epiphe-nomenon[3] of sexual drives and instincts in the sense of a so-called sublimation. Love is as primary a phenomenon as sex. Normally, sex is a mode of expression for love. Sex is justified, even sanctified, as soon as, but only as long as, it is a vehicle of love. Thus love is not understood as a mere side-effect of sex; rather, sex is a way of expressing the experience of that ultimate togetherness which is called love.

The third way of finding a meaning in life is by suffering.

THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

We must never forget that we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed. For what then matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a

personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement. When we are no longer able to change a situation— just think of an incurable disease such as inoperable cancer —we are challenged to change ourselves.

3 A phenomenon that occurs as the result of a primary phenomenon.

old woman, I cannot see what all that was for; actually, I must say, my life was a failure!"

I then invited the mother of the handicapped son to imagine herself similarly looking back over *her* life. Let us listen to what she had to say as recorded on the tape: *"I* wished to have children and this wish has been granted to me; one boy died; the other, however, the crippled one, would have been sent to an institution if I had not taken over his care. Though he is crippled and helpless, he is after all my boy. And so I have made a fuller life possible for him; I have made a better human being out of my son." At this moment, there was an outburst of tears and, crying, she continued: "As for myself, I can look back peacefully on my life; for I can say my life was full of meaning, and I have tried hard to fulfill it; I have done my best—I have done the best for my son. My life was no failure!" Viewing her life as if from her deathbed, she had suddenly been able to see a meaning in it, a meaning which even included all of her sufferings. By the same token, however, it had become clear as well that a life of short duration, like that, for example, of her dead boy, could be so rich in joy and love that it could contain more meaning than a life lasting eighty years.

After a while I proceeded to another question, this time addressing myself to the whole group. The question was whether an ape which was being used to develop poliomyelitis serum, and for this reason punctured again and again, would ever be able to grasp the meaning of its suffering. Unanimously, the group replied that of course it would not; with its limited intelligence, it could not enter into the world of man, i.e., the only world in which the meaning of its suffering would be understandable. Then I pushed forward with the following question: "And what about man? Are you sure that the human world is a terminal point

In addition to excessive intention as described above, excessive attention, or "hyper-reflection," as it is called in logotherapy, may also be pathogenic (that is, lead to sickness). The following clinical report will indicate what I mean: A young woman came to me complaining of being frigid. The case history showed that in her childhood she had been sexually abused by her father. However, it had not been this traumatic experience in itself which had eventuated in her sexual neurosis, as could easily be evidenced. For it turned out that, through reading popular psychoanalytic literature, the patient had lived constantly with the fearful expectation of the toll which her traumatic experience would someday take. This anticipatory anxiety resulted both in excessive intention to confirm her femininity and excessive attention centered upon herself rather than upon her partner. This was enough to incapacitate the patient for the peak experience of sexual pleasure, since the orgasm was made an object of intention, and an object of attention as well, instead of remaining an unintended effect of unreflected dedication and surrender to the partner. After undergoing short-term logotherapy, the patient's excessive attention and intention of her ability to experience orgasm had been "dereflected," to introduce another logo-therapeutic term. When her attention was refocused toward the proper object, i.e., the partner, orgasm established itself spontaneously.[9]

Logotherapy bases its technique called "paradoxical intention" on the twofold fact that fear brings about that which one is

afraid of, and that hyper-intention makes impossible what one wishes. In German I described paradoxi-

9 In order to treat cases of sexual impotence, a specific logothera-peutic technique has been developed, based on the theory of hyper-intention and hyper-reflection as sketched above (Viktor E. Frankl, "The Pleasure Principle and Sexual Neurosis," *The International Journal of Sexology,* Vol. 5, No. 3 [1952], pp. 128-30). Of course, this cannot be dealt with in this brief presentation of the principles of logotherapy.

turb him, since pressure precipitates counterpressure. Again the symptom is reinforced! On the other hand, as soon as the patient stops fighting his obsessions and instead tries to ridicule them by dealing with them in an ironical way—by applying paradoxical intention—*the vicious circle is cut,* the symptom diminishes and finally atrophies. In the fortunate case where there is no existential vacuum which invites and elicits the symptom, the patient will not only succeed in ridiculing his neurotic fear but finally will succeed in completely ignoring it.

As we see, anticipatory anxiety has to be counteracted by paradoxical intention; hyper-intention as well as hyper-reflection have to be counteracted by dereflection; dereflec-tion, however, ultimately is not possible except by the patient's orientation toward his specific vocation and mission in life.[16]

It is not the neurotic's self-concern, whether pity or contempt, which breaks the circle formation; the cue to cure is self-transcendence!

THE COLLECTIVE NEUROSIS

Every age has its own collective neurosis, and every age needs its own psychotherapy to cope with it. The existential vacuum which is the mass neurosis of the present time can be described as a private and personal form of nihilism; for nihilism can be defined as the contention that being has no meaning. As for psychotherapy, however, it will never be able to cope with this state of affairs on a mass scale if it does not keep itself free from the impact and influence of

ing him against a formal psychosis rather than endangering him in this direction.

16 This conviction is supported by Allport who once said, "As the focus of striving shifts from the conflict to selfless goals, the life as a whole becomes sounder even though the neurosis may never completely disappear" (op. cit., p. 95).

Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is. After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with the Lord's Prayer or the *Shema Yisrael* on his lips.

POSTSCRIPT 1984

*The Case for a Tragic Optimism**

Dedicated to the memory of Edith Weisskopf-Joelson, whose pioneering efforts in logotherapy in the United States began as early as 1955 and whose contributions to the field have been invaluable.