

LIVING LOGOTHERAPY

Elisabeth Lukas – Heidi Schönfeld

MEANING-CENTRED PSYCHOTHERAPY

Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy in Theory and Practice

A publication series of the Elisabeth-Lukas-Archive

Living Logotherapy

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Meaning-Centred Psychotherapy

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Foreword for the series "Living Logotherapy"

"In our time, people usually have enough to live on. What they often lack, however, is something to live for." This is how Viktor E. Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist and founder of logotherapy, summarised a problem that is just as relevant today as ever. Elisabeth Lukas, a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, has an international reputation as Frankl's most important student. In her many books, she illustrates how logotherapy provides help in cases of mental illness, enriches the everyday life of healthy people and inspires us all to lead a meaningful, fulfilling life. Her books illustrate how humane, authentic and up-to-date a "living logotherapy" can be. The main objective of this new series is to make her books, which have enjoyed lasting success in the German-speaking world, more accessible to speakers of English.

Many people have worked hard to make it possible for the Elisabeth Lukas Archive to publish this new series. Particular thanks are due to our translator Dr. David Nolland, who has produced a fluid text that remains very close to the original. He has excellent knowledge in the field of logotherapy and supervises this series in all matters relating to the English-speaking market. Thanks are also due to Prof. Dr. Alexander Batthyány, who supported us from the beginning and will accompany this series as a guide. The formatting and layout is due to Bernhard Keller, and the beautiful presentation of the books is wholly attributable to his expertise.

The first book in this series is a collaborative project. It combines discussions of the theory of logotherapy by Lukas with numerous case studies by Schönfeld. Thanks to Dr. Kagelmann of Profil Verlag, the holder of the rights for the German version of the book, for generously giving his permission for an English language version.

All that remains is to wish this book success in the Englishspeaking world. May it give readers a glimpse into the vitality and relevance of

logotherapy!

Dr. Heidi Schönfeld

Director of the Elisabeth-Lukas-Archive

Translator's Note

Logotherapy presents a particular challenge for the translator. Viktor Frankl's own works are full of humour and metaphor, and his distinctive way of making his point often relies heavily on wordplay, poetic forms of expression and nuances of language that combine colloquial language with philosophically suggestive formulations distilled from a profound understanding of the history of European thought. He coined a number of original terms and concepts that play a key role in his work. Frankl was often dissatisfied with the published translations of many of these key terms, and his own translations, where available, provide valuable clues to his thinking.

Elisabeth Lukas has a distinctive written style that shares the aforementioned features of Frankl's writing. She has continued in Frankl's footsteps linguistically as much as she has intellectually and spiritually. Frankl never saw the logotherapy he had originated as something finished and set in stone, but as a system of thought that should continually be developed in response to the inexhaustible insights into human nature arising from his focus on meaning and the possibilities of the human spirit.

I have done my best to capture the personality and nuance of Elisabeth Lukas' and Heidi Schönfeld's writing by staying very close to the original text, and I have benefited from extensive help and advice from the authors and other experts in logotherapy in the case of various technical points which have proved difficult. We are satisfied that the result is a text that remains faithful to the legacy of Viktor Frankl and Elisabeth Lukas, and provides a valuable reference of "living logotherapy" for the English-speaking world.

Dr. David Nolland

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PROLOGUE

Elisabeth Lukas

Viktor E. Frankl, who lived from 1905 to 1997, is one of "Austria's great sons". His name is extremely well-known internationally – and not only amongst specialists. Countless people all over the world know of Frankl from his bestselling book *Man's Search for Meaning* (... *trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen*), which has been translated into many languages and sold millions of copies. The book describes his captivity in German concentration camps during World War II as seen through the eyes of a psychiatrist and philosopher. It is an immensely powerful book because it bears witness to the inalienable dignity of human beings even under inhuman conditions and shows how it is possible to preserve an intact soul in times of disintegration. As can be seen from the flood of positive reactions, a significant percentage of the countless readers have derived courage from the book to keep going in their own challenging circumstances. Every kind of misery and suffering traps a person in some way – one is hemmed in, hopes and plans are destroyed, and one's existence is threatened. The cause does not need to be the effect of external violence, for example from a cruel political regime, but may instead result from illness, family disaster, excessive deprivation, selfinflicted tragedy or hard-to-overcome loss, which create apparently hopeless situations of despair or resignation. Frankl's book throws significant light on such situations; it does not gloss over or distort anything. It remains factual in tone, but its message is deeply moving: life has meaning until one's last breath. Life offers possibilities for meaning until one's last breath. Meaning is attainable even in the face of suffering, adversity and death. This is no illusionary assertion given literary expression by an incorrigible optimist, but a document full of genuine testimonies realistically reported on the basis of personal experience. This is exactly what gives this work from the immediate postwar period such overwhelming influence and vibrancy. Frankl's own struggle with the challenges of incipient despair and resignation meets people in the places where they experience the same things, and gently leads them to the conviction that, in principle, they also have the strength and capability needed to survive – even in a manner that

proves rewarding. And this survival is not only for themselves. What has meaning spreads out, flows towards others, unites itself via mysterious channels with the *logos*, which was in the beginning and never ceases to be. Frankl's book is a hymn to the fundamental spiritual values of humanity that have emerged over millennia of cultural history.

Nonetheless, it would be a shame if Viktor E. Frankl were known and remembered by his large readership primarily for his heroic survival of concentration camp experiences. This would not do justice to his overall achievement. Frankl was a scientist at heart, and he would have developed his groundbreaking ideas just the same under different political circumstances – perhaps even more quickly than he was able to in his own time. It is for good reason that he is these days referred to in dictionaries of psychology as the founder of the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy. He developed a comprehensive therapeutic method that decisively complemented, corrected and humanised the new discipline of psychotherapy, which was only in gestation as an independent discipline at the beginning of the 20th century. The concepts that he introduced continue to be effective in the same way at the beginning of the 21st century, even though social, economic and technological structures have radically changed worldwide – and with them the perspectives, mindsets and problems of modern society. There is something so generally valid about the picture of humanity advocated by Frankl, something so deeply resonant with the soul about the healing methods designed by him, that they are not anchored in fashions and traditions, and therefore cannot fall out of fashion.

Some of the medical terms used by Frankl, however, may now appear a bit outdated, for example the old idea of "neurosis", which was still common in the years during which he was practicing, and which he made use of in his seminal work *On the Theory and Therapy of Neuroses*. But what does it matter whether one speaks of "anxiety neuroses", or (as one does today) of "anxiety disorders"? Are those affected happier to have a "disorder" than a "neurosis"? Their problems are the same, no matter how they are classified, and they are what have to be remedied! What Frankl's

book has to say about how to achieve this is brilliantly thought through and meticulously explained; it continues to be valid today.

The present book has set itself the task of bringing into the foreground the merit won by Frankl as a brilliant doctor of the soul. His meaning-centered psychotherapy – logotherapy – is unique amongst the many treatment methods and approaches of varying seriousness that are on offer in today's psychotherapy market. It stands out for many reasons.

For one, logotherapy rests on an anthropological foundation which has been worked out in detail. Every psychotherapist knows how important that is. All methods, strategies and psychotherapeutic techniques are limited in scope and fail for certain patients who are simply not responsive to them. Human responses are not predictable like those of machines. What should one do when nothing works? It is a blessing when there is a foundation that one can fall back on in such cases. A foundation is incomparably more than the sum of all individual therapeutic methods. It is a way of seeing the world and beyond the world, of seeing what it means to be human and to be oneself; it is the last and most real thing that one can believe in and hold on to. An exchange of views about this reaches even patients who otherwise refuse all offers of help. Frankl was completely convinced that the effectiveness of therapy was only to a small extent dependent on the strategies used. He thought that it was much more to do with successful "optical adjustments" – and most evaluations have proved him right. Ever since Plato's allegory of the cave, it has been known that people make "pictures" of reality, of their own and others' essence and existence, which, of course, can never be perfectly grasped or understood. Metaphorically, the "image quality" and even the "colour quality" of such pictures are decisive for the quality of life of the "picture maker". It is not possible to live well with distorted or excessively dark perceptions of reality. For those who constantly doubt their own value, see their environment as full of rivals or enemies, give themselves over to an absurd destiny, or torment themselves with images of a punishing God, it is difficult to experience spiritual regeneration. To want to affirm one's life only insofar as it promises pleasure and enjoyment will soon lead to a permanent state of frustration. A

false philosophy, however, cannot be overcome by purely psychological means. What is required is precisely the anthropological foundation that Frankl delineated.

For another, logotherapy also stands out because it can be used for both long-term support and short-term therapy. It has come to be recognised that long-term therapy should be avoided if at all possible. It is expensive and tends to make people dependent rather than responsible and self-reliant. There are, however, disorders that make longer-term specialist monitoring desirable (in addition to any necessary medication), because these illnesses are accompanied by emotional and cognitive breakdowns which require continual alleviation. Logotherapy is ideally equipped for this task. It also, however, proves itself to be just as well-adapted to short-term therapy in common cases of conflict and dramatisation that were previously referred to as "neurotic". Furthermore, it is ideal for use as an intervention in times of crisis or emergency, whenever a real cause for suffering has fallen upon a person and the burden seems too heavy to be able to be borne.

It is indeed rare to find such a sophisticated psycho-therapeutic concept that is so firmly rooted in its theoretical foundations and at the same time so flexible in its practical applicability as logotherapy. Frankl's theory has been used in South American drug rehabilitation centres, in North American prison counselling, in South African peace initiatives, in Japanese clinics for psychosomatic medicine and trauma therapy, in Israeli gerontology projects, in ethics classes in European schools, in consultancy for the business leaders of international corporations – the list could be continued for many pages. The healing effect of logotherapy transcends the bounds of psychotherapy and has been enthusiastically seized upon by practitioners of psychology, philosophy, pedagogy, social work, medicine, youth work, nursing, care of the elderly, family assistance, and business management, being adapted in each case to the specific challenges involved. It cuts so close to the heart of the human species in all its complexity that it is compatible with the findings of prominent university researchers and scholars as well as with the common sense of ordinary people, with the essence of the great world religions as well as with homely

wisdom, handed down over the centuries, about the question of how to live a happy life.

The present book is the result of a collaboration between one of my best students and myself. With our combined forces we would like to shine a spotlight on both the theoretical and the practical sides of Frankl's teachings about mental health. I have taken on the difficult task of making transparent the challenging foundations of Frankl's body of teaching, from which logotherapists all over the world derive their therapeutic successes – in this concrete case, the therapeutic successes of my co-author. She is blessed – in addition to having profound knowledge of Frankl's teachings – with the right intuitions about how to deal with people seeking advice. She also has a mastery of what Frankl called "the art of improvisation and individualisation", which is absolutely essential in the face of individual beings and unique encounters, and she benefits from a great wealth of personal experience (see Epilogue) with which she unfailingly and with persuasive power wins back unhappy and despairing people to a life filled with meaning. She has selected seven case studies from her extensive repertoire, which in contrast to the case histories in Frankl's books and my own, are discussed and explained in detail. This grants interested readers hitherto unsurpassed insights into the "logotherapy workshop" and the gradually flourishing healing processes within it that eventually allow patients to grow beyond their psychic weaknesses and take full spiritual control over the way they lead their lives. It has given me great pleasure to participate in this joint project, and I sincerely hope that this pleasure will be shared by you, the reader.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LOGOTHERAPY

Elisabeth Lukas

The word *logotherapy* derives from the Greek word *logos* and signifies *meaning* in the context of Frankl's theory. Logotherapy is a meaning centred psychotherapy that acknowledges the fundamental role of the human spirit (Greek *nous*). The human spirit is rooted in the unconscious, which is why a clear distinction will be made between unconscious instinct, which is psychophysical, and the unconscious spirit. The human spirit, however, is not merely reason and intellect, which are further aspects of the psychophysical dimensions. What is in fact meant is the specifically human dimension of the multidimensional entity that we call the *human being*.

A specifically human dimension

The term *existence* is often used in philosophy for the special nature of being human. Frankl characterised as *existential* every process for which nothing comparable can be found in the animal kingdom. Thus, for example, the explication – in other words the unfolding of the human person – is an existential process as it goes beyond pure psychophysical development and entails unique choices and decisions. Frankl justified his focus on human spirituality with a dual argument. First, a psychotherapy which neglects the existential nature of the human being fails to make use of one of the most important weapons in the battle for the psychic recovery of a patient. Second, there is a danger of corrupting a patient with a "spiritless" view of human nature, of corroborating the patient's nihilistic thoughts and deepening the (neurotic) disorder.

In fact all forms of psychotherapy are based on anthropological premises, whether or not these are explicitly stated. In logotherapy they are openly set forth and meticulously worked out. Logotherapy attributes to human beings an ability to transcend – a "lifting power" – by means of which they can lift themselves out of psychophysical enslavement into the heights of spiritual freedom. Thus they cross over from simply being to having the ability to be otherwise. So, for example, a patient can to a significant extent either give into gloomy moods or defy them, can allow

inner fits of anger to run their course or control them, can laugh off excessive anxieties or take them seriously, and so on. This invites us to make use of the resistive power of the human spirit for therapeutic purposes as a weapon in the battle for psychic recovery. Indeed, if this power is not mobilised, the focus becomes the psychophysical enslavement and dependence of the patient and the root cause therein of that gloomy mood, inner rage or excessive anxiety. In this case the affected person admittedly still possesses the existential lifting power granted by human existence, but without being conscious of it, and thus hardly daring to make use of it. Thus the erroneous assumption is strengthened that the individual is at the mercy of his or her physical and psychic nature. This is what Frankl meant by the danger of a corrupting view of human nature. Instead, the patient should be inspired and encouraged in the direction of being able to transcend the psychophysical realm.

Of course this lifting power – which Frankl also called *the defiant power of the human spirit* – is not able to remove all pathological determinants. The spiritual resistance of a fragile and limited being is itself fragile and limited. But spiritual freedom also includes the ability to achieve reconciliation with psychophysical limitations when and where they cannot be counteracted; for example, in the case of severe psychotic or neurophysiological disorders. As meaningful as it is to defy unnecessary states of suffering, it is equally meaningful to encounter the necessities of fate, that is, unavoidable states of suffering, with heroic acceptance. Moreover acceptance or nonacceptance is in itself a decision-making process that emerges from the human spirit and represents the final reservoir of the existential being.

Normally, it is not necessary to grapple with something difficult or to reconcile oneself with unpleasantness on a continuous basis. In a fulfilled life with a healthy balance between creative activities, satisfying experiences and sufficient periods of relaxation, physis, psyche and spirit are united together in a harmonious whole. But while the connection between the physis and the psyche is rather rigid and entrenched, the human spirit has surprising agility. The human spirit cannot be tied down: not in

time, not in space—and not in body. *The spiritual is movement—in one's being.* Thus "being human" always shows itself most clearly when it is in motion, for example when a person is able to create distance from a part of his or her self, or transcend current boundaries. In this context, Frankl spoke of the uniquely human abilities of self-distancing and selftranscendence.

Multidimensional ontology

The logotherapeutic healing approach can only be understood in the context of Frankl's dimensional ontology, which addresses the ontological multiplicity of the physical, psychic and noetic (=spiritual) dimensions of the anthropological unit "man" as in a coordinate system. The three coordinates (corresponding to length, breadth and height) completely interpenetrate one another without being identical. Unlike a coordinate system, however, one of the three dimensions – the noetic – is more than just one of three, as it is the one responsible for making human beings actually human: it is the essentially human dimension. In contrast to the other two dimensions it is constitutive of human existence. Biologists and zoologists are always insisting that there are species of animals, particularly apes, which are capable of extremely complex acts of thought and communication. No logotherapist denies this fact. There are only gradual distinctions between the cognitions and emotions (psychic dimension) of animals and those of humans. But it is impossible to find something "uniquely human" (as Frankl as defined the noetic dimension) amongst animals – indeed it cannot be there, because then it would not be specifically human. If anyone denies the fundamental difference between humans and animals, namely the existence of the human spirit, it is the same as denying "being human" as a *distinct quality* and equating it with a higher evolved "being animal".

Frankl vehemently resisted projecting the human into the animal – in other words, interpreting statements about the human spirit at a psychophysical level (even broadly defined) – which is the traditional psychoanalytic approach. Interpretations along the lines of an artistic design