

## PREFACE to the first German edition

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When Viktor E. Frankl was interned in a concentration camp in 1942, he carried in his pocket the manuscript of a book which contained the fundamental ideas of his teaching, later called *logotherapy*. The title of the book was *Medical Ministry* (now known as *The Doctor and the Soul*), which was published after the war under this title.

Since then, a new generation has grown up; it has experienced more changes than the 10 previous generations put together. Traditions have collapsed, hierarchies of values have shifted, and ideas about freedom, responsibility, human rights, and human dignity have changed. These changes have had philosophical and psychological consequences, which have affected work in universities and consulting rooms of the medical profession all over the world.

It has always been the responsibility of philosophers to elaborate on fundamental principles according to which man can understand himself as a human being. Psychologists, on the other hand, have the responsibility of translating these principles into practical terms so that we remain healthy human beings. This book pursues both aims in an exemplary way. Therefore, it is appropriate that, as a counterpart to Frankl's first book, it has the title *Psychological Ministry* [now known as *The Therapist and the Soul* —Ed.]. Just as Frankl's first book marks the beginning of his pioneering career, this book rounds out the octogenarian's lifework. Nobody could have been better suited for this task than his most outstanding pupil, Elisabeth Lukas.

The ancient admonition of the Delphic oracle "Know thyself!" is obviously not adequate. In addition, today it is more than ever necessary to respect each other as beings of worth and dignity. The consequences of any kind of dehumanization affect not only the immediate victim; they also dehumanize whoever causes others to suffer. Whoever habitually hurts

other people's worth and dignity, in the end hurts himself. Often it is just this lack of self-respect which leads to inhuman treatment of others.

As Elisabeth Lukas describes in this brilliantly inspired text, psychotherapists are in no way immune to the double-edged destructive power of disregarding human dignity. The problem seems to be rooted in a mistaken philosophical anthropology which she identifies as a regrettable chasm between the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the human being. Reductionist tendencies of traditional psychology have alienated this branch of science from the essence of human existence. On the other hand, there is a movement among the schools of psychotherapy, built on the humanistic theories of logotherapy, to remove these degrading tendencies.

The inviolable dignity of the patient plays a central part in Frankl's "psychiatric credo" and is at the same time the foundation for his concern with rehumanizing psychotherapy. According to Frankl, the doctor or therapist has to establish in each consultation a distinctive and unique person-to-person relationship with his patient, thus maintaining the dignity of both throughout the course of treatment. One could even claim that this is an essential part of treatment.

By means of an alliance with logotherapy, philosophy has found an additional opportunity to serve as a perfect complement to psychotherapy. Such profound themes as fate and freedom, conscience and responsibility, being and meaning, which Frankl introduced into his medical-psychological work, are now convincingly discussed by Lukas, and are, after all, the main themes of philosophy. The removal of existential blindness through logotherapy, therefore, goes hand in hand with the correction of metaphysical myopia in the philosophy of life and vice versa.

What is important is human participation in the conditions of reality instead of subjugation under them. It is exactly this different nuance in orientation that distinguishes a person who is able to see an area of freedom from another who regards himself as at the mercy of fate. Individuals, for instance, who live under the "slavery" of their feelings suffer their self-imposed tragedy and are forever dependent on environmental conditions. The truly free and wise person, on the other hand, can act despite the

unavoidable burdens presented by life itself. Spinoza speaks of a person who is a slave to his feelings as someone who “ceases to live when he ceases to suffer.”

Only the person who is free to act has energies available to investigate the meaning of the total situation. Doing this, that individual automatically turns away from destructive goals towards aims of a meaningful design. Elisabeth Lukas shows in tragic case histories how this tactic finds its psychological manifestation—where the surrender of freedom in favor of the tyranny of fate would have speedily caused emotional chaos if logotherapeutic help had not been available. She reaches a conclusion which becomes the essence of her statement: “Pointing out to a person the—possibly last—remaining area of freedom is, beyond any psychotherapeutic tactic, an act of human dignity!”

I would like to add one comparison. A game of tennis does not rob us of our dignity by forcing us to obey the rules and limitations of the game. Quite the opposite: These rules and regulations are the preconditions of the game and provide us with the opportunity to develop our individual skills. In a similar manner, we are not robbed by life when it imposes its unchangeable limitations. Our responsibility lies in accepting these limitations and integrating them into our freedom, so that we neither overestimate them nor underestimate our spiritual potential for dealing with them.

In logotherapy, and especially in this book, many opportunities for a positive and meaning-oriented confrontation with fate become apparent, opportunities that may spread into wider circles and thereby benefit humanity.

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## 1. Finding Meaning and Psychological Health

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Today, everyone is aware of the threat to the human race and the question mark which hangs over the future ecology of our environment. Young people have always opposed traditions and forcefully pushed towards new horizons. But never before have the young been filled with such dark forebodings as at present; so much so, that it now calls itself the “no-future generation.” However, this dark mood is only indirectly aroused by a fear of negative events in the future.

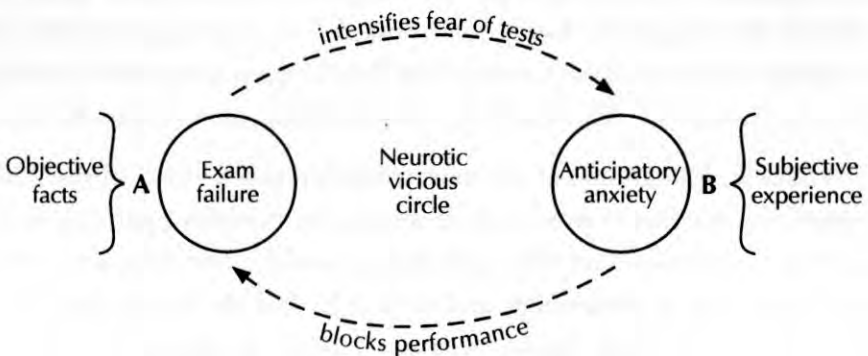
Even if the possibility of an atomic war that would put an end to all human endeavor can be envisaged, and even if there are more and more alarming prognoses concerning poisoned environments and insurmountable famines ahead of us, human beings are too short-lived and shortsighted to let it affect everyday business. No, fear of imaginary terrors is not the original deciding factor in this displeasure that can be observed worldwide and that grips both older and younger generations.

The hallmark of the no-future generation is a high degree of a *feeling of meaninglessness*, a continuing loss of meaning which happens now—today—and saps the strength for facing tomorrow. A “no-meaning generation” is emerging, which is of more concern than that for the survival of the species; when the “wherefore” falls away as the existential basis, survival loses its value.

Viktor E. Frankl, one of the most insightful psychiatrists of the 20th century, was the first to prove a close connection between a person’s inner meaning orientation and his psychological health. This idea was previously unknown in psychology, and with it he laid the foundation for a new approach in all the human sciences. Thanks to his research, we can

now reconstruct the *vicious circle* that ominously affects individual lives as well as the fate of entire nations, and is, at present, active on several levels. Because we are aware of it, we can design proposals for breaking this vicious circle. Even if it hasn't yet found a satisfactory echo in world events, Frankl's theory gives a powerful impulse to individual psychotherapists, who are able to provide active support to the people of today who face this crisis of meaning.

What is this vicious circle? It is a causal chain of several links which cascade on each other in an uninterrupted chain reaction. Simplified, it looks like this: Factor A leads to factor B, and B again leads back to A, and A, now fortified again, leads to B, and so on. These circular effects have been known for some time in the theory of psychological disorders. In every case it starts with some feeling of insecurity. Let us look, for example, at examination anxiety. A well-prepared student fails a test. This is factor A. It may happen that a great fear of the next test develops—we call this “anticipatory anxiety”—this is factor B. As a consequence of an exaggerated negative expectation of failing again, factor A is fortified and the test taker is so blocked and frozen up that failure results on the next test. Thus B has led back to A. Examination fear is now solidly established—A immediately intensifies B—i.e., the vicious circle between anticipatory anxiety and failure is closed.



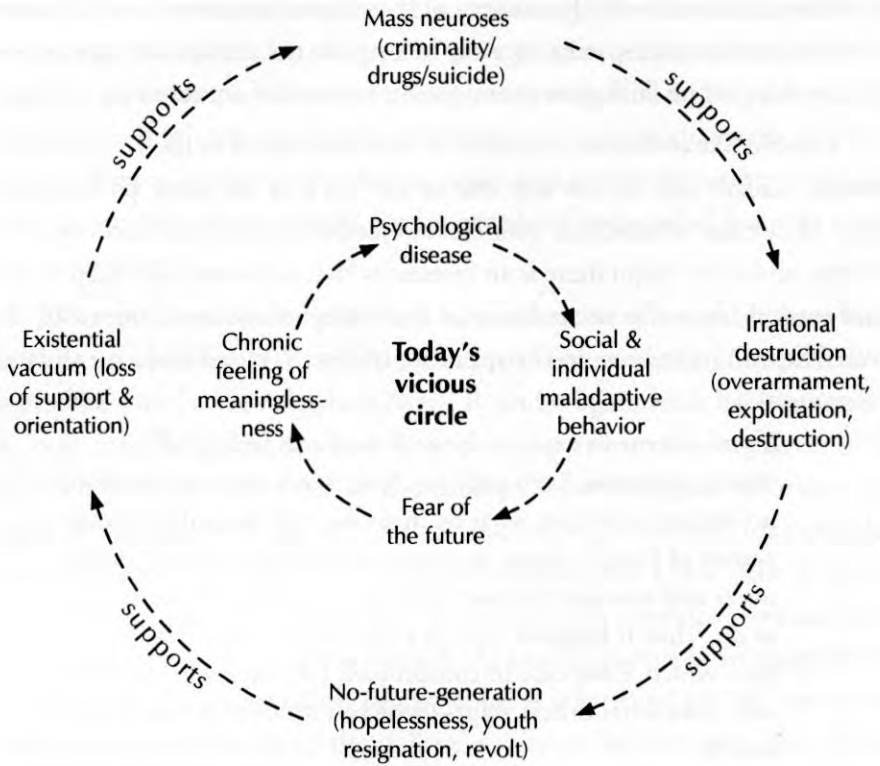
Naturally, this is merely a simple example of what can be said to be the origin of every psychopathological deviation. It is positioned—as the reader

may have observed—on the tangent of the subjective internal and objective external world; anticipatory anxiety belongs to the subjective experiences of a person, while failing an examination represents an objective reality.

I would like to discuss a number of factors involved in the vicious circle, whose shadow can fall on any one of us. Yet it is the same pathological type of circular interaction between subjective experiences and objective events, and at its origin there is an insecurity that is existentially deep-seated and intense. It is the pervasive total insecurity of modern times and the overwhelming doubt as to the meaning of life. Viktor Frankl formulated its genesis:

If you ask me to explain the genesis of this feeling of meaninglessness, I can only say that, in contrast to the animal, no instinct tells man what he must do, and in contrast to the person of former times, no tradition tells him what he ought to do and now he does not seem to know what he really wants to do. Thus it happens that he either only wants what others do—which is the case in conformism (Western world), or he only does what others want—which is totalitarianism (Eastern world).

We see that the human being no longer has the foolproof instincts of animals. Furthermore, the individual has lost—in this century more than ever—support from established traditions and value norms. The two World Wars and enormous technical progress have considerably contributed to this state of affairs. This caused a sudden *existential vacuum*, as Frankl called it. It is a loss of orientation and support, in which the question of meaning in any activity becomes suddenly acute and remains unanswered. Subsequent events simply demonstrate the neurotic vicious circle. The chronic feeling of meaninglessness upsets the balance of psychological health in a person and, once this balance is affected, social and individual maladaptive behavior is the inevitable result. This usually introduces *anticipatory anxiety*. The resulting pessimistically tinted, and by no means groundless, anxiety in its turn reinforces the resigned feeling that, in the final analysis, everything is meaningless anyway. This completes the vicious circle [see inner circle in figure on next page].



If we relate these four factors to world events at large, a specification can be assigned to each, indicating the complexity of its effects. The feeling of meaninglessness of the individual is analogous to the existential vacuum of a no-meaning generation on the level of the total population. The psychological illness of the individual parallels the mass neuroses of our time, with high rates of perversions, criminality, alcohol and drug dependency, depression, and suicide.

All those unsound deeds of humanity that have no other aim than irrational destruction, such as overarmament, exploitation, and the destruction of environmental and cultural treasures, can be understood as social and individual maladaptive behavior on a large scale. The fear of the future finds its expression in a generation of young people without ideals or compromise, a group that has named itself the "no-future generation" [see outer circle in figure].