OROVA Csaba

Emptied Squares in the City of God:
A Space for Catharsis

Since Jesus was a Jew, Christianity is a religion written into Judaism. Since the Shoa was anticipated by the anti-Judaism practiced by Christians, Judaism is a religion written into Christianity.

Thus, their relationship and dialogue are uniquely and simultaneously both tragic and promising. The promising character of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is not self-evident in the discourse after the Shoa.

This discourse began with a shocked silence, later followed by a painful statement: our culture and civilisation are questioned. The next stage was that of attempts at reconstruction of the (hi)story and the healing of memories by repentance and apology.

While all these are valid for our times as well, new voices are arising. These voices are silent answers for the Question raised by the Shoa. As a memory from Lublin, this essay is an attempt to make some of these voices speak.

Emptied Squares in Lublin

Arriving in Lublin, hoping to *see the memories* of the Polish culture and experience the Central European atmosphere, one observes huge *empty* squares at the outskirts of the inner city, which is marvellous today as then.

Next, one observes characteristically rigid buildings produced during the era of the Cold War. Then the foreigner is informed by the guide about vivid streets and motley squares once inhabited by Jewish people.

The Jewish quarter once gave birth to a many-coloured culture.

Lublin, with its Jewish community of *forty thousand*, was once called the "Jewish Oxford" owing to its world-renowned university.

In this Jewish spiritual centre of Central Europe, the Rabbis were educated by Zaddiks, righteous persons in the sight of God. Nowadays, local Jews are unable to practice the Saturday worship, because it requires *ten* persons.

Those once resident did not move too far. We can find their living memories within some kilometres at Majdanek, a demonic city founded by our European fellows. The foreigner, becoming aware of those *emptied* squares in Lublin and this cold garden of death, after shame and fury, now understands that she or he is not a foreigner any more in these two but symbolically *one* City.

Arriving as a new inhabitant of the Central European history in this concentration camp and *seeing the living memories*, one observes silence and tries to find reasons; but since the reasons prove to be incomprehensible, one is forced to observe this silence.

Then one slowly raises the silent question: to what culture can this City give birth? And what kind of spirituality can fill this now emptied place of universal humanity?

Though the voices of the Magyar intellectuals listed below (all experienced personally both the Nazi and the communist regimes) stem from the 1970s, their reception starts in the 1980s and 1990s, since they all were *personæ non gratæ* according to the official Magyar "cultural politics."

Thus, they should be listened to as new voices answering the questions raised. Nowadays, there are attempts to appropriate their allegedly conservative, liberal or left-wing attitudes by certain political forces, but their deep commitment to democracy, human rights and values are a common witness independent of any political standpoint.

The Culture of Civil Attitude

"I am not a *talented* person, so I need Nazism," said someone in the memoirs of MÁRAI Sándor, one of the most excellent Magyar writers, in his book titled *Earth, Earth*.[1] This book, and his diaries as well, are a vivid testimony for a *talent* of civil attitude. He is a symbolic figure of the unity of personal and civil attitude and literary work.

1 MÁRAI Sándor (1900–1989) was a Magyar writer and journalist. His works are translated into Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, English, Estonian, German, Italian, Polish, Slovak and Spanish.

As a protest against Soviet colonization, this celebrated writer went into voluntary exile in 1949. Till his death in the United States, he lived in close connection with Magyar and European literature, but was totally renounced by the communist government of Hungary.

In a destructive era when Empires decompose cultures, down to their humanistic foundations, that talent of civil attitude *resists* any irrational and totalitarian tendency coming either from East or West.

On the other hand, this talent of brave civil attitude *creates* a culture of responsible liberty. Principally, this civil attitude means a recognition of the main questions raised by the given time.

In a world of Empires, the main challenge is to remain outside of the crowd and to be an individual with the ability of making responsible *personal decisions*. Recognizing the questions sincerely means firstly a confession of being a *caricature* of the truth.

As a caricature of the truth, though one knows all the humanistic and Christian values and virtues, one does not concede their radical and practical consequences, but instead lives compromised by rotten scenery of history and inhuman social networks.

Recognizing the questions sincerely means an effort of defeating and disowning all caricatures of the truth. Uncovering that rotten scenery requires the talent of courageous civil attitude.

This talent is always threatened by the crowd attitude of the Empires and, on the other hand, endangered by forgetting the *I* that has the spiritual force to protest against all anti-humanistic and inhuman forces.

Liberty is a permanent intention to be free from any despotism and to persist in creative ways of human life. Where is the will of such a liberty with all its consequences in European culture nowadays? That was the question of MÁRAI Sándor to his readers *with a personal stress* in 1972, but today as well. The place for inner liberty should not be *emptied*.

The Culture of Solidarity

"In this time [of anti-Jewish laws], instead of work and enterprise, wide circles of the society became accustomed to building their living on looking out for someone else's existence, reporting on them, spying out their origins, getting them thrown out of their job, interning them and taking possession of their existence."

These lines were written by one of the greatest Magyar social scientists, BIBÓ István, in his study titled *The Question of Jews in Hungary after 1944*.[2]

BIBÓ István in his personal life embodied that talent of civil attitude described above: as a state minister of the revolutionary government in October 1956, he remained in his office when the Soviet Army occupied the Parliament in Budapest. To the inquisitive question of a Soviet officer why he was still there, he replied: 'I am working.'

Though silenced by the regime, he persisted in his hard work in the field of social science, which later became the foundation for all the democratic movements in Hungary. Though he was dead by that time, BIBÓ István became a symbolic figure of the democratic transformation in Hungary (1989–1990).

For BIBÓ István, the fundamental lack of a basic trust among the players of the society, i.e. the mutual non-recognition of partners, is a principal destructive force, resulting in murderous contradictions between classes and political elites; it emerges even as the root of the "misery of Eastern and Central European countries."

Moreover, this lack of social trust manifests itself already at the level of *perception* of each other when one (an individual, a class or a nation) forgets about the basic psychological insight: despite any similar notions, the self-image of an identity is not equal with the image made by another, from outside.

Thus, instead of sermonizing to each other or setting a pact to restore trust among social groups and integrate the interests among nations, the first main task is to make it mutually clear that we are caricatures for each other, by simply putting those images into words. It is a mutual task of *clearing our notions,* resulting in new stances regarding our language, attitude and ethical norms—that is, a humanization of inhuman relations.

The second task is a *cultural* fight against prejudices and superstitions rooted in our cultural patterns. The third task is a *socio-political* activity in a sense of being responsible for these patterns on the level of public decisions, leadership and even government.

In these processes of exchanging social experiences with each other, all the possible partners should communicate to each other: individuals (or groups) in the same party and individuals (or groups) across the borders of parties.

2 BIBÓ István (1911–1979) was a Magyar social scientist. His works are translated into English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Slovak.

All social bonds, such as tradition, law, legal coercion, international interests and even democracy itself, get their meaning from these trust-building processes, resulting in solidarity "federations" of individuals, groups or nations.

Instead of the isolation of concerns, this *solidarity* is already based on identifying our suffering with all others' suffering, our humiliation with all others' humiliation, our seeking for truth with all other human beings' search. The place for solidarity should not be *emptied*.

Holocaust as Culture

The Holocaust has its saints, just as all subcultures have, and if the living memory of what happened survives, it will be thanks to the martyred lives, writes the Nobel prize-winning Magyar writer KERTÉSZ Imre in his essay with the same title, *Holocaust as Culture*.[3]

He was still a secondary school pupil when in 1944 he was deported to Auschwitz because of his Jewish origins. He was released from Buchenwald in 1945. He finished his secondary school studies in 1948. Between 1949 and 1951 he was a journalist. He was fired in early 1951, and then lived as a labourer. From 1963 he has been a free-lance writer and translator. One of his most important works, *Fatelessness,* was written between 1960 and 1973.

What are the elements of that subculture? In the beginnings, silence and suppression; then the decades-long rational struggle for historical, sociological and psychological *documentation and explanation of negative experiences*.

The *negativity* of the Holocaust is not just a private affair of the Jews; it is rather a traumatic event for Western civilisation as a whole. Its negativity goes beyond historical events in a twofold manner.

First, the witnesses hand over their negative experiences in such a way that the recipient herself or himself, who in fact did not live at the time of the Story, becomes a survivor and a resistant.

In another respect, the negativity of the Holocaust can be experienced under other totalitarian regimes as well, including the sickle-and-hammer type of totalitarianism, which identified itself with the swastika type in many respects.[4]

3 KERTÉSZ Imre (1929–) is a Magyar writer. His literary work was honoured by a Nobel Prize in 2002. His works are translated into Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish.

4 KERTÉSZ Imre often refers to MÁRAI Sándor, explaining this experience, for example in his essay titled *Motherland, Home, Country*.

The *name* of this *negativity,* and its spiritual and emotional community united by a passion that resists forgetting, is Holocaust.

This twofold going-beyond leads us to our crucial question: beyond any documentation and explanation, can this *negativity* create values? Yes, KERTÉSZ Imre says, because its "spirit and catharsis," beyond any compassion, oblige us to *decide* on its recognition and on the receiving of that passion.

The Holocaust can indeed create a culture, because it obliges us to make an individual *decision*, penetrating into our private life's depth. Based on this decision, solidarity can be organized and sustained, independently from any domination or power.

Though values are in relation to rational arguments and explanations, first of all they are choices and decisions about the conditions of our self-knowledge. "A viable society must keep alive and renew constantly the knowledge and consciousness of itself and of its own criteria." (Says KERTÉSZ Imre, in his essay above.)

That negative knowledge of immeasurable suffering and this decision as an ethical value may fertilize Europe, giving birth to a culture. The Holocaust has, as all times have, its cathartic experience from which a culture is rising.

"Just as the Greek genius confronting barbarism and fighting the Persian war created the drama of the Antiquity, an eternal model [came out now as well]." *Fatelessness*, this metaphorical expression of negativity experienced by one deprived from her or his personal life, even death, by an impersonal power, is that cathartic experience.

Together with the other sources of the European culture, the Greek and Biblical tragedy of the human, this new culture is inspired by an "irredeemable reality that gave birth to atonement: spirit and catharsis."

In the City of God

"Magnificent and strong, once were these walls, fresh and free life flooded on their streets, power swelled, pomp flourished, there were beauty and gloom, plenty of love and hate," writes Heinrich HEINE in *The Rabbi of Bacherach*.

What culture and spirituality can this now emptied City give birth to? That is the question that we asked at the beginning of this essay. That emptied City opens places for our exploration in two directions.

In a horizontal direction, there are places to fill with a culture of civil attitude and solidarity. In a short synopsis above, we tried to make some voices speak on this culture. Those life-works of MÁRAI Sándor and BIBÓ István spring from personally experienced historical catharses.

The figure of the fateless and the Holocaust as culture, described by KERTÉSZ Imre, open the vertical direction. It might be the prayer of his metaphorical survival, the fateless, which was written by the Austrian poet Rainer Maria RILKE at the beginning of the XXth century:

"God, give us each our own death, The dying that proceeds From each of our lives: The way we loved, The meanings we made, Our need."

The negativity, i.e. the history of destruction and inhuman networks, which keep us in prison like Franz KAFKA's *Castle* does, is incomprehensible for us. The meaning of this *Civitas Diaboli* where the human rejects God becomes obvious far later.

Those emptied squares, however, are places for catharsis. Those chosen will live in the City of God. There will be no place for a ghetto in this City of God, and it cannot be identified with any given, historical institutions.

Here is the revelationary meeting place for God and human. As preconditions of this meeting place, Israel and the Church had been living in a close, but tense relationship for centuries.

Then this community was broken or forgotten, and their relationship *diverged*. In our times, however, they should look together at those emptied squares made by the Shoa. And catharsis has the power to *converge*.

The fundamental experience of Christianity is the death of an innocent in order to enact the good. This Christian catharsis and that of the Shoa both should awaken responsibility in all of us. We are sure that a responsible decision inspired by catharsis may fill the place of those symbolic emptied squares in Lublin.

Suggested Reading

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Peter TAVEL

Hatred and the Human Mind: Psychological Implications of the Holocaust

Based on the Work of Viktor E. FRANKL

One of the most important notions in the thinking of Viktor E. FRANKL *is that in life it is not so important what you expect from life, but rather what life expects from you. It is not the human who is asking about the meaning of life, but rather she or he is the one who receives this question from life and who has to answer it honestly with her or his life.*

Search for Meaning

Viktor E. FRANKL was born in 1905 in Wien. He had two siblings, a sister named Stella and a brother called Walter. His father Gabriel was from the southern Moravian town of Pohořelice, a man known for his loyalty to his principles, a perfectionist focused on duties. He also raised his son Viktor to be a perfectionist in accordance with his convictions. Viktor FRANKL himself says in several instances that he is like his father, who died before the war.[1]

Viktor FRANKL's mother Elsa came from Praha, and was in many ways the opposite of her husband: she was a benign and devotedly religious person. The whole family apart from Viktor FRANKL died in a concentration camp.

The parents raised their children strictly but, as FRANKL says, the atmosphere at home was that of security and safety.[2] About FRANKL's personality we can say in short that he was extremely rational (like his father) and deeply emotional (like his mother).

Further, it should be mentioned that he was indeed a perfectionist, and he was very strict with himself, which was manifested also in the fact that he consciously chose to be a mountaineer. He had a strong compassion and empathy for others, especially for those who were suffering.[3]

1 FRANKL. 1982. 124–125.

2 FRANKL. 2002. 1–13.

3 FRANKL. 2002. 13–17.

FRANKL's works can be commonly characterized as the *Will to Meaning* (Der Wille zum Sinn),[4] which is a short summation of FRANKL's search for the answer to the point and meaning of human life.

This issue is crucial to FRANKL and can be encountered in his whole life from his childhood onwards. He describes it this way: "One evening before going to bed, I was about four years old, I got scared, I got scared at the thought that one day even I have to die."[5]

Already at the age of fifteen, FRANKL presented a lecture at a philosophical seminar about the meaning of life. As he further added, he never experienced the fear of dying as an unbearable burden; what troubled his mind was the question of "whether the transitory nature of life does not destroy its meaning."[6]

At such moments it is fascinating to attempt to grasp what kind of school of life FRANKL had to undergo; or, to say it in a religious way: what kind of things God let him experience, what God let him go through in order to enable him to find the answer to this question.

The Devaluation of One's Self

An indisputable turning point in FRANKL's life and work is the rise of Nazism in Europe, World War II, and the three years he spent in four different concentration camps: Terezín (Theresienstadt), Oswieçim (Auschwitz), Kaufering III and Türkheim.[7]

The young successful doctor became *Number 119.104*.[8] Thus it is already as a doctor that FRANKL went through these traumatic life experiences and discoveries which would later mark his whole work.

One of the fundamental things that FRANKL experienced under the strong influence of the world that surrounded him in the camps was the "*devaluation of one's own self.*"[9] He experienced situations where almost the whole of the human being was devaluated.

This devaluation was at times not immediately connected with the

4 FRANKL. 1979. 101.

5 „*Mit vier Jahren muß es auch gewesen sein, daß ich eines Abends kurz vor dem Einschlafen aufschreckte, und zwar von der Einsicht aufgerüttelt, eines Tages auch ich sterben müssen.*" FRANKL. 2002. 9.

6 „*Ob nicht die Vergänglichkeit des Lebens dessen Sinn zunichte mache*." FRANKL. 2002. 9.

7 FRANKL. 2002. 77.

8 FRANKL. 1982. 19.

9 „*unter dieser allgemeinen Suggestion muß schließlich auch das eigene Ich eine Entwertung erfahren*". FRANKL. 1982. 83.

direct will to take away one's life and the lives of the others. The *self* of the human being was devaluated under the strong influence of the surrounding camp-world from which the value of human life and the dignity of the individual had disappeared.

The individual became almost exclusively an object of the will of the others, who wanted to use for their purposes even the last bit of her or his physical strength.[10] If a person does not oppose this pressure of the circumstances, she or he loses the sense of being a subject, a spiritual being with an inner freedom and a personal value.

She or he even loses independent thinking and will; and she or he finally becomes part of the crowd. And this act of protest can at times be done only through an ultimate resort to one's own human dignity.[11]At this point FRANKL poses the question of whether there is anything like human freedom. He is hinting at spiritual freedom, freedom to behave independently, the way of approaching the given conditions of her or his surroundings.

He asks whether the individual is not only a product of her or his surroundings, of biological, psychological and sociological givens.

10 FRANKL. 1982. 83.

11 FRANKL. 1982. 83.

In this context FRANKL emphasises that in the determinative conditions of the camp, it was very difficult to stay immune towards the strong influences of the surroundings.[12]

After all his considerations on the issue of freedom, FRANKL's answer is that freedom does exist. He claims that "*the decisive factor is always the human.*"[13] In the concentration camp he saw people who gave evidence for inner freedom, who showed that suffering is an inner action with dignity.

And finally exactly this "spiritual freedom (which cannot be taken away until the very last moment of one's life) gives the person the opportunity to order her or his life in a meaningful way."[14]

The Role of Hope

FRANKL tried to help the prisoners in the camp to find their life aim. He claims that it was sheer misery when a prisoner saw no more aim in her or his life. A typical answer was: "What more can I expect from life?"

FRANKL underlines the fact that each prisoner's attempt at inner recovery presupposed that she or he would focus on a future goal, on a fixed point. This aim, this fixed point, was connected both with time and with the object.

As for time, he says: "*Without a fixed point in the future, a human being cannot exist at all.*"[15] Before the Christmas of 1944 a naïve hope spread among the prisoners that they were going to celebrate it in their homes.

As this hope did not materialise between Christmas and the New Year, there was a wave of massive dying, even though the working conditions, supply situation and the weather did not get any worse, and there was no epidemic at that time.

The news about the potential end of the war did not bring anything encouraging; instead the prisoners lost their point in the future. They experienced a fatal disappointment which led to the wave of dying.[16]

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12 FRANKL. 1982. 107.

13 „*Das Entscheidende ist immer der Mensch.*" FRANKL. 1985. 247.

14 „*Die geistige Freiheit des Menschen, die man ihm bis zum letzten Atemzug nicht nehmen kann, läßt ihn auch noch bis zum letzten Atemzug Gelegenheit finden, sein Leben sinnvoll zu gestalten.*" FRANKL. 1982. 109.

15 „*Ohne fixen Punkt in der Zukunft vermag der Mensch nicht eigentlich zu existieren.*" FRANKL. 1985. 110.

16 FRANKL. 1982. 123.

FRANKL found his aim, the firm point of an object, of his personal autotherapy during the typhus infection, while writing his book *Ärtzliche Seelsorge*. He knew that if he had an aim, it would certainly help him to survive.[17]

When mentioning this situation, he always likes to quote Friedrich NIETZSCHE: "*Everyone who has a* why *in her or his life can bear any kind of* how."[18] He invoked this principle, as an experience from the concentration camp, in his theory of existential analysis in connection with neuroses.[19]

The Power of Love

In the concentration camp FRANKL also reflected on his relationship to his wife Tilly. For the first time in his life he realized the truth that had been formulated by so many thinkers before: *"Love is the ultimate and the highest, which the human can herself or himself reach*."[20]

He grasped the meaning of the most extreme that the human mind, poetry and faith could offer: *"Salvation by love in love."*[21] It was in the camp that he for the first time in his life understood that there was nothing left to hold on to.

And still that he could be blessed, if he was in his deepest inner ground devoted to his beloved one, he could be able to fill his inside with the loving glance, the contemplation of the spiritual image of the beloved, which carries in itself the meaning of what makes it possible to the angels to share in the blessed vision of the infinite glorious Beauty.[22]

Through his concentration camp experiences FRANKL found out "that love is by far not connected only to the physical existence of the human. In the greatest depth love concerns the spiritual being of the beloved one."[23]

One does not need to know at this very moment whether the beloved person is around, if she or he physically exists or if she or

17 FRANKL. 2002. 75–77.

18 „*Nur wer ein Warum zu leben hat, erträgt fast jedes Wie*." FRANKL. 1982. 124.

19 FRANKL. 1983. 192.

20 „*Daß Liebe irgendwie das Letzte und das Höchste ist, zu dem sich menschlichen Dasein aufzuschwingen vermag*." FRANKL. 1982. 65.

21 „*Die Erlösung durch die Liebe und in der Liebe*." FRANKL. 1982. 65.

22 FRANKL. 1982. 66.

23 „*So wenig meint Liebe die körperliche Existenz eines Menschen, so sehr meint sie zutiest das geistege Wesen des geliebten Menschen*." FRANKL. 1982. 67.

he is still alive. Love, affectionate recollection, the loving glance of the spiritual image of the beloved, cannot be harmed in this way.

Viktor FRANKL says that if he had found out in the camp that his wife was dead, this knowledge would not have affected him; he would have contemplated his beloved wife with the same devotion.

Even the spiritual talks with her would have been equally intense and fulfilling. FRANKL admits that it was thanks to love that he survived the concentration camp, and the greatest credit lies with his love for his wife.[24]

Confronting Suffering and Death: The Copernican Turn

In the concentration camp Viktor FRANKL ascertained that in the thinking of the human person an important and decisive turn (conversion or metanoia) is possible. It is the so-called *Copernican turn*.

Elisabeth LUKAS[25] EXPLAINS THIS BY SAYING THAT FRANKL warns the human not to ask life the *why*-questions. Thus in fact we should not ask: "Why is my daughter disabled? Why is my husband a drunkard? Why has my wife cheated on me? Why did I get ill?"

When we ask *why*, we examine the causes. The space for action of the human, however, is not the questions but the answers. This is the Copernican turn from the question *why* to the answer *therefore*.

Life is asking the questions: "Your daughter is disabled. What are you going to do now? Your husband is a drunkard. What are you going to do about it? Your wife has cheated on you. How are you going to solve it? You got ill. How are you going to face it?"

To find a clear-cut *why* is sometimes not possible for the human. The answer, however, is hers or his for a hundred percent. *A unique and unrepeatable individual is facing a unique and unrepeatable situation* and her or his answer to the given situation is always something *concrete* that this unique and unrepeatable situation brings with itself.

So if the human has to suffer, she or he should perceive it as a task, as her or his specific task. FRANKL says: "If a human is facing some kind of suffering, she or he is the only one in the whole space who stands here and no one else can suffer through it instead of her or him. It is about the uniqueness of her or his performance."

24 FRANKL. 1982. 67.

25 LUKAS. 1999. 13–15.

Further he adds: "For us in the concentration camps this was the only way of thinking that could help us, because it did not let us despair; even though we did not see any chance to survive, it was the only one that could help us!

"Because it was not anymore a question about the meaning of life, which was very often posed and which means only the fulfilment of some given aim. We meant the meaning of life as a totality which comprises also death, and so it does not offer only the meaning of life, but also the meaning of suffering and death. We fought for this kind of meaning."[26]

As Viktor FRANKL detailed, in the camp he learned in concrete life how to cope with suffering. He said: "If something bad happens to me, spiritually I fall on my knees and wish that nothing worse happens to me in the future.

"There is not only a hierarchy of values, but also a hierarchy of worthlessness. In a toilet in Theresienstadt an inscription caught my attention: Detach yourself from everything, and enjoy every single piece of shit."[27]

The "Fruit" of the Holocaust and Collective Guilt

The experience from the concentration camp was for FRANKL's work a constitutive life experience, or as he puts it himself, *experimentum cruces*.[28] He says about himself that after the validation of his own self-transcendence and self-distance, he gains even more certainty concerning his theory of the *will to meaning*.

He claims that a basic *border situation* (in the sense of Karl JASPERS) was actualised in his life,[29] a moment of self-revelatory truth, a moment in which human existence touches the borders of being.[30]

26 „*Für uns im Konzentrationslager waren solche Gedanken das einzige, was uns noch helfen konnte! Denn diese Gedanken waren es, die uns auch dann nicht verzweifeln ließen, wenn wir keine Chance mehr sahen, mit dem Leben davonzukommen. Denn uns ging es längst nicht mehr um die Frage nach dem Sinn des Lebens, wie sie oft in Naivität gestellt wird und nichts weiter meint als die Verwirklichung irgendeines Zieles dadurch, daß wir schaffend etwas hervorbringen. Uns ging es um den Sinn des Lebens als jener Totalität, die auch noch den Tod mit einbegreift und so nicht nur den Sinn von Leben gewährleistet, sondern auch den Sinn von Leiden und Sterben: um diesen Sinn haben wir gerungen!*" FRANKL. 1982. 126–127.

27 „*Wenn mir etwas zustößt, sinke ich in die Knie – natürlich in der Phantasie – und wünsche mir, daß mir in der Zukunft nichts Ärgeres passieren soll. Es gibt ja ein Hierarchie nicht nur der Werte, sondern auch der Unwerte, die sich in solchen Fällen in Erinnerung rufen sollte. In einem WC im Lager Theresienstadt habe ich einmal einen Wandspruch gelesen, der lauterte: Setz' dich über alles hinweg freu' dich über jeden Dreck.*" FRANKL. 2002. 15.

28 FRANKL. 2002. 75.

29 JASPERS. 1950.

30 FRANKL. 2002. 75.

FRANKL maintains that no generation got to know what is inside the human in the same way as the one that experienced the Holocaust. They found out the human person is a *blend* of good and evil.

The human person is the one who builds incinerators in concentration camps, and the human walks into them with a raised head and a prayer on his lips. In this connection FRANKL deliberates on whether or not there is such a thing as *collective guilt*.

He remembered a situation, when after being released from the camp on the way home, he went with a friend through a field of early oats. FRANKL stopped with the feeling that they should not be walking on the crops.

His friend encouraged him with the words that those are German fields and oats and that the Germans caused great harm to them so they actually well deserve to have their crops trampled upon.

FRANKL reflects on this kind of thinking and arrives at the opinion that there can be no collective guilt which the German nation as a whole should bear, but rather that guilt is to be attributed to individuals.

He even pointed out that the one talking about collective guilt does injustice to herself or himself. Wherever it was possible, FRANKL stood up against the concept of collective guilt, even though his attitude was rather unpopular after 1946.

For the illustration of his stance, FRANKL often used an example of one of the camp leaders who was an SS officer. After the liberation it became known that from his own money he had been buying medicine for prisoners in a nearby pharmacy.

After the liberation of the concentration camp, the prisoners themselves hid this SS-man and finally surrendered him to the American commander on the condition that nothing would happen to him.

The American commander kept his promise and appointed him to be the commander of the liberated camp and he organized food and clothes collections among the inhabitants of the surrounding villages.[31]

31 FRANKL. 2002. 80–81.

FRANKL's Work after the War

After the war Viktor FRANKL started publishing and lecturing all around the world. He admits, however, that his life experiences could be a burden, that he suffered some kind of deformation, which makes his objectivity doubtful.

In other words, his ability to judge others and himself might have been weakened by the trauma. He said: "The one who was in the middle has too little distance. On the other hand, the one who was on the outside has too much distance and can hardly put herself or himself into the position of the one on the inside."[32]

In spite of this doubt, FRANKL started a publishing series of his works after the war. He became the founder of *logotherapy*, which is based on his experience from the concentration camp and has its cornerstone in the theory of the *will to meaning*.

After the war logotherapy became widely discussed, for example, in the United States.[33] He is the author of thirty-one works translated into twenty-four languages.[34] His concentration camp experience is described in detail in his book *…trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen. Ein Psycholog erlebt das KZ* (… Still Say Yes to Life. A Psychologist Experiences the Concentration Camp).[35]

FRANKL was active until the very end of his life. He was awarded 29 honorary doctorates around the world. Even at the age of seventy he was still an active mountaineer. In spite of his growing popularity and recognition he remained a modest person.

At an audience with the Pope PAUL VI, he maintained that the success of logotherapy is not something that he should be congratulated upon. Viktor FRANKL had his last lecture at the University of Wien in the year 1995.[36]

In the United States alone, more than nine million copies of his books have been sold, and according to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., his book *Man's Search for Meaning*[37] is among the ten most influential books in the United States.

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32 „*Derjenige, der ‚mitten drin' stand und sich schon eingelebt hatte, schon längst viel zuwenig Distanz.*" FRANKL. 1985. 105.

33 FRANKL. 2002. 75.

34 FRANKL. 2002. 100.

35 FRANKL. 2002. 85.

36 FRANKL. 1982. 110.

37 FRANKL. 1982.

Suggested Readings

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www.viktorfrankl.org

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