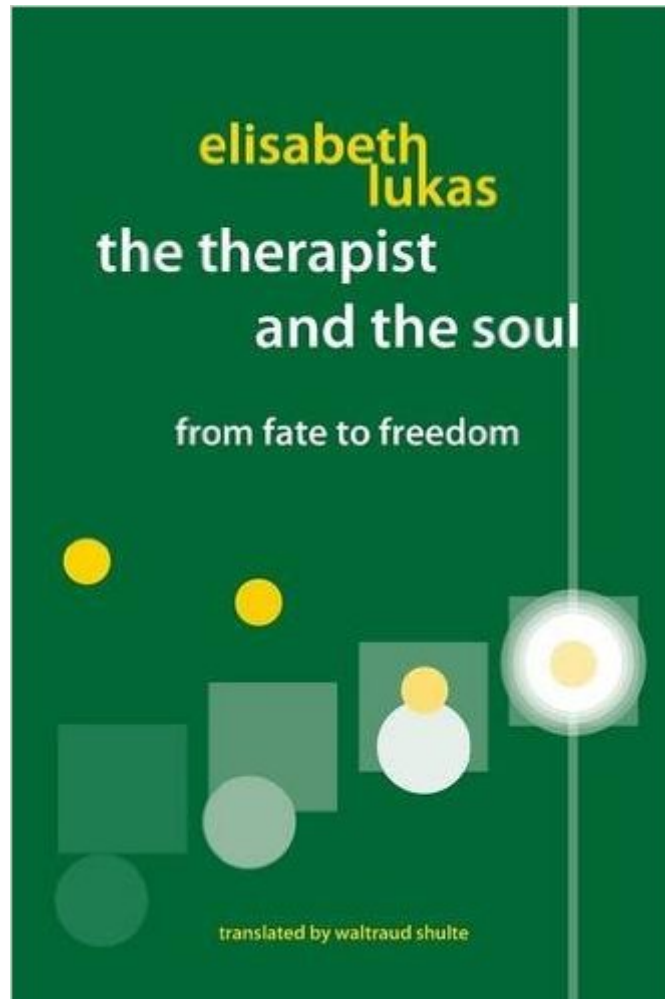


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The Therapist And The Soul: From Fate To Freedom



Synopsis

The Therapist and the Soul: From Fate to Freedom by Elisabeth Lukas Elisabeth Lukas is one of the leading practitioners of logotherapy in the world, and is internationally known for applying and extending the work of Viktor Frankl. Frankl noted that, "For Lukas, there is no human being who does not retain a chance to grow, no situation which does not have its spark of meaning.... To elucidate meaning possibilities is the art of Elisabeth Lukas and entirely in the tradition of logotherapy." In this book, Lukas offers hope to those who suffer from guilt or fear, whether justified or not. Each must be dealt with differently; for example, it is common for a person to suffer from guilt for an accident for which there is no responsibility. Such unjustified guilt is actually the result of the blows of fate, which were not chosen and for which the person was therefore not responsible. On the other hand, where guilt is justified, the offering of "absolution" is not appropriate, and practical measures must be offered for the individual to address it. Lukas devotes separate chapters to meaningful approaches to the unique struggles facing men and women; working with "problem children"; the use of books for self-therapy; the prevention of suicides; as well as justified vs. unjustified guilt, among others. Lukas establishes (using examples and case studies) that it is not necessary to dredge up the past, uncover old wounds, or analyze childhood traumas in order to find meaning and healing. What awaits us all is a meaningful choice among a constellation of possibilities. Excerpts from *The Therapist and the Soul: From Fate to Freedom* Everybody can be good for something or someone, independent of the perhaps miserable position in which the person exists. At the very moment when such a "being good for something" (that is, a meaning element of one's own existence) lights up, the question "why live?" or "why go on living?" is already answered. (p. 186) How can helping support be given in the search for meaning, which every person faces sooner or later? One fact has to be kept in mind: Meaning can never be given--it must be discovered. (p. 12) It is the central concern of the logotherapist to guide vulnerable people towards meaning-oriented thinking and to rouse in them supportive attitudes which will prove themselves in times of need and crisis. (pp. 185-186) It is not the intention of those practicing logotherapy to put blame onto patients; nor are practitioners interested in exonerating patients of guilt. Rather, the logotherapist is concerned with insight into just how far we are free and hence responsible, in contrast to how far we are the plaything of fate and hence not responsible or guilty. Which possibility is preferred is an open question. (p. 221) Fate entails that the circumstances themselves cannot be changed. But we are not responsible for what we cannot change and have not chosen, nor can we be at fault in such circumstances. However, what we have chosen freely, done freely, decided freely to be a part of our own lives, to this we have committed ourselves with all its consequences. It is

undeniably our own deed or our own fault. When we look at it this way, we may hesitate to prefer the area of freedom. For freedom may well be a gift, but it is also a sentence to responsibility. And fate may well force us to do something, but it is also a pardon from responsibility. (p. 218)

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Customer Reviews

This book addresses a question that is seldom, if ever, asked by experts in the mental health field. What is the goal of the therapy? Is it to discharge the drives that make client's impulses, thoughts, feelings and behaviors uncomfortable causing them distress and even psychosis? Is it to remove stress all together so that a client can be happy? Is happiness really what we all strive for and why we seek out a therapist in the first place? Even if happiness were the ultimate goal, can a person sustain such a state and still live a fulfilled life? Is that all there is, really, just being happy? Using Elisabeth Lukas's book as a guide, the answer to all these questions has got to be no. The answer, as she explains, is finding meaning and purpose in what we do. Using clinical examples, Lukas introduces something unexamined in modern therapy, that is, one can have an unhappy life, even a difficult one, but if one finds purpose in experience, then a person is offered the possibility of fulfillment despite the severity of individual circumstance. From this view, it makes sense that happiness is passing and cannot be sustained, but that meaning is something we can be in constant pursuit of and we can dedicate ourself to it. My most personal example of this is my maternal grandmother, who would walk through one of the toughest projects in Brooklyn, Bedford Stuyvesant, so that she could save the carfare to buy her grandchildren candy bars. This would be considered an empty gesture by most people, except when put in the context of the meaning she

could envision, the future that she would never see herself, but that could perhaps be recognized by the ones that she knew would come after. It gave an unschooled woman's life meaning and gave meaning to those who could appreciate this selfless gesture. This is the kind of experience Lukas envisions and I think correctly envisions what therapy is meant to achieve-finding purpose.

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