

ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES

Although Humanistic Psychology is concerned perhaps rather more with the continued growth and development of people who are already coping adequately with their ordinary life situations, most of the findings, techniques and insights are equally applicable in the field of therapy. In fact, it is impossible to draw a sharp dividing line between growth and therapy. To some extent we are all in need of healing: to some extent we can all benefit from increased awareness and growth. One of the big advantages of these alternative therapies is that they are much cheaper than conventional medical and psychiatric practices and can reach a much wider group of people. At the same time this is one of the factors that worries the establishment, and prevents many doctors and therapists from co-operating as fully as they might.

Is there perhaps an element here of self preservation? The feeling that once a person has passed the relevant examination he becomes a different and superior kind of person? This is not to decry academic study in general, only the substitution of role-playing for an effective and meaningful relationship with their patients. The record of for example official psycho-analysis is not too impressive as Eysenck has often pointed out. Of a sample group of patients undergoing analysis, some 20% of them will be found to have improved over the course of three years. A controlled sample of similar patients who receive no treatment, produce exactly the same result.

Physical medicine as practised by the mass of GPs is little better. In spite of some brilliant research work into drugs and cures of major diseases, medicine to-day has failed to cure the common cold and very largely ignores the research findings that much of disease is produced by the patient as protest, armour or escape. This is not to say that any of the alternative therapies that we mention in this issue would necessarily do better. However, they are unlikely to do worse, will cost a great deal less, and are certainly a lot more rewarding as activities in themselves.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the three major articles - Dr. Reddy on Transactional Analysis, Dr. Berke on the work of Arbours and the interview with Aaron Esterson - all begin from the view-point of man as a social animal, not as a lone deviant. There are two main threads: the late Eric Berne's view of repetitive and destructive social behaviour as a kind of 'game' (*The Games People Play*) and Dr. Ronald Laing's pioneer work on schizophrenia as a 'career' involving all members of the family and not just the 'patient'. This is completely in line with the philosophy of Humanistic Psychology - namely that the most rewarding, the most healing, and the most growth-enhancing activity of a human being is his/her relationships with other human beings.

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