

Book Review

Paul Hauck, *Overcoming Depression*, Sheldon Press, £3.75 (paperback).

Paul Hauck, an American psychologist, writes in an easily understandable non-technical style. He dedicates his book to Albert Ellis, (the creator of Rational Emotive Therapy), yet regrettably makes no reference to this school of therapy despite the fact that his approach to depression derives a great deal from it. Albert Ellis, a forceful drily humorous character judging from his recent lectures in London, assumes that man's problems arise because he lives his life grounded on irrational beliefs which govern his thoughts, and hence his feelings. The therapist helps his patient by discovering his irrational philosophies of life and correcting them. Thus the patient learns to live untrammelled by illogical attitudes and value judgements which he has been brainwashed into accepting.

Hauck claims that his book will help those with mild depressions the most. I have gained much benefit in checking my own considerable tendency to 'self-blame'. Self-blame says Hauck is a violence against yourself. It is one of the three causes of depression, the others being self pity and sentimental pity for others.

Self-blame is double pronged. Your action is bad; you are bad. While the former may be true, the latter is an irrational judgement. That I am guilty of belittling my wife may be true; but that therefore I am worthless is an irrational invalid statement. The feeling of guilt is *not* because of the fact that I have done something wrong or badly, but the assumption that this therefore makes me a bad person.

I consider Hauck's analysis of the causes of depression unsatisfactory: for one thing it omits unexpressed anger which I feel can be a contradictory cause. Most valuable perhaps is Hauch's insight into self-blame.

I like his 'ABC Theory of Emotions', though his presentation is careless. He compares physical and emotional pain. Physical pain has two factors, 'A' a knife thrown at your chest and 'B' the sound in your chest. This wound 'B' causes 'C' the feeling of pain. Emotional pain has two factors 'A' an insult I direct at you and 'B' your thought that I want to hurt you and that this is intolerable. This thought 'B' causes 'C' the painful feeling. It is not 'A' that causes you pain, but 'B' your own thoughts. If only you could see that it is not intelorable that I should insult you, then you need suffer no pain (says Hauck).

Hauck also instances a flirtatious wife responding to her husband, insults that she is a tart, by examining his accusation carefully to decide whether it is right or wrong. Hauck ends this illustration by saying - 'Notice how she's profited from being called a tart instead of becoming depressed'. Well really I find this ludicrous!

The wife thoughts are twofold. 'My husband is calling me names and attacking me'. 'I'm a tart'. Both thoughts occur as quick as a flash, and cannot be avoided by any 'rational theory'. The wife will then feel hurt whether the accusation is true or not. What Hauck fails to realise is that the name-calling hurts even if unjustified because the husband is attacking and trying to hurt. Her feeling is then 'I want my husband to like me and he doesn't'. My own view is that you tend to believe the content of insult the more easily, the less confidence and self-respect you have. So that the wife, if she had been confident of herself in general, would have been upset only by her husband's aim to hurt, but not by the content of his accusation. If you are easily insulted and suffer feelings of guilt as I do you need that much more self-confidence and self-respect.

In general I find this book contains much that is valuable and provides much food for the thoughtful person who wishes to know more about guilt as well as depression.

Ronald Ullmann