
WANTED - A NEW WAY OF THINKING

by

Roy Ridgway

Albert Einstein said: "We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive".

A number of physicians and health workers in mainstream and complementary medicine are proposing to form a group who will seek new ways of thinking and behaving. Ultimately they hope that they may help to eliminate the use or threat of violence as an instrument of policy in international relations, and to protect the environment - land, seas and forests - from exploitation for short term gains.

Mankind has reached a state of development in which old modes of thinking and behaving threaten to destroy our planet. We are living through a crisis in international relationships, in which only a profound and radical revolution, unlike any other that has ever taken place before, can save us from total self-destruction. Those of us who are dedicated to the preservation of life must play a prominent part in this revolution, which calls for a substantial change in our manner of thinking.

There must be a reappraisal of the way we define ourselves and what it means to be a human being.

There must be a radical change in

our sense of **ourselves**. We must begin to accept that human beings, far from being inherently evil and violent, are at heart good and constructive. We must change from being suspicious, self-defensive and secretive to being open, trustworthy and responsible.

Damage to the environment

The damage we are doing to ourselves and our environment was described in *The World Conservation Strategy* (Geneva, 1980), which stated that the planet's capacity to support people had been irreversibly reduced in both developing and developed countries and that the resource base of major industries is shrinking. Arable lands and forests are being destroyed at an alarming rate, as is the genetic diversity of plants and animals. In Europe, forests are being destroyed by acid rain, brought about by a variety of causes, including sulphur from power stations, nitrogen oxides from cars, and probably other causes not yet identified. But ultimately, the effect on trees may be only the tip of the iceberg. Latest research suggests that industrial pollution (from sulphur, nitrogen, heavy metals, etc) is poisoning our soils

and even our water supplies and may be endangering human health.

The current population of the world amounts to about 4.5 billion people, and this will probably rise by 2 billion in the next 20 years, giving rise to enormous problems of maintaining even a minimum standard of health and subsistence in vast areas. Even at present there are half billion in the world who are underfed, one billion who are illiterate, one and a half billion who do not have adequate medical care, and a billion who do not have adequate housing. This problem of deprivation is further magnified by the millions of refugees and the degree of unemployment in the world.

A recent report of the British Medical Association's board of science points out that increasing poverty and widespread unemployment, even in a developed country such as the United Kingdom, is giving rise to pronounced effects on health, wasting the nation's talents and stunting its children. In the developing countries, the situation is worse. Regularly we hear of new regions where whole populations are suffering from malnutrition and disease, exacerbated by war and civil strife.

The arms race throughout the world causes an enormous strain on resources. The approximate costs of armaments for 1986 are estimated at \$900 billion. In the world today there is one soldier for every 43 people and only one doctor for 1030 people. Every two seconds a child dies - a victim of avoidable disease - whilst another is born into

conditions that will damage them, physically and emotionally, for life.

By a wiser and more equitable distribution of medical and other resources and by putting the eco into economics - i.e. persuading governments that it makes economic as well as ecological sense to develop environmental protection programmes - we can reverse the trend towards the ultimate destruction of our essential means for survival on our planet.

New Thinking

Thomas Kuhn (1962) introduced the idea that for centuries science has been guided by a paradigm based on the intellectual achievements of Newton and Descartes, who saw the world mechanistically and reductively, divided into inside and outside, subject and object. All the emphasis was on the objective world "out there" with very little account taken of modes of seeing or perceiving that world. This has been overturned by the work of Einstein and his theory of relativity, the atomic physicists and others who have discovered laws that don't fit the old paradigm. So a new paradigm is emerging that takes into account the observer as well as the thing observed: the two cannot be separated. There cannot be objective knowledge without an observing subject: what we see must be relative to and influenced by where we are and who we are.

In human affairs, objectivity on its own doesn't work because it contradicts what it means to be a human being. A human being is **not** an object. He or she is not only a

thinking, but a feeling person with emotions, values, hunches, intuitions, sensitivities, which have a tremendous influence on what they do and how they perceive the world. He or she is both an individual, alone in a own private world, and also a member of a particular society, and, in turn, that society belongs to a wider community, the human family, with which every individual shares common experiences and aspirations and a common global environment. The individual and society are inter-dependent, as are the individual nation state and the community of states that share the same global environment. An understanding of our present situation and any diagnosis of ill-health, in individuals or populations, must take into account all these factors.

In medicine, there is a new holistic approach, which recognises both the inner and outer worlds of the patient and the inter-dependence of the two. The way objective and subjective approaches to illness are coming together in a more holistic approach is demonstrated in the new science of psychoimmunology, in which it has been shown that states of mind can influence the immune system by sending messages down nerve cells (Paul Martin: **New Scientist**: 9 April, 1987).

The holistic approach is, in fact, in the tradition of Hippocratic medicine, with its emphasis on the fundamental interrelation of body, mind and environment. One of the most important of Hippocratic books, **Airs, Waters and Places**, represents what we would now describe as a treatise on human

ecology. It demonstrates in great detail how the well-being of individuals is influenced by environmental factors - the quality of air, water and food, the topography of the land and general living habits.

The positive role of medicine in international relationships

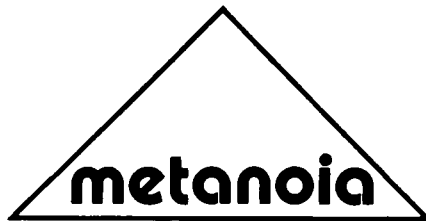
It is because of this more holistic approach that medicine has an increasingly important role to play in international relationships. Understanding the nature of human beings will enable us to see more clearly the reasons for their predicament today, which is essentially a breakdown in relationships. People have become alienated from themselves - their true inner nature - from others and from their environment.

The Renaissance Group of Physicians and Health Workers will expose obsolete ways of thinking which have had such disastrous effects on the environment and international relationships, and seek to promote new, healthier ways of thinking which recognise the value and creative potential of every individual. As physicians we have a duty to educate our patients to change their thinking and their lifestyle and to persuade them to accept responsibility for their own health which is dependent to a large extent on the environment in which they live and which they help to create. We must persuade governments of the need to examine old and outworn policies that keep the world in a constant state of fear and ill-health, and to introduce new policies that are based on a respect

for the natural environment and an unconditional positive regard for every individual. We will seek to do this through seminars, study groups,

workshops, medical exchanges and through the medical press and the media generally.

For further information write: Dr Michael Ellis, Bridge Lane Health Centre, 20 Bridge Lane, London SW11 3AD, or Roy Ridgway, 13 Beech Grove, Owslebury, Winchester, Hants SO21 1LS. Tel: 090274-262.



Psychotherapy Training Institute

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY

26th May 1988 in London

This will be the first National Conference of Psychotherapists in Britain who are coming together to explore psychotherapy integration. Some well-known speakers have already agreed to lead workshops.

It is being arranged by the British network co-ordinator of the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration USA with a view to bringing together professionals interested in an eclectic, integrative approach to psychotherapy.

If you are interested in attending this conference and/or contributing to it in another way, please contact the co-ordinator, Dr. Petruska Clarkson, as soon as possible. Please also bring this date to the attention of friends and colleagues who may be interested.

Dr. Petruska Clarkson,
metanoia Psychotherapy Training Institute 13 North Common Road.
London W5 2QB. Telephone: 01-579-2505
