

# Calendar 1963—64

It is proposed to hold the following meetings at 3 Albert Court, Kensington Gore, s.w.7. They will take the form of a discussion on various aspects of the Alexander Technique. Each discussion will be opened by selected speakers followed by a general discussion. Meetings will start at 7.30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise stated.

TUESDAY 11 JUNE 1963  
Psychological Aspects of the Alexander Technique.

TUESDAY 16 JULY 1963  
Garden Party and Musical Evening at 16a Broadlands Road, London N.6  
(Highgate Tube Station) 7.30 for 8.

TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 1963  
The Technique in Industry.

TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 1963  
Annual Lecture at the Medical Society of London. Lecturer to be announced later.

TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER 1963  
The Technique in Sport.

TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 1964  
The Technique in Art.

TUESDAY 10 MARCH 1964  
The Technique in Education.

• See Also P.

# The Alexander Journal

NO.2 SUMMER 1963

Published by the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique,  
3 Albert Court, Kensington Gore, London s.w.7.

Editorial Committee: Dr. Wilfred Barlow, Patrick J. Macdonald, Eric de Peyer.

Editor: Edward H. Owen

## CONTENTS

- 4 Aspects of the Alexander technique 2:  
The technique and back disorders – Eric de Peyer
- 7 The problems of posture
- 8 Alexander and the mastery of habit – Edward H. Owen
- 10 What F. M. Alexander said about – Habit and change
- 11 The barrier of habit – John Dewey
- 15 Some varieties of mis-use – Wilfred Barlow, M.A., B.M., B.Ch.
- 21 Education without 'end-gaining' – A talk by Irene Tasker reported by  
Joyce Warrack
- 23 The Society's activities
- Inside back cover Correspondence – Geoffrey Curtis, C.R.; Gwyneth Isaac

## Editorial

Discussing the purpose of the journal in our introductory editorial, we observed that one of the Society's objects was 'to do everything possible to preserve Alexander's teaching in its authentic form'. Some readers took us to be referring to F. M. Alexander's particular style of teaching his technique – rather than, as we meant, to the principles underlying it – and concluded that the Society was growing conservative and suspicious of innovation or individuality of approach. Let us make clear at once then that no one in the Society is against experiment in teaching methods or in favour of any sort of standardised teaching procedure. What we had in mind, as we said above, were the principles on which the technique is based and the need to ensure that these are not blurred or lost as the work develops and spreads.

There are many ideas and methods current today in the fields of medicine, psychology, education, physical training and so on that look superficially rather like Alexander's teaching – and have in some cases almost certainly been influenced by it. The Alexander technique itself, however, embodies principles that are not, as far as we know, present in any other system of education or form of treatment; and these principles constitute by far the

more important part of F. M.'s discovery, because without them we should perhaps have a method of alleviating bodily strains and stresses but certainly not a method of re-education. It is surely one of the responsibilities of Alexander's supporters, then, to deepen their understanding of these principles, so that as the application of the work widens it can have the profound influence on human health and happiness that F. M. himself hoped for.

Through his remarkable feat of self-observation, Alexander came to recognise that there was such a thing as a person's 'manner of use'; in other words, he saw that most of us do not employ our bodies as nature intended, but in a way peculiar to ourselves that 'feels right' but in fact is objectively wrong. Through experiment on himself, as described in his book *The Use of the Self*, he arrived at a clear idea of what was objectively right, and then went on to work out a method of exercising a conscious form of self-direction in place of the instinctive feeling that had shown itself to be so unreliable.

Strictly speaking, we have put these discoveries in the wrong order and one needs to take them chronologically to appreciate how much more there was in Alexander's achievement than simply noting that there was a wrong way of using the body. To recapitulate, then, Alexander first decided that it was something he was doing to himself that was causing his throat trouble and identified this as a tendency to 'pull down'. It was only when he tried to check this tendency that he came up against the real difficulty inherent in one's habit of use, i.e. that it is an unconscious general mannerism, a quasi-instinctive pattern stamped on nature by individuality, a hidden persuader that imposes its will through the medium of feeling. He was forced to recognise that it was this acquired and impaired sense of self-regulation, as represented by what 'felt right', that was the effective doer of his actions. If he had failed to find a way round this barrier of conditioning, Alexander might perhaps have succeeded in preventing himself from 'pulling down' as he stood before the mirror, but he could never have employed his discovery in normal daily activity, let alone have attempted to re-educate other people. He – and we – would have been left in the unhappy situation of knowing that all our psychophysical responses were affected by our manner of use while having no means of changing this for the better.

By evolving his technique of 'constructive conscious control', Alexander achieved something of great significance in the field of human self-direction. He showed that conscious control could be applied to levels of behaviour that had hitherto been regarded as instinctive or constitutional, and hence beyond the reach of the mind. As is clearly brought out by the small symposium on Alexander and Habit published in this issue, the method of re-education he worked out was nothing less than a technique for freeing ourselves from the conditioning grip of habit – and, as such, a contribution to human liberation the implications of which have hardly begun to be explored.

It is surely apparent then that one can speak of an 'authentic form' of Alexander's work, as opposed to forms that do not get to grips so fundamen-

tally with this problem of habit – for a diagnosis that does not go deep enough is always liable to create further problems and ills. While there is everything to be said, too, for our watching any similar developments sympathetically, and where possible exchanging ideas with the people concerned, it would be sad indeed if Alexander's teaching were ever to be submerged in and confused with methods that are altogether less profoundly based. Whatever individual differences may emerge in styles of teaching, there is an authentic form of the technique – a form derived from clearly reasoned-out principles – which all teachers and pupils must do their utmost to safeguard. \*

## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

We should like to express our thanks for the many letters we have had welcoming THE ALEXANDER JOURNAL and commenting generously on its contents and general appearance. Now that it seems to have been successfully launched, we hope that the journal will increasingly become a forum for all who are interested in the Alexander technique.

Two articles that were announced for this issue have had to be held over – mainly in order to meet the general wish that we should carry reports of current talks on the work. The postponed articles are one by J. Roose-Evans on the technique in drama, and another on Alexander's meeting with the American naturalist, Professor G. E. Coghill; the second will now introduce a symposium on Coghill and Alexander that we are planning for a future issue.

---

## *A message of welcome from Dame Isobel Cripps*

The first, well produced issue of THE ALEXANDER JOURNAL is most welcome and holds promise of developing into a useful means whereby teachers and all who are interested in the work can feel themselves brought into fellowship with one another.

As well as more specialised articles, I hope there will be others written in simple language so as to convince the ordinary reader of the greatness of Matthias Alexander's discovery, and that it is fundamental to a full and healthy life.

Those of us who have learnt from personal experience the essential value of the technique wish above all to broadcast the news. We see around us widespread 'dis-ease', so often caused by tension and bad use of the body, and want people to come to the realisation that very much of this suffering can be prevented.

I wish the journal an ever-increasing circulation.  
*Derhams House, Minchinhampton, Glos.*

ISOBEL CRIPPS

# The technique and back disorders

ERIC DE PEYER

*A condensed version of the paper read by Mr. de Peyer at the Society's meeting on 22nd November at the Medical Society of London.*

The scope of the Alexander technique is so wide that it is easy to overlook its great potential value in solving specific therapeutic problems. The fact that it is primarily a re-educational procedure rather than directly medical, and is not concerned with fine differences of diagnosis, does not at all mean that even intractable symptoms may not disappear when the sufferer learns to apply Alexander's principles.

If, as often happens, people have aches and pains which have defeated ordinary medical procedures, it may be because a habit of muscular tension and mis-use has been formed which needs to be unlearned. A great deal of chronic backache is of this kind. The body will tolerate unfair pressures and faulty mechanics for a time, but often at middle age, or before, it begins to protest – sometimes violently. Heat treatment or manipulation may relieve the pain, but until the sufferer learns to use his back as nature intended, the relief is unlikely to be permanent. By means of the Alexander technique good bodily usage can be restored, with the result that the relief of pain is more likely to be permanent.

Take, for instance, a typical case: a woman of 38 with chronic backache. The X-rays showed 'arthritic changes' in the lumbar region. Physiotherapy was used, and quite effectively; the pain went. But temporarily only. More physiotherapy was used, with the same result. By chance she heard of the Alexander technique and arranged to have some lessons. After only three it was quite apparent that the way she was holding herself had a great deal to do with the onset of pain. If the unnecessary tension was released and her back was no longer pulled in, the pain began to disappear. Soon she learnt to undo this tension for herself, and after the initial feeling of 'unnaturalness', began to prefer using her back in this new way. As the habit of improved use became established, the pain steadily diminished, until it was wholly absent. No more physiotherapy was needed, and instead of 'learning to live with her pain' and taking aspirins when it became too bad, she was able to live a free, normal, active life. This happened nearly 10 years ago and she is still free of pain.

Exercises are often recommended as a way of changing faulty muscular habits. The reason why they are not effective takes us to the heart of Alexander's contribution to the study of human behaviour. We all have a way of using our bodies (in walking, sitting down, bending and so on) which is natural to us. Thus, we often recognise a friend at a distance by his stance or gait. It is very difficult to escape from this characteristic pattern of movement, because it would feel too odd and peculiar if we did. We subconsciously reject any way of using our bodies other than our own special way simply because we are used to it. The familiar feels 'right' and the unfamiliar feels 'wrong'. Moreover our sense of security and balance is bound up with the maintenance of the customary feeling.

What happens if we do exercises? Naturally enough we do them in our own individual way. But if our doctor believes we need exercises it is highly probable that our own individual way is extremely faulty. Hence, what is to prevent us from performing our exercises in that same faulty style? If, for example, we normally stiffen our neck excessively in all activities, we shall certainly continue to do so while doing exercises. Or if we hollow our back habitually, we are not likely suddenly to stop doing so during our exercise period. A crooked man proverbially walks a crooked mile, but so also does a stiff-necked man or a hollow-backed man do a stiff-necked or hollow-backed exercise. We are to a large degree conditioned by our past habits and imprisoned in the muscular sets we have made for ourselves. What makes it so difficult to escape is that we are unaware of our state, and just as many people literally enjoy ill-health, so we, like the cage-bird, enjoy our captivity.

Alexander got round the problem of untrustworthy feeling by giving his pupils the experience of doing the ordinary, basic movements of everyday life without the habitual misdirection of energy and excessive tension or distortion of the bodily shape. He used his hands to do this, guiding them and undoing over-tension whenever it occurred, while their main concern was to be sure to switch off the urge to react in the same old automatic way. Unless the pupil made himself neutral and uncommitted, he could not receive the new muscular experience in a pure form; the old habit would still be operating to some extent. For in the attempt to change any habit, whether in the technique of piano-playing, or golf, or speech, or even merely sitting-down, no progress will be made unless the highest priority of all is given to the idea of change. As soon as this loses its priority, the pupil will inevitably revert to gaining his end in the old familiar way. This is what Alexander called 'end-gaining'. Crossing the road without looking is a simple example of 'end-gaining' (and in modern conditions of traffic, end-gaining in possibly more than one sense!). But so is jumping to a wished-for conclusion without passing through any logical train of evidence. Stammerers are obvious end-gainers, because they try very hard to speak using the wrong means of clenched jaw and tense lips. (I am not, of course, suggesting this is all there is to stammering.)

The principles on which the Alexander technique is based do not in any

way conflict with accepted anatomical and physiological knowledge. It is known that the human body functions best if the spine is normally kept extended and that habitual over-tension not only constricts the blood vessels and reduces respiratory efficiency but tends to distort the body as well.

There is another point that is sometimes forgotten. Good muscular habits maintain the natural margin of safety. For example, the spinal vertebrae become better spaced, so that impingement on nerve trunks by displacement becomes less likely. Stepping unexpectedly off a pavement is far more liable to have serious consequences if one's spine is habitually badly aligned than if good postural habits normally keep the vertebrae in their proper position.

Bad use therefore increases accident-proneness. We become more vulnerable because our bony structure has no margin of error. We cannot afford to make a false move.

The same principle applies in a more psychological sense. If we are habitually strung up, the inevitable irritations, frustrations, disappointments (not to mention the real disasters) of life become intolerable burdens. We have no safety margin to take any extra load. Hence, one can perhaps say that far more important than the kind of misfortunes in a person's life is the sort of state he is in when they occur. If we are tense, small things seem unbearable, and molehills become mountains. If we are not tense, there is at least more chance that we can bear them philosophically and adapt ourselves. I am not suggesting that there is no more to the problem than comparative degrees of tension. It isn't nearly so simple as that, because we are all largely conditioned by our past experience working on our character and temperament. But I do say that the same person, given his (perhaps) peculiar psychology, will react very differently to the same sort of stimulus at different times.

Certain bodily habits go with certain mental habits. Depression is a literal physical fact, as well as a mental one. Hence, if we habitually adopt a depressed posture, we are already depression-prone.

Take one more case, a man in the middle forties. He had been through the whole gamut of medical treatment, and reckoned altogether he had spent £1,000 in trying to get cured. He had had his teeth out, had spinal manipulation from orthopaedists, manipulation also from three different osteopaths, was examined with negative results for diabetes, kidney trouble and a T.B. spine, and was advised to wear a steel corset. All this was backed by scores of X-ray photographs. He had not omitted to consult a psychologist and had even tried the Black Box.

When he came to me he was quite desperate, indeed almost suicidal. For it was no ordinary backache, but one that extended down his legs to his feet and produced a most unpleasant muzzy feeling in his head.

At the first lesson, we made good progress and he went away much encouraged. At the second, he said excitedly, 'I think we've got it!' I, too, was excited, because it was becoming obvious that he only needed to be released from tension for all his pain to disappear. Owing to a bad fall he had had, his

muscles had gone into a protective spasm, as if to prevent his being hurt again, and this had become fixated, so that he had lost all power of recapturing normal feeling. What he needed, and what no other treatment had given him, was to be *given* the experience of normal feeling instead of the tense, perverted muscular sensations he had got used to.

After that second lesson he went home, went to bed at 6 p.m. and slept without waking till 8 o'clock the next morning. From then on the problem was more or less solved. With more lessons he got increased confidence in his ability to put himself right, and he describes the change that occurred (now eight years ago) as a 'fantastic transformation'.

Can all back troubles be cured by the Alexander technique? Of course not. For there are a few back disorders in which muscular tension and bad body mechanics are not a significant factor, and which require medical treatment. On the other hand, it would be a pity to undergo dangerous and useless operations, or to let pain and discomfort spoil years of one's life, or even to spend £1,000 on medical tests and treatments, before finding out that the real way to better health lies through re-education.

---

## *The problems of posture*

Understanding of even the simplest postural circuit involves knowledge of the muscle-spindle and how it is influenced by normal and abnormal states of muscle – of the latter we know little or nothing – the afferent impulses, the interneurons and synapses in the spinal cord, the motoneurons, the myoneural junction, and the physio-chemistry of muscular contraction.

We must bear in mind also not only that through these mechanisms bad postures tend to perpetuate themselves, but also that normal reactions may be interfered with by nociceptive reflexes set up by painful states. At higher levels we need to consider the particular importance of the head, stressed by Sherrington, and the influence of the labyrinth and the neck upon bodily posture as a whole.

Lastly, there are psychological problems, almost an untilled field. In the realm of positive achievement, what is the relationship between conscious effort and unconscious habit, and how does the one pass into the other? On the negative side, how is posture affected by psychological tension, and what is the part played by conscious relaxation in re-education?

*From a paper on Posture read by Lord Brain, President of the Royal College of Physicians, to the Section of Anatomy & Physiology at the 1959 annual meeting of the British Medical Association.*

---

## Alexander and the mastery of habit

*This article opens a small symposium on the subject of F. M. Alexander and Habit. It is followed by a selection of Alexander's own comments on habit and change, and then by an essay in which the late Prof. John Dewey explores some of the philosophical and psychological implications of Alexander's approach to this problem.*

We don't need to be told that we are creatures of habit – and we know, too, that many of our habits are doing us no good. We over-eat, or we smoke too much. We breathe badly or we walk awkwardly. We can't let other people talk. We lose our grip or our temper again and again on the same provocation.

BUT WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT? This age-old problem is posed today in a new and acute form, for medical science is revealing to us just how far-reaching, powerful – and often crushing – the grip of habit on the body and mind can be. No longer are most of our common disorders treated simply as unprovoked attacks from outside; more and more of our suffering, physical as well as mental, is seen to be brought on ourselves by our own actions and attitudes. Wrong habits can warp our minds and bodies, dull our senses, poison our relationships, turn living from an exciting adventure into painful drudgery.

But still the question is: What can we do about it? Science seems to leave us habit-bound – and helpless. For if habit dictates how we do things, how we see and feel, even how we think, then how can we hope to change?

F. Matthias Alexander devoted over 60 years to the study of this problem of habit. It was at the age of 21, when he had made up his mind to try to turn a talent for acting to professional use as a reciter and teacher, that his body gave him the warning signal that it was being misused – a persistent sore throat. Every time he gave a recital the hoarseness returned.

Dissatisfied with the sprays and lozenges that were all the doctors had to offer, Alexander resolved to find out for himself what was causing the trouble. He had one important clue to work on: when he was off-stage his throat got better, when he was performing it got worse again. Evidently the cause lay in something he was doing at times when he recited – a simple but significant fact that the doctors seemed to have overlooked. The way to cure his hoarseness, he decided, was to track down and put right the misuse of himself that lay behind it.

For hours on end, over weeks and months, he studied his reflection as he

recited, searching for the unsuspected mannerism that was causing the trouble, until finally one definite observation emerged. He detected a tendency, whenever he recited, to 'pull down', i.e. to stiffen the neck muscles and so draw down the head. Moreover, a slighter movement of the same kind was noticeable when he did other things. He began to suspect that he had got into some habit of interfering with the natural relationship of head and neck to the trunk that might be responsible not only for his hoarseness, but for other bad functioning as well.

However, Alexander was still a long way from his goal. He was exactly where we all find ourselves when we become aware of some harmful habit – he still had to stop doing it. And he found to his dismay that he seemed unable to check the tendency to 'pull down' with each movement. Even more disconcerting, at moments when he was sure he was making his head go up, his eyes showed him that he was doing the reverse. In other words, what 'felt right' was a completely unreliable guide to what he was actually doing.

Alexander always spoke of this discovery as 'one of the greatest shocks of my life'. But in his subsequent work, when he was trying to lead others along the way he had come, he would have been surprised not to meet in a new pupil with this divergence between what we intend to do and what we actually succeed in doing. 'Man proposes, habit disposes', could well have been his motto. Our mind gives the orders, but it is habit that carries them out – in its own way. So accustomed do we become to habit's responses that actions come to 'feel right' even when they are the opposite of what we think we're doing.

This discovery that force of habit overrules even the messages we give to our own muscles was the near-defeat out of which Alexander wrested victory. 'I refused to believe,' he once told me, 'that nature could play us such a trick as to give us minds and yet leave no way open for mind to correct the errors of the body'.

It is not part of the technique that he evolved to try to control actual physical functioning as in some Yoga systems, for Alexander was satisfied that the body knows its own business and will work smoothly and efficiently once it is freed from the crippling grip of wrong habit. All the instruction is to one purpose: to show the pupil how habit is crushing and constricting him in all his movements, and to teach him where and how to check this interference with free, natural functioning.

The most persistent habit is the tendency to 'pull down' which Alexander observed in front of his mirror. This interference with the natural head-neck-trunk relationship seems to be what throws out the whole mechanism, all other bad uses of oneself being somehow connected with it. For this very reason, because the neck is where interference starts, it is also the point at which the whole strait-jacket of habit can be untied. Alexander demonstrated that the wayward neck muscles can be brought under control – provided we don't try to control them.

This insistence on 'not trying' is one of the most baffling features of the Alexander technique to the newcomer, for it seems contrary to everything he has previously accepted about how to tackle a new task or master a new skill. And, in fact, it is contrary to our whole conditioned approach – which is precisely why 'not trying' occupies such a key place in this unique method of habit-breaking. Whatever we try to do, we inevitably do in the manner that feels 'right' and familiar; we don't know any other way of doing it. But the bodily movements that 'feel right' are, as Alexander learnt in his early days, all the more likely to be bound up with the primary bad habit of 'pulling down'. Learning to direct actions without using the old mental signals associated with 'pulling down' is the experience that the Alexander pupil slowly acquires at the teacher's hands.

Through the Society and the growing number of Alexander teachers in this country and overseas, Alexander's work will perhaps have the profound influence on medical and educational methods that it failed to secure in his own lifetime. At present, too many who know of the technique, or have even observed its practical results, continue to look on it merely as a system of muscular control or manipulative treatment. Fundamentally, however, what F. M. Alexander taught was a means of crossing the gulf between the known and the unknown, the old and the new, through the mastery of habit.

## *What F. M. Alexander said about —* Habit and change

*A further selection of F. M. Alexander's sayings to pupils, taken down during teaching sessions by the late Miss Ethel Webb, his secretary and assistant for a great many years.*

Change involves carrying on an activity against the habit of life.

They may have an intellectual conception of what they want, and they may write down what they want to bring about, but how are they going to do it? They are not doing *the* thing that alters all the rest.

Everything a person has done in the past has been in accordance with the mental direction to which he is accustomed, and it is his faith in this that makes him unwilling to exchange it for the new direction one is trying to give him.

They won't try and get out of the chair unless they feel they have that 'something' that will get them out of the chair: that 'something' is their habit. Prevent the things you have been doing and you are half-way home.

We can throw away the habit of a lifetime in a few minutes if we will use our brains.

As soon as people come with the idea of unlearning instead of learning, you have them in the frame of mind you want.

JOHN DEWEY

## The barrier of habit

*The American philosopher and educationist Professor John Dewey, who died in 1952 at the age of 92, first met F. M. Alexander at the time of the first World War and was deeply impressed by the practical benefits and scientific soundness of his teaching. Not only did Dewey write introductions to Alexander's first three books, but he readily acknowledged that he owed the concrete form of certain of his ideas to his experience of the technique. In the following extract from Human Nature & Conduct (1921), reproduced here by kind permission of Henry Holt & Co., New York, Dewey discusses the implications of Alexander's views on habit and will.*

F. M. Alexander recently remarked to me that there was one superstition current among even cultivated persons. They suppose that if one is told what to do, if the right end is pointed out to them, all that is required in order to bring about the right act is will or wish on the part of the one who is to act.

He used as an illustration, the matter of physical posture; the assumption is that if a man is told to stand up straight, all that is further needed is wish and effort on his part, and the deed is done. He pointed out that this belief is on a par with primitive magic in its neglect of attention to the means which are involved in reaching an end. He went on to say that the prevalence of this belief, starting with false notions about the control of the body and extending to control of mind and character, is the greatest bar to intelligent social progress. It bars the way because it makes us neglect intelligent inquiry to discover the means which will produce a desired result, and intelligent invention to procure the means. In short, it leaves out the importance of intelligently controlled habit.

We may cite his illustration of the real nature of a physical aim or order and its execution in its contrast with the current false notion. A man who has a bad habitual posture tells himself, or is told, to stand up straight. If he is interested and responds, he braces himself, goes through certain movements, and it is assumed that the desired result is substantially attained; and that the position is retained at least as long as the man keeps the idea or order in his mind.

Consider the assumptions which are here made. It is implied that the means or effective conditions of the realisation of a purpose exist independently of established habit and even that they may be set in motion in

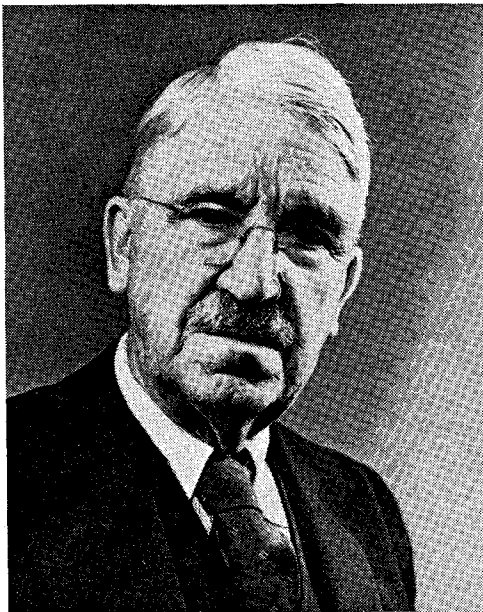


Photo: U.S. Information Service.

JOHN DEWEY

opposition to habit. It is assumed that means are there, so that the failure to stand erect is wholly a matter of failure of purpose and desire. It needs paralysis or a broken leg or some other equally gross phenomenon to make us appreciate the importance of objective conditions . . .

Conditions have been formed for producing a bad result, and the bad result will occur as long as those conditions exist. They can no more be dismissed by a direct effort of will than the conditions which create drought can be dispelled by whistling for wind. It is as reasonable to expect a fire to go out when it is ordered to stop burning as to suppose that a man can stand straight in consequence of a direct action of thought and desire. The fire can be put out only by changing objective conditions; it is the same with rectification of bad posture.

Of course, something happens when a man acts upon his idea of standing straight. For a little while, he stands differently, but only a different kind of badly. He then takes the unaccustomed feeling which accompanies his unusual stance as evidence that he is now standing right. But there are many ways of standing badly, and he has simply shifted his usual way to a compensatory bad way at some opposite extreme.

When we realise this fact, we are likely to suppose that it exists because control of the *body* is physical and hence is external to mind and will. Transfer the command inside character and mind, and it is fancied that an idea of an end and the desire to realise it will take immediate effect. After we get to the point of recognising that habits must intervene between wish and execution in the case of bodily acts, we still cherish the illusion that they can be dis-

pensed with in the case of mental and moral acts. Thus the net result is to make us sharpen the distinction between non-moral and moral activities, and to lead us to confine the latter strictly within a private, immaterial realm.

But in fact, formation of ideas as well as their execution depends upon habit. *If* we could form a correct idea without a correct habit, then possibly we could carry it out irrespective of habit. But a wish gets definite form only in connection with an idea, and an idea gets shape and consistency only when it has a habit back of it. Only when a man can already perform an act of standing straight does he know what it is like to have a right posture and only then can he summon the idea required for proper execution. The act must come before the thought, and a habit before an ability to evoke the thought at will. Ordinary psychology reverses the actual state of affairs.

Ideas, thoughts of ends, are not spontaneously generated. There is no immaculate conception of meanings or purposes. Reason pure of all influence from prior habit is a fiction. But pure sensations out of which ideas can be framed apart from habit are equally fictitious. The sensations and ideas which are the 'stuff' of thought and purpose are alike affected by habits manifested in the acts which give rise to sensations and meanings . . .

Admission that the idea of, say, standing erect is dependent upon sensory materials is, therefore, equivalent to recognition that it is dependent upon the habitual attitudes which govern concrete sensory materials. The medium of habit filters all the material that reaches our perception and thought. The filter is not, however, chemically pure. It is a reagent which adds new qualities and re-arranges what is received. Our ideas truly depend upon experience, but so do our sensations. And the experience upon which they both depend is the operation of habits – originally of instincts. Thus our purposes and commands regarding action (whether physical or moral) come to us through the refracting medium of bodily and moral habits . . .

What is true of the dependence of execution of an idea upon habit is true, then, of the formation and quality of the idea. Suppose that by a happy chance a right concrete idea or purpose – concrete, not simply correct in words – has been hit upon: What happens when one with an incorrect habit tries to act in accord with it? Clearly the idea can be carried into execution only with a mechanism already there. If this is defective or perverted, the best intention in the world will yield bad results. In the case of no other engine does one suppose that a defective machine will turn out goods simply because it is invited to. Everywhere else we recognise that the design and structure of the agency employed tell directly upon the work done.

Given a bad habit and the 'will' or mental direction to get a good result, and the actual happening is a reverse or looking-glass manifestation of the usual fault – compensatory twist in the opposite direction. Refusal to recognise this fact only leads to a separation of mind from body, and to supposing that mental or 'psychical' mechanisms are different in kind from those of



bodily operations and independent of them. So deep-seated is this notion that even so 'scientific' a theory as modern psychoanalysis thinks that mental habits can be straightened out by some kind of purely psychical manipulation without reference to the distortions of sensation and perception which are due to bad bodily sets. The other side of the error is found in the notion of 'scientific' nerve physiologists that it is only necessary to locate a particular diseased cell or local lesion, independent of the whole complex of organic habits, in order to rectify conduct.

Means are means; they are intermediates, middle terms. To grasp this fact is to have done with the ordinary dualism of means and ends. The 'end' is merely a series of acts viewed at a remote stage; and a means is merely the series viewed at an earlier one. The distinction of means and end arises in surveying the *course* of a proposed *line* of action, a connected series in time. The 'end' is the last act thought of; the means are the acts to be performed prior to it in time. To *reach* an end we must take our mind off from it and attend to the act which is next to be performed. We must make that the end. The only exception to this statement is in cases where customary habit determines the course of the series. Then all that is wanted is a cue to set it off. But when the proposed end involves any deviation from usual action, or any rectification of it – as in the case of standing straight – then the main thing is to find some act which is different from the usual one.

The discovery and performance of this unaccustomed act is the 'end' to which we must devote all attention. Otherwise we shall simply do the old thing over again, no matter what is our conscious command. The only way of accomplishing this discovery is through a flank movement. We must stop even thinking of standing up straight. To think of it is fatal, for it commits us to the operation of an established habit of standing wrong. We must find an act within our power which is disconnected from any thought about standing. We must start to do another thing which on one side inhibits our falling into the customary bad position and on the other side is the beginning of a series of acts which may lead into the correct posture. The technique of this process is stated in Alexander's book, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, and the theoretical statement given is borrowed from Mr. Alexander's analysis.

The hard drinker who keeps thinking of not drinking is doing what he can to initiate the acts which lead to drinking. He is starting with the stimulus to his habit. To succeed he must find some positive interest or line of action which will inhibit the drinking series and which by instituting another course of action will bring him to his desired end. In short, the man's true aim is to discover some course of action, having nothing to do with the habit of drink or standing erect, which will take him where he wants to go. The discovery of this other series is at once his means and his end. Until one takes intermediate acts seriously enough to treat them as ends, one wastes one's time in any effort at change of habits. Of the intermediate acts, the most important is the *next* one. The first or earliest means is the most important *end* to discover.

WILFRED BARLOW, M.A., B.M., B.Ch.

## Some varieties of mis-use

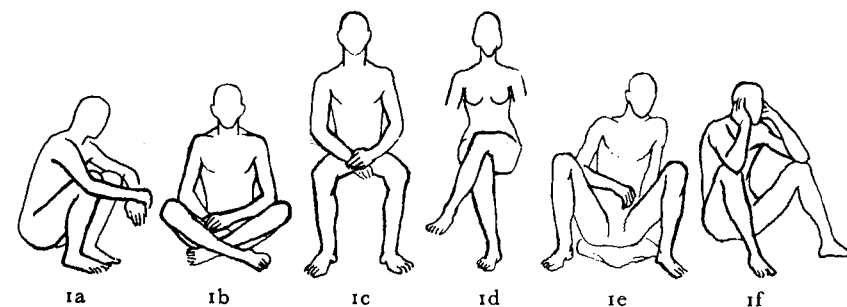
Mis-use is an umbrella term for which no simple definition can be given. Alexander meant by 'mis-use' very much more than those distortions of the muscular and bony framework that are the province of the orthopaedic surgeon, the physiotherapist, the osteopath and the physical educationist. It is the purpose of this series to indicate, usually with the aid of pictures, some of the ways in which human beings mis-use themselves; but before this can be done we must understand what is to be included in the idea of someone's 'Use'.

### A CLASSIFICATION OF 'USE'

Firstly, there are the simple mechanical actions that we carry out all day and every day – moving ourselves and moving objects in our environment; moving a pen, moving a fork; moving a book, a paper, a telephone receiver; moving a dishcloth, an oven-door, an electric switch; moving a gear-handle, a half-crown, a bus-ticket . . . the list is endless.

Secondly, there are the positionings and postures that we take up usually to facilitate our other actions. This comes down to sitting, lying, standing, kneeling and all the variations of these. Over one thousand body positions have been listed (*Scientific American* 196, 1957) and very few of these necessarily involve a mis-use of the body.

The deep-squat (1a) and tailor-squat (1b), with their variants, replace chair-sitting (1c) for at least a quarter of mankind, and although uncomfortable and sometimes considered indelicate for adult Europeans, they do not involve mis-use; and although such attitudes as the crossed knees (1d) predispose to mis-use, and despite such obvious distortions as (1e) and (1f), it





would be a brave man who would typify more than a few of these one thousand postures as a mis-use. Clearly we must seek some more comprehensive definition of 'Use' than the particular position adopted.

Thirdly, and perhaps more difficult to describe and to observe, are those forms of 'Use' that occur when we communicate. In addition to the obvious ways of communicating by word and gesture, we find in human behaviour tiny signs which – unconsciously, automatically, and whether we like it or not – transmit a certain mood, quite contrary to our intention of expressing something. These signs may be hardly perceptible by ordinary conscious observation, but when we undertake a detailed re-education of 'Use' by Alexander's methods, we find that they are dependent on habitual patterns of muscular tension and tone.

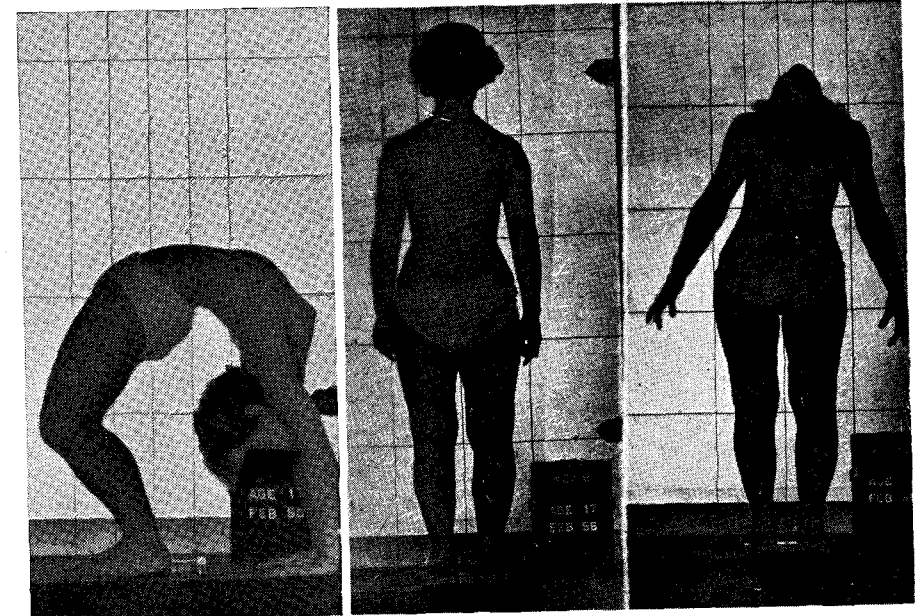
These tiny mood-signs, which Dewey called 'Properties of sensitivity and delicate participative response', are part and parcel of our personal conscious life; often, however, they may include unconscious fragments of some 'role' that was of significance in the past but which is now irrelevant. Such small gestures, grimaces, mannerisms, and shifts of muscular tension will appear strange and inappropriate because their content and origin have been lost; they evoke from those around us reactions which we do not want and, as habits, are far more difficult to eliminate than those already mentioned. It is significant that Alexander first described mis-use in relation to communication, i.e. to his speaking habits; and it is only when we discover, as he did, a resting-state of muscle tension in which no 'role' is expressed that we become aware of these irrelevant tensions.

Fourthly, we must include under 'Use' a large range of activities that are partly under voluntary and partly under involuntary control. These will include such activities as breathing, eating, excreting and sex; the way in which we handle these needs or functions brings the concept of 'Use' into the province of morals and social adjustment.

Whether or not we believe in the Freudian concept of oral, anal and genital types, we shall find that disorders of muscle tone, in relation to these functions, present themselves over and over again to both teacher and pupil, whether it be in the oral tension of the stammerer, the relief of constipation that so often follows re-education, or the many sexual dysfunctions that are cleared up as the general pattern of muscular tension is altered. We shall, however, realise what a relatively small part such tensions play in the genesis of neurotic behaviour, when compared with the tensions that are generated around other actions.

#### MIS-USE AND VALUES

These four types of 'Use' do not of course occur independently; at any time we may see movement, posture, communication, and biological functioning intermingling in a composite human reaction. If then we are to talk about a



2a

2b

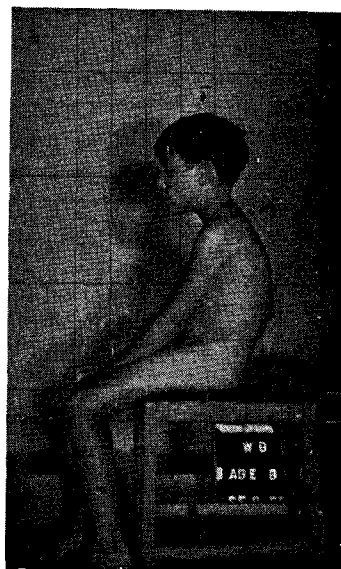
2c

'mis-use', we imply that there is a *purpose* for which we are using ourselves. This purpose will mainly be related to only one of the four types of 'Use', while involving the other types to a less degree.

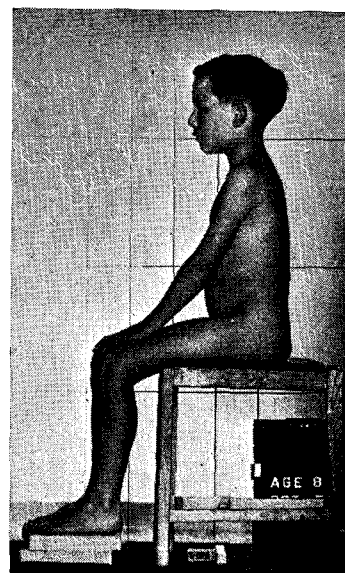
The acrobatic dancer who earns her living by the movement in (2a) might say that for her purpose of giving a performance this movement was a good one. However, the acute low back pain she eventually developed was based on a pelvic twist which occurred as she bent backwards (2c). If her purpose was to continue her career and not to develop a dropped left shoulder and a twisted pelvis (2b), (2c) was not the best for her purpose and was a mis-use; and no doubt this mis-use entered into many other aspects of her life.

Likewise, we might say of the child in (3a) that if his purpose is to be depressed, sulky and bored, this constant 'pulling-down' is a good way to go about it. However, since with this manner-of-use he developed asthma, which disappeared when he learned to use himself better (3b), we can call (3a) a mis-use.

We see from this that to call a certain reaction a *mis-use* implies a certain set of values. We adopt a certain position or manner-of-use because, consciously or unconsciously, we consider it valuable. The first answer to the question 'Why did he do that?' is always 'Because he considered it valuable'. The teenagers in (1e) and (1f) might feel 'stuck-up' if they sat using their bodies well, in a way less likely to strain their shoulders or depress their



3a



3b

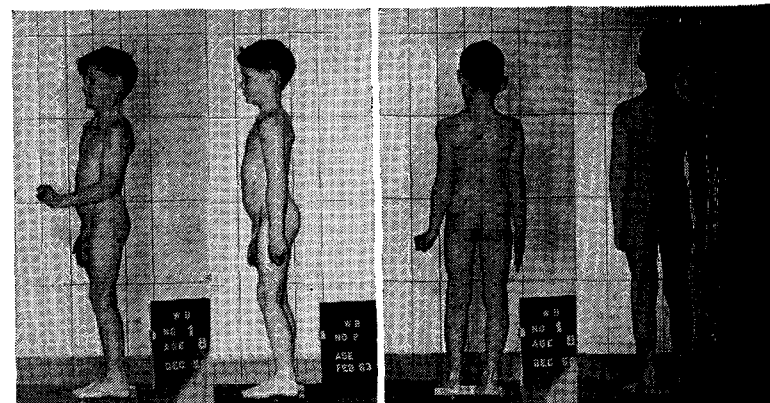
breathing. The value of conforming to the group pattern of slumping outweighs for them any other consideration. These 'conformity' deformities are hard to avoid, and it is difficult to be with a lot of other people who are 'pulling-down' without doing the same – all the more so when they are not aware that such habits are harmful.

#### THE MUSCULAR MATRIX OF DECISION

Mis-use patterns seem valuable to a person, then, for a multitude of reasons, some of them physiological, some of them psychological, some of them conscious, some of them unconscious. A laborious analysis of their antecedents is rarely called for – it is enough to re-train the faulty habit, since in the process of learning a new resting-state of muscle tension, the pupil will discover the values that lead him to destroy it.

To speak of altering unconscious habits in such a manner will usually call down cries of 'crude behaviourism' on one's head. Anyone who has been through the long-drawn-out process of re-education which Alexander's work involves knows that there is nothing crude in this process. It is never a question of detecting a faulty habit-pattern once and for all, de-conditioning it and seeing it disappear. Rather it is a matter of continually having to re-find it, in different situations. We fall into the same tricks of mis-use again and again, and the discovery of these tricks by no means stops us from repeating them.

We soon discover that side by side with patterns of mis-use, there is usually an inability to stick to decisions, because a constancy of decision requires a



4a

4b

4c

4d

constancy in the manner of use. We can see from the face and appearance of the spastic child in (4a) that an integration of intention has followed his re-education (4b). With mis-use, there is a disintegration of intention – we find it hard to adhere to the mood in which we take a decision. This leads to avoidance of responsibility or of opportunity, or procrastination in the face of jobs that are inevitable. Tasks are left unfinished, effort is disorganised and inadequate, and there may be inability to define sub-goals that would lead to fulfilment of strong desires. Eventually this may lead to day-dreaming, self-disparagement and other substitute satisfactions.

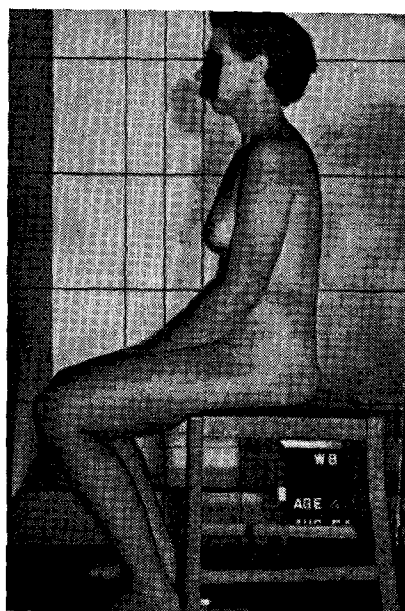
However, as mis-use patterns begin to be altered, there is a corresponding integration of intention; people begin to reorganise themselves so as to cope with life more constructively, more intelligently and in a more adaptive way. They change in their perception of themselves and others, becoming less defensive and more tolerant of frustration. The spastic child (4c), whose attitude improved so much after re-education (4d), was able after a time to walk to school unaccompanied, and to undertake the normal school curriculum.

The connection between the physical and the psychological becomes clear as re-education proceeds. When someone is mis-using himself by 'pulling down', he will not get the thoughts that would lead him out of the situation in which he finds himself and which is depressing him. His remedy is to stop 'pulling down' and wait patiently for new ideas to arise; and arise they will when his energy is not dissipated in irrelevant tension.

The pupil in (5b) is clearly more alert and alive than she was before re-education (5a). Man is born to be free in his reactions, and this means the



5a



5b

expression of freedom in his attitudes. Many people, however, prefer a deforming attitude of slavery to things and to people. There is so often a persistent drag-down to a state of non-directing mediocrity in which increasing consciousness is feared because it will mean increasing awareness of truth.

By mis-use, we distort our senses because of fear of what our senses would tell us if we let them register truthfully. There is no 'crude behaviourism' in an approach that compels the pupil to face up to these fears and, personally, with the help of a technique which he has been taught, to re-make his reactions.

#### CONCLUSION

To summarise, we may say that mis-use manifests itself in a multitude of ways, mainly through our movements, our postures, our communications, and the management of our biological functions. Mis-use is characterised by unnecessary, excessive or irrelevant muscle-tension patterns, which detract from a skilful economy of action. Such mis-use is maintained because, either consciously or unconsciously, it appears valuable; and therefore any form of re-education must involve a change in relative values. Such a change in values involves the ability to stick to a new decision against all the pull of unconscious habit. The manner in which these unconscious habits are manifested will be the subject of future articles in this series.

#### IRENE TASKER TALKS ON

## Education without 'end-gaining'

*At the October meeting of the Society's Educational Group, the main item on the agenda was a long-awaited talk by Miss Irene Tasker, one of our Trustees, on her experience in teaching the Alexander technique in this country, America and South Africa. The talk and the subsequent discussion are reported here by Joyce Warrack, Group Secretary.*

There is at present no school where education is based primarily on the principles of the technique, and committee members, though they are all keen supporters with a considerable amount of experience through individual lessons, felt somewhat lacking in the practical knowledge as to how these ideas could best be introduced to schools. Groups of children or young people frequently work in a climate fraught with anxiety and 'end-gaining', and there were some doubts as to whether the technique could indeed be applied to any but individual cases.

Miss Tasker's talk was therefore stimulating, encouraging and reassuring; and, out of it, and the general discussion that followed, several important, and hopeful, facts emerged very clearly.

She had found that children, with comparatively good use of themselves, could be successfully taught in groups; and, when asked how old a child had to be before it could recognise the relationship between ends

and means, Miss Tasker said that, in her experience, varying ages in a group were a help, rather than a hindrance; and that the principle of inhibition to the incoming stimulus could not be inculcated too early, nor be too strongly stressed.

She very rarely gave individual teaching of the technique in a class, as children were apt to be embarrassed if singled out for attention. In her pre-war F. M. Alexander school, inhibition, and the orders given to prevent wrong use, were taught, discussed and practised during the pupils' rest periods; and, later, applied to all their work and games. For instance, an end-of-term play would be prepared by these methods. Dramatic situations, and difficulties such as problems of presentation, words and their meaning, were all thoroughly considered. Each child learnt the whole play as he rested on his back and kept the orders going, so that his use for memory, and any emotion suggested by the play, was being gradually built into a total pattern of activity. He learnt to inhibit the immediate reaction to noise or interruption.

This work would go on for most of the term and only a fortnight or so before the production date would the children, quite spontaneously, go into action. By that time there was very little for the producer to do, for character and situation were so thoroughly ingrained. Miss Tasker told of a delightful

incident in an outdoor performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when a noisy plane circled low over the garden, completely drowning the actors' voices. The small Titania was quite unperturbed and, with her finger to her lips, held the situation for three solid minutes till the intruder had flown off. Then the children resumed the play quite calmly as if nothing had happened.

It was suggested that parents and teachers in the work might be able to form small groups for children, and Miss Tasker thought this an excellent idea. As to the danger of parents of normal children failing to see the necessity of such work, she exclaimed: 'But everyone needs it! After all it is a practical technique for living. Its principles are so much broader than "use" as such!'

In telling us of the train of events that led to her meeting with F. M. Alexander and his technique, she mentioned her visit to Rome, where she went to study the methods of, and work with, Madame Montessori. To an enthusiastic young woman longing to impart information, the great innovator's insistence that one should *observe* rather than teach came as something of a shock. The laying down of the means to any given end was a basic part of the Montessori system. What better preparation could there have been as an introduction to F.M. and his ideas? One of her fellow-students was, in fact, Miss Ethel Webb (for so many years Alexander's secretary), and it was she who introduced Miss Tasker to one of his books and later to himself.

After her return to England, and some lessons with Alexander, Miss Tasker went to teach Madame Montessori's methods in an infant school at Darlington, and also to lecture on the subject to student teachers. She described how she tackled a singing class—and here she applied Alexander's principle of inhibition—by impressing on the children that this was primarily a 'listening lesson'. They were to listen quietly while she sang them a simple tune and only when they were sure they really knew it were they to cross the floor and sing it to her. For two days not a child moved, then one came over and sang the melody easily and correctly, and was quickly followed by several others. Those who felt they could not make the attempt

were told that it was equally brave to say so. By the end of the term the children were happily singing several unison songs in perfect tune and free of any trace of unpleasant tone.

After these and other encouraging experiences with ordinary children, came a disconcerting, but invaluable, meeting with her first real problem pupil. He was a small boy with a terrible stammer. He seemed unable to learn or to listen. He had no power of inhibition and was a frantic end-gainer. Miss Tasker had to admit that she could do nothing with him, and was so concerned at her helplessness in such a situation that she decided to give up teaching temporarily, and take some work which would enable her to have further lessons with Alexander until she was sufficiently equipped to deal with such difficult cases.

She realised that, when bad use had gone beyond a certain limit, skilled individual help in re-education was a primary necessity. It was only after such a pupil's special problems had been overcome that he would be able to join in group activities. This particular boy's parents sent him to Alexander for lessons, and later, when through a generally improved use of himself his stammer was cured, he was able to respond in a perfectly normal way.

Several members on the committee, teaching in schools, mentioned the general deterioration in children's behaviour and how, to anyone with experience of the Alexander technique, this could be seen to be the direct result of bad use. Miss Tasker entirely agreed. Bad behaviour, bad memory and lack of concentration were always closely linked with bad use.

The practice of inhibition, and of giving orders, so that conscious control can replace the mechanical reaction to a stimulus, is the supreme aim of the Alexander technique. Physically it encourages, and gives experience of, a balanced relationship between the head, neck, spine, back and legs; so that the body can work as a total pattern of activity in any given situation. Mentally it provides the pupil with the invaluable awareness of a conscious and directed choice of reaction to incoming impressions.

JOYCE WARRACK

## THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

The first issue of the Journal has been well received, not only by members but also by people new to Alexander's ideas. Through the generosity of members who have purchased large numbers of copies to sell, it looks as though the cost of the first issue will be covered. Even if the Journal has to be run at a small loss, however, most members seem agreed that it is a loss the Society should be prepared to carry.

### MEDICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

Over one hundred members attended a meeting held on 22nd November at the Medical Society of London, 11 Chandos Street, W.1, at which Mr. Eric de Peyer read a paper on 'The Alexander technique in relation to back disorders' (see report, pages 4-7). One of the features of the lively discussion that followed was the number of members who expressed an interest in the psychological aspects of Alexander's work, and several speakers suggested that the next public meeting might deal with this topic.

It is hoped to hold this next meeting in June, but the Society will endeavour before this date to publish a calendar of forthcoming events so that out-of-town members can make arrangements well ahead.

A very encouraging aspect of the public meetings held at the Medical Society of London has been the stimulating character of the general discussion. Anyone who has attended the meetings of various Societies will know how extremely dull these can be, and it is evidence of the great vitality of Alexander's work that so many people are prepared to attend and to express their views.

### ANNIVERSARY PARTY

A wine and cheese party was held at 16 Ashley Place, S.W.1, by kind permission of the present Chairman of the Alexander Society, Mr. Patrick Macdonald. The party was held

to commemorate F. M. Alexander's birthday, and it was unfortunate that the night that was chosen turned out to be the coldest night recorded in January and one on which snow was falling heavily. In spite of this, 40 members, out of 80 who had promised to come, turned up. Miss N. Ben-Or and Mr. Alan Rowlands played the piano, and Mr. Andrew Downie, the principal tenor from *H.M.S. Pinafore* etc., sang with a clarity of tone and phrase which we would like to think owed something to his Alexander lessons. He has done much to stimulate interest in the Alexander technique in the musical world.

### EDUCATIONAL GROUP

The Educational Group has continued to meet and a resumé of the talk given by Miss Irene Tasker is included in this issue (pages 21 and 22).

### PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP

The Psychological Group has now started meetings and hopes to meet regularly in the future. At the first meeting, held in January at 7 Wellington Square, S.W.3, a varied array of psychological schools was represented, including a Freudian, two Jungians, a social psychologist, an academic psychologist, a physician in psychosomatic medicine, and a physiotherapist interested in psychological medicine.

Several psychiatrists have promised to attend future meetings, and a large number of topics have already been touched on. It was considered of the utmost importance that Alexander teachers should not neglect this field of study. Various suggestions were put forward for instituting a research programme. Members of this group are following the example of the Educational Group, by each preparing their own suggestions as to what should be done next.



A wine and cheese party was held by the Society in January to commemorate F. M. Alexander's birthday. Here is a flashback to F.M.'s 70th birthday party at the Carlton Hotel in 1939. On Alexander's left is the Earl of Lytton, one-time Viceroy of India and a great supporter of the work, who

presided at the dinner. Other speakers included Dr. Peter Macdonald, Patrick Macdonald's father; Miss Lucy Silcox, a former Headmistress of St. Felix's School, Southwold; Anthony M. Ludovici, the author; and Miss Irene Tasker, now one of the Society's Trustees.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS

It is hoped that members will continue to send material of Alexander interest to Mrs. S. Lushington, 18 Deans Yard, Westminster, S.W.1 (Public Relations Group). The Society, as an organised body, has very much more chance of influencing public opinion than have the individual members, but we must ask individual members not to write to the Press in the name of the Society without first consulting the Public Relations Group since, with the best will in the world, they may sometimes do more harm than good. The Society will be glad to take up any matter which appears likely to further Alexander's work as a whole.

#### TESTING OF STUDENTS

The testing has now begun of students who have been training to teach the Alexander Technique, and in spite of the obvious difficulties a workable procedure has been achieved.

The Society now includes most of the

recognised teachers, and possession of a certificate of teaching ability from the Society is designed to ensure the protection of the public from teachers who may not have had an adequate training. The fact that this certificate is difficult to obtain should act as a stimulus to those who are training teachers.

#### GENERAL SECRETARY APPOINTED

Meanwhile membership of the Society is continuing to expand. In view of the increasing amount of work involved, a General Secretary has now been appointed. We hope that members will forgive any delays there may have been in the past in acknowledging annual subscriptions, etc., since regular liaison between the Treasurer and the Secretary has presented some difficulties. All communications should now be addressed to the General Secretary, Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique, 3 Albert Court, London S.W.7 from whom a list of teaching members can be obtained.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### *Integral approach*

Thank you for sending me a copy of the first number of THE ALEXANDER JOURNAL. I am very glad that a co-operative effort is being made to consolidate all that was given us by Mr. Alexander and all that has been learnt since.

I am particularly glad of the line taken by Mrs. Wallis in her article. Everything for the future integral helpfulness of the technique, with regard to human living as a whole, seems to me to depend upon the recognition and development of the points she makes, especially in her third paragraph.

GEOFFREY CURTIS, C.R.  
*Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield.*

(Editor's note: In her third paragraph, Mrs. Wallis wrote: 'However important the part of conscious thought and control in the Alexander technique, they are only aspects of a whole personality and not independent entities. To treat them as such, and ignore the whole of which they are a limited aspect, would be to impair any process of re-education; for education is a matter of the whole personality.'))

### *The technique in education*

As a qualified teacher with experience of children from the ages of 5 to 14 in State schools, and of teen-agers in Youth Club work, I certainly agree that the Alexander technique is desperately needed by our children and young people, if they are going to live in the world of today.

Therefore we have our 'end', but we must consider our 'means'.

1. The parents must be considered first. They must have had lessons in the Alexander technique, otherwise any value gained in school will be lost at home. As only about 1,500 hours per year are spent in school, the child would be liable to forget many of the fundamentals, especially inhibition, if the other 7,000 odd hours were spent in the company of people who had never had lessons.

I have experienced this the other way round. Our son, who was 12 years old when he first had lessons, would have neglected and even forgotten the technique if we had not been around to encourage and help him when necessary – and it was often necessary!

2. It is impossible to teach the Alexander technique indirectly; it must be taught individually, for the basis is inhibition and the use of the primary control. Therefore the methods of teaching will be so different with children learning the technique that I think it would not be possible – to begin with – to have them in a school with children being taught by orthodox means.

Development will be at an individual rate, so the skills etc., must be taught individually. Any element of competition must be avoided at first as this is 'end-gaining'.

3. The idea of teaching the Alexander technique to backward and maladjusted children is sound, but as a pilot scheme there is the danger that it will be considered consequently merely as a treatment. Perhaps as a start this sort of school would be more prepared to be 'taken over' than any other school.

4. In our desire to have something to put before the authorities we must be careful not to debase the technique and must pay great attention to the means, without thinking so much about the 'end' i.e. converting the authorities. It is the pupils who are most important and their acquisition of the technique in the true Alexandrian manner. So the need is for:

- (a) Parents who are willing and eager to have their children taught in this way, and who will co-operate out of school time.
- (b) Enough teachers to cover the scheme. They all must at least have had lessons in the Alexander technique.
- (c) A school on its own – hence a private school – to begin with, until the scheme has been fully tried and proven.

Only then, when we have a working scheme, could we present the Alexander technique to the authorities.

GWYNETH ISAAC