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Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy.

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Abstract

Just as Duncan Hines, Michelin, and Baedeker guide the inexperienced traveler, this book directs the uninitiated through the land of psychotherapy. In his comprehensive epistemology, the author carefully examines the knowledge, limitations, validity, and diversity of psychotherapeutic theories and practices. Avoiding the "how to do it" aspects of the psychiatric profession, Dr. Frank addresses his book to both laymen and professional colleagues. In his words, "The purpose of this book is to review data from various sources that may help to identify and clarify the active ingredients of various forms of psychotherapy in our

own and other cultures by searching for their common features." (p. 2.) The content is arranged into twelve chapters, comprising such aspects as the contemporary conceptual framework of psychotherapy, religious healing, the placebo effect, experimental studies, individual and group psychotherapy, and hospital and community psychiatry. The book is lucidly written, and each chapter is terminated

The report humbly confesses that there is still much work to be done in the area elucidating the ethics of psychiatric practice and suggests that the clergy could be very helpful in discussing the moral issues involved in lobotomy, or brain operations for investigative purposes; or the moral implications of divorce (even when it may be indicated for the patient's happiness); or the degree of communal responsibility a psychiatrist must show when he detects gross antisocial potential in a patient's behavior.

In its excellent Report No. 37 on "Psychiatric Aspects of School Desegregation," the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry has shown how closely the conditions of psychologic wholesomeness and of moral well-being overlap and interrelate with each other. Perhaps as both groups become more aware and more concerned with the environment out of which the patient and the parishioner comes and into which he must return, they will discover common ground and develop the habit of collaboration until there is sufficient trust and understanding to cooperate effectively on the more specific techniques of the cure and care of the soul.

JACOB J. WEINSTEIN, D.D.

Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy. By Jerome D. Frank, M.D. Price, \$5.50. Pp. 282. The Johns Hopkins Press, Homewood, Baltimore 18, 1961.

Just as Duncan Hines, Michelin, and Baedeker guide the inexperienced traveler, this book directs the uninitiated through the land of psychotherapy. In his comprehensive epistemology, the author carefully examines the knowledge, limitations, validity, and diversity of psychotherapeutic theories and practices. Avoiding the "how to do it" aspects of the psychiatric profession, Dr. Frank addresses his book to both laymen and professional colleagues. In his words, "The purpose of this book is to review data from various sources that may help to identify and clarify the active ingredients of various forms of psychotherapy in our own and other cultures by searching for their common features." (p. 2.) The content is arranged into twelve chapters, comprising such aspects as the contemporary conceptual framework of psychotherapy, religious healing, the placebo effect, experimental studies, individual and group psychotherapy, and hospital and community psychiatry. The book is lucidly written, and each chapter is terminated with a concise summary so that the reader can quickly decide whether it will repay him to read the text. The volume is well documented and many thoughtful footnotes have been included as addenda.

Dr. Frank's approach deviates refreshingly from the usual redundant treatises on therapy that have appeared over the last thirty years. He begins with a cautious definition: "Attempts to enhance a person's feeling of well-being are usually labeled treatment . . ."; and he then goes on to examine one by one the features inherent in the various ways people influence each other. Says the author: "The core of the effectiveness of methods of religious and magical healing seems to lie in their ability to arouse hope of capitalizing on the patient's dependency on others." (p. 62.) And ". . . faith may be a specific antidote for certain emotions such as fear or discouragement, which may constitute the essence of a patient's illness. For such patients, the mobilization of expectant trust by whatever means may be as much an etiological remedy as penicillin for pneumonia." (pp. 333-334.) In examining the physician's methods, Dr. Frank pays special attention to the placebo effect. Apparently those who respond to placebos are predisposed to accept and react to socially defined symbols of healing, and many of the drug effects observed in medicine can be related to this attitude. Of the physician as a change agent, Dr. Frank writes: "Certain it is that emotionally shocking procedures have always played a part in the treatment of the mentally ill." (p. 143.) All of his observations lead to the final conclusion: "Our survey has suggested that much, if not all, of the effectiveness

of uncerent form of psychotherapy may be due to those features that all have in common rather than to those that distinguish them from each other." (p. 232.)

If he sees hope and faith on the part of the patient and suggestion and persuasion on the part of the therapist as constituting some of the universal factors operative in mental healing, Dr. Frank's conclusions, although more tolerantly expressed, echo those reached by Dr. Sargant in his *The Battle for the Mind* (1957). Both authors have in common the very healthy attitude of disallowing the special claims that various schools of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis put in for the specificity of their methods. Writes Dr. Frank: ". . . the superiority of analytic treatment over other methods remains to be demonstrated. This suggests that part of the popularity and persistence of analytic training may lie in its effectiveness as an indoctrination procedure. In this connection similarities of analytic training to thought reform are pointed out." (p. 141.) The book also awakens memories of an older era in psychiatry

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