

## " THE USE OF THE SELF "

SIR.—You published in your issue of June 4th a letter by Dr. A. P. Cawadias. He has so succeeded in cramming the maximum of error into the minimum of space that it would not be worth answering did it not afford a fresh opportunity of directing the attention of the profession to the importance to medicine of Alexander's work. This importance to medicine is incidental, for Alexander is primarily concerned with education. Never, despite what Dr. Cawadias says, has Alexander "indicated that he can, on the basis of certain principles, cure." He has never "attempted any treatment" of any disease, nor does he "teach treatment," and, accordingly, Dr. Cawadias has written one sentence which is free from error when he says, "In his work Mr. Alexander does not indicate any precise method of treatment."

The most startling of Dr. Cawadias's statements is contained in the sentence where he says: "Literature . . . has been submerged by works of non-medical healers teaching new methods. . . . Nothing of all these speculations has survived. . . ." It is quite startling, not to say refreshing, to find a medical man, or any other educated man, who has apparently not heard of Pasteur.

I should think that we might all agree with Dr. Cawadias in his plea for "a precise medical diagnosis." It is partly because Alexander has widened the conception of diagnosis that the medical aspect of his work is so important. Take the example of flat-foot: Unless it is recognized that the relation of the head to the neck, the neck to the torso, the torso to the limbs, in short, the whole "use of the self" has its part in the diagnosis of flat-foot, then that diagnosis may be defective. That education in how to manage the head in relation to the neck, the neck in relation to the torso, in how to use the self generally, may have the specific effect of causing sunken arches to rise—that is to say, "curing" flat-foot in process—a distinguished Harley Street consultant will, I am sure, testify to Dr. Cawadias should he care to seek the truth.

You will not, I know, give me space to elaborate the importance of the investigation of function in relation to diagnosis; indeed, Alexander has not exhausted it in his chapter on "Diagnosis." The importance of Alexander is his recognition that, in a changing environment, conscious must be substituted for instinctive control; in the use of the body, as well as in the use of the mind, in man's physical acts as well as in his civic and social and international relations; that man's command over things—steam and explosives, and atoms and space—has outrun his powers over himself to use that command wisely. No proof of this is needed beyond the tragic condition of the world to-day, and it is because Alexander will in time be recognized as the pioneer worker in establishing the conscious control of the use of the self that he will be given his place in history as the seer he is, on the condition, a quite uncertain one, that civilization lasts so long.—I am, etc.,

York, June 9th.

PETER MACDONALD.

SIR.—My attention has been drawn to the letter by Dr. Cawadias in your issue of June 4th, and as Dr. Cawadias in this letter makes certain assertions which seriously misrepresent both my attitude towards medical diagnosis and treatment and the principles I have outlined both in this and in my earlier books, I am asking you to be good enough to grant me space in your valuable columns for my reply.

First, Dr. Cawadias writes: "He [Alexander] gives a general outline of principles well known in medical circles, and indicates that he can, on the basis of these principles,

cure." Later, he says: "I do not see how the 'use of the self' will help us to cure an individual infected with typhoid fever or with cholera, or who is suffering from a perforated appendix." And again: "Alexander, like all non-medical critics, puts the cart before the horse, and teaches treatment without diagnosis."

In answer, I can only refer your readers to *The Use of the Self*, and to my other books, in all of which I have expressly dissociated myself from any idea of producing "cures," or "giving treatment." For instance, I began my chapter on diagnosis and medical training with the following paragraph:

"For many years medical men have been sending their patients to me, because they know that I am experienced in examining conditions of use and in estimating the influence of these conditions upon functioning. I would say at once that I do not receive these cases as patients, but as pupils, inasmuch as I am not interested in disease or defects apart from their association with harmful conditions of use and functioning."

I herewith forward the names of many of the medical men referred to, all of whom can endorse this and also the following statement, namely, that the whole of my experimentation, as set down in Chapter I, from which my technique has been evolved, is concerned, not with medical "treatment" or "cures," nor with the "self" or "the use of the self," as such, but with the conscious direction of use (a fact indicated by the subtitle of the book). Through the employment of this conscious direction of use I found that it is impossible to dissociate use from functioning, for the improvement in the direction of control of use brings about a corresponding improvement in functioning, the whole process tending to eradicate or prevent those symptoms which come about as the result of imperfect or inadequate functioning. This, the foundation of all my work, Dr. Cawadias passes over entirely, but anyone who is interested enough to read Chapter I in *The Use of the Self*, and also the chapter on "Diagnosis," can verify my statement and form his or her judgement as to the value of Dr. Cawadias's *ipse dixit* statement that "Mr. Alexander . . . teaches treatment without diagnosis" and "indicates that he can . . . cure."

All I have aimed at in my book, and indeed in all my writings, has been to draw attention to the fact, unrecognized up till now in medical and other remedial and educational practice: (1) that man's sensory appreciation of the use of the psycho-physical mechanisms of his organism has become more or less untrustworthy, this growing untrustworthiness being associated with a misdirection of the use of himself; (2) that in my experience this misdirection of use has an unsatisfactory influence upon the general functioning of the organism, leading in many cases to the development of symptoms of defect or disease; and, therefore, (3) that it is not sufficient to deal with these difficulties by such direct means as are employed in orthodox medical and educational methods of specific training and treatment of defects and ailments, since in these methods no account is taken of the fact that the use of the mechanisms by means of which a pupil or patient must carry out any prescribed form of treatment or training is in most cases misdirected on account of untrustworthiness of sensory appreciation. I therefore make it plain to all who apply to me for lessons that I do not wish them to come to me as pupils unless they are prepared to work with me, not for the purpose of treatment or cure, but on the basis of correcting the misdirection of their use generally, which, through my experience in this new field, I am able to diagnose.

This is my approach to the question of diagnosis, and by ignoring it throughout his letter I claim Dr. Cawadias has seriously misrepresented me. More than this, by his statement that I, in my book, describe "in popular form