

**Treatment of the mentally or physically handicapped** by Dr J.-J. Hazemann, *Informations Sociales, Paris, 1962. No. 10.*

Man is a living being and endeavours in the first place to find his organic, mental and emotional equilibrium within himself: Overcome in his living works, in his organic equilibrium either at birth if he is born infirm, as a result of a microbial or chemical onslaught, or following a physical or mental traumatism, man, like any living being, reacts with a defence potential which is his own; as an organic being with every cellular and humoral defence potential; as a psychic being with his intelligence which endeavours to put everything into operation to fight against the onslaught, to compensate for amputations or functional deficiencies by creating (much better than an animal could do) adaptations, transfers of functions and even substitutional apparatus. This intelligence can be a factor in better adaptation for him by a clear representation of the situation, but it can also be a regressive factor if it results in a false representation of the situation or of its causes and of the means of palliating it; as a sensitive being, man suffers when he is affected in his physiological equilibrium and much more so when he discovers that he can only partially recover this equilibrium. This suffering can be a factor of progress and it can also be an inhibiting factor.

This marvellous faculty of adaptation which man finds in himself to continually adapt his physical and psychical entity to the external and internal attacks of his surroundings has its limits and even its irregularities. The handicapped individual is born of these limits and these insufficiencies.

Because he belongs to a society which has needs, ethics and important means of action, the handicapped person finds possibilities for adaptation or rehabilitation which can carry him beyond his individual capabilities.

Man in our time does not live alone, he has a family, a social function, he is part of a group, of a social universe and when the adaptational faculties inherent in man reach their limits or default, it is society, when it is civilised, and all the more so when it has reached a high degree of organisation, which is going to give the individual new adaptational possibilities.

As an organic being, the physically or mentally handicapped person is going to receive from society considerable help, ranging from simple nutritional aid, through medical and surgical treatment of the disabling complaint or its after-effects, to re-education with external aid or more or less complicated apparatus.

This aid is essential but man is not only a combination of organs:

—as an intelligent being, a rational understanding of his state and of his means of emerging from it, thanks to information and a permanent motivation coming from the place which looks after him and helps him,

## A GLANCE THROUGH THE REVIEWS

gives the handicapped person increased possibilities of adaptation, of transfer of function and of willingness to succeed . It fights against the negative motivation frequently found in the isolated subject overcome by a problem which he does not understand :

—as a sensitive being, the handicapped person, aided morally by the material and moral help which is given to him and his family, finds himself better equipped to fight organically and mentally. The more human the aid in its form, the bigger are its emotional repercussions and its effectiveness.

Civilised society does not content itself with helping the physically and mentally diminished to rehabilitate himself as well as possible to all his aspects as a man, it goes so far as to modify itself permanently to put itself within his reach. When the handicap is a big one, society creates social or economic circles in which the handicapped person finds a universe within his capacity in which he can reintegrate himself.

This artificial area, these substitutional living conditions, could not be conceived and could not be accepted by the handicapped person unless they gave him a human universe, a universe within his capacity as a man and unless they met the needs and the aspirations not only of his organic " id " but also of his intellectual and emotional " id ".

If helping the physically or mentally diminished is a moral need for society, it nevertheless has its economic and financial necessities which it must take into account and which the handicapped person must take into account to orientate his action.

Of the harmonious and interacting efforts of the individual and society faced with the handicap, in their mutual interest, is born the social problem of the rehabilitation and valuable re-admission into society of the physically or mentally diminished.

The problem of effective treatment cannot be conceived outside this context.