

# Book Reviews

May, Rollo, *Love and Will*, W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., New York, 1969, 352 pp.

This is a timely, important and thought-provoking book. Addressing itself to professional and layman, it challenges many of our assumptions about the human condition and the efficacy of the psychotherapeutic process. Like the ancient philosopher Socrates, who is quoted frequently in the text, Rollo May wants to be a gadfly to his contemporaries. He is groping towards the existentialist position which at once defines the problems and challenges all of us to come up with some pertinent answers.

Dr. Rollo May is a psychoanalyst and a former president of the New York State Psychological Association. In the past, he has given us such searching books as *The Meaning of Anxiety*, and *Man's Search for Himself*. In all his books, his concern is not only with psychological issues but with psychological problems as well. He probes the ultimate meaning of life and death, the nature of man's relationship with himself and others. The present volume contains the essence of several decades of professional experience, as well as the philosophical wisdom of a keen, analytical mind which is not satisfied with easy conventional answers to the complex problems of contemporary man.

Briefly, Dr. May suggests that modern man suffers from a conflict between love and will. We do not know the real meaning of love and thus are not able to express love appropriately. Other cultures had the concept of eros which connotes passionate involvement with and caring for another person. We have replaced eros with an emphasis on sex and sexual technique as the basis for heterosexual relationships. Love has become an empty, meaningless term rather than being the essence of human interaction.

Concurrently, there has been a decline in our ability to use will constructively. Our ancestors believed in willpower as a solution to all problems. This was clearly one-sided and psychologically unrealistic. But modern man has shifted to the opposite extreme of not knowing how to will anything. This springs from a feeling of being basically impotent and powerless. Where will is present at all, it is primarily being exerted as a compensating device, as power drive. Modern man sets will against love and thus paralyzes both.

To escape from this dilemma, Dr. May proposed that we must have a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between love and will. His key concept is intentionality which connotes knowing reality and helping to shape it through participation. Intentionality is an assertive response of the person to the structure of his world. It is, in May's view, the essence of the psychotherapeutic process and the key to development of personal maturity.

A student of Individual Psychology can easily recognize some basic similarities between May and Adler. May emphasizes the consequences of man's feelings of helplessness and the vicissitudes of the power drive gone awry. May also recognizes the teleological aspects of human behavior, and his concept of intentionality has a good deal in common with the Adlerian concept of

**Gemeinschaftsgefuehl.** This is not surprising in view of the fact that May studied with Alfred Adler in Vienna in the early nineteen-thirties. Thus, one would have wished for a more generous recognition of his intellectual debt to Adler, rather than the one superficial reference that the book contains.

There are a number of other issues on which May can be criticized. The book is at times badly overwritten, and suffers from a turgid prose which detracts from its readability. More forceful editing would have benefited both the author and his readers. Last but not least, this reviewer believes that May does not pay sufficient attention to the social forces fostering alienation in our time. If modern industrial society does indeed produce a feeling of helplessness and depersonalization in the individual, then it is hard to see how anything can change unless we change the very structure of society. May recognizes this dilemma but he proposes no solution for it. His solutions are personal ones; he does not address himself to the reform of society and its institutions.

Yet, these are minor complaints about an otherwise excellent book. Rollo May has written a truly profound book that challenges us to recognize the existential truth of the human condition and to develop "The Courage To Be," to use Tillich's phrase. It is a major achievement, and deserves to be read and re-read until it has become integrated intellectually and emotionally into the fabric of our daily lives.

Leo Rattner, Ph.D.