

# THE F. MATTHIAS ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

*evolved for changing and improving*

## THE USE OF THE SELF

*by F. Matthias Alexander*

### A SELECTION OF APPRECIATIONS OF THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

**Sir Charles Sherrington**—*Extract (from personal letter to Mr. Alexander)*:—"I need not repeat to you that I appreciate the value of your teaching and observations. I was glad to take the occasion to say so in print. I know some of the difficulties which attach to putting your ideas across to those less versed in the study than yourself. Your disciples, however, can more and more disseminate them and multiply your call."

**Professor John Dewey**, Professor of Philosophy and Educator:—"A revolution in thought and action."  
"Thinking in Activity."

**Professor G. E. Coghill**, Professor of Comparative Anatomy, author of "Anatomy and the Problem of Behaviour":—"Mr. Alexander has demonstrated the very important psychological principle that the proprioceptive system can be brought under conscious control, and can be educated to carry to the motor centres the stimulus which is responsible for the muscular activity which brings about the manner of working (USE) of the mechanism. Mr. Alexander re-conditions and re-educates the reflex mechanisms, and brings their habits into normal relation with the functions of the organism as a whole. I regard his methods as thoroughly scientific and educationally sound."

**Professor Sir Frederick Keeble**:—"A simple and stupendous truth."

**Aldous Huxley**:—"It is now possible to conceive of a totally new type of education affecting the entire range of human activity; an education which, by teaching them the proper use of the self, would preserve children and adults from most of the diseases and evil habits that now afflict them . . ."  
(Reprinted from October 25, 1941, issue of the "Saturday Review of Literature.")

**J. E. R. McDonagh, F.R.C.S.**:—"It became apparent to me, after meeting Mr. Alexander and watching his technique, that the wrong use of the body plays an important role in disease."

**A. Rugg-Gunn, F.R.C.S.**:—"No school of psychology, so far as I am aware, has developed a technique that will enable the average man, or woman to adjust themselves without fail to the growing complexities of modern life. This is, however, precisely what the practice of Constructive Conscious Control, associated with the name of F. Matthias Alexander, and the technique which he has evolved for teaching it, claims to do. The claim is one which is amply supported by a growing body of authoritative opinion. . . ."

**Dr. P. B. Ballard, M.A.**:—"I can, from personal experience, testify to the value of the psycho-physical education invented by Mr. F. Matthias Alexander. The object of the system is, in fact, the education of the whole man about which so much has been said of late and so little has been done. Mr. Alexander's way of doing it is both original and effective; and the application of this method to the education of young children is an enterprise rich in promise, and deserving of the fullest support. . . ."

**Sir Stafford Cripps**, to Chairman of Committee of Publishers Rationing Board:—

I would like to support the application for extra paper required to reprint Mr. Alexander's books.

I have now had a very considerable experience of Mr. Alexander's writing and of the practical application of his teaching both in my own case and in those of others known to me.

I consider that the wide knowledge of his writing and methods is of the very greatest importance to the future welfare of the country and has particular application in the rehabilitation which will be necessary after the war.

I can think of no single direction in which education is more required by the people, and Mr. Alexander's books are the only ones which give access to his teachings.  
6.12.44.

(Sgd.) R. STAFFORD CRIPPS.

This application was supported by similar letters from the late Earl of Lytton, J. E. R. McDonagh, F.R.C.S., A. Rugg-Gunn, F.R.C.S., and was duly granted by the authorities concerned.

# Man's Supreme Inheritance

By F. MATTHIAS ALEXANDER

With an Introductory Word by Professor John Dewey

## SIGNIFICANT APPRECIATIONS

**Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A., D.D., LL.D.,** writes:

Mr. Alexander has given us a work of rare and original value. His philosophy unveils a deliverance from the tutored and unintelligent sub-consciousness in which we are all more or less enslaved, and he opens out the prospect of an enlightened sub-consciousness through the ministry of conscious guidance and control. Mr. Alexander's philosophy seems to me to be entirely sound. It does not hang in the air; it moves on the earth. He shows how it can be directed to the re-educating of those whose sub-conscious life is a blind creation. But, far better still, he applies it to the education of the young before these perversities have arisen. The large acceptance of his principles would revolutionize the early training in our schools. Here, at any rate, is a very arresting exposition of a theory and method which would redeem the individual from the mastery of non-intelligent forces in his own life, and bring mind and body into the co-ordinated health of vital fellowship."

**Professor Frank Granger, D. Litt., M.A.,** Professor of Classics and Philosophy, University College, Nottingham, writes in *The Expositor*:

"One of the most urgent needs of the present time is the profounder analysis of the causes which determine the habitual movements of human beings. In the absence of adequate knowledge in this field, the ground is left open to empirical and one-sided attempts to remedy the obvious disturbances of the normal course of human development. Mr. Alexander, indeed, is concerned with the borderland which both separates and unites mental and physiological processes. Leaving for the moment physiological processes out of account, I have been much impressed by what seems to me a most valuable contribution to psychology; a contribution the more needed because, if Mr. Alexander is working on right lines, we must call a halt to all those who, under various banners and upon many pretexts have been eliminating recently from education the elements of conscious control. Mr. Alexander has accumulated a large store of experience, and he seems to me singularly successful in giving a clear expression to the important results which have disclosed themselves to him. . . . Mr. Alexander has made an original contribution of the very greatest value to our knowledge."

# Man's Supreme Inheritance

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**Professor John Dewey, of Columbia University,** writes in *The New Republic* concerning the thesis of *Man's Supreme Inheritance*:

"His contention is that the remedial ills from which humanity suffers on the physical side (with the intellectual and moral ills which result) are due to the disassociation of the 'higher' nervous structures and functions—those which are at the basis of our conscious life—from the 'lower'—those which are involved in the execution of bodily postures and movements. Mr. Alexander contends that our education, which covers, of course, infinitely more than our schooling, has proceeded as if the centres of our conscious activity had been merely superimposed upon the neuro-muscular structures which represent our heredity from the lower animals. Civilized persons, especially the intellectuals and specialized persons who are leaders, cultivate the 'brains' as if they were separate from the rest of the body. The outcome, in Mr. Alexander's contention, is the larger number of physical disorders which inflict themselves exclusively upon civilized man, and the larger number of neuroses which express themselves in intellectual and moral maladies. The claim is sweeping and as simple as it is sweeping. Mr. Alexander's positive principle is, in effect, an education which will integrate the functions now so disastrously divided. With subsequent generations it can, in the degree in which it is utilized with children, become positive and constructive. The change would be so great, the stage introduced in the history of humanity would be of such crucial significance, that the use of the word evolution in connection with it is a mere matter of literary taste."

**Professor Frank Granger** also writes:

"The King in you, the hope of glory' strikes the note of a ruling inner-principle. The effects of such a principle are traced in a work, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, by F. Matthias Alexander. The author traces the salutary effects upon mental and bodily health which follow from the subjection of human habits to self-government. . . . He helps me to understand how the figure of the interior King has worked miracles of healing throughout the whole Christian history."

**Every man, woman and child holds the possibility of physical perfection; it rests with each of us to attain it by personal understanding and effort.**—*From the Author's Preface.*

"A Work of Rare and Original Value" —Rev. J. H. Jowett  
"No Book Could Have A Greater Subject"  
—New York Times  
"An Original Contribution, Of The Very  
Greatest Value, To Our Knowledge"—Prof. Frank Granger

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REV. J. H. JOWETT, M.A., D.D., LL.D.  
PROFESSOR FRANK GRANGER, D.Litt., M.A. (Eng.)  
PROFESSOR H. M. KALLEN  
PROFESSOR JOHN DEWEY

**THE DIAL:** "To the fellowship of Wagner, Tolstoy and Carpenter may be added F. Matthias Alexander. To the diversities of preacher, pietist and prophet may be added that of scientist. But where his predecessors see a cure for civilization in an abandonment of it, Mr. Alexander sees the cure in a growing control of the human organism at work in it."  
Professor H. M. KALLEN.

**THE CHRISTIAN REGISTER (Boston):** "A remarkable book. What Mr. Alexander has done is to apply to the re-education of our inherited bodily mechanisms principles which are coming to be generally accepted."  
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**THE CHICAGO EVENING POST:** "Here is a great work." "This book would do an incalculable amount of good were it only in virtue of its destructive passages." "(The thesis) reaches into every department of the physical and mental-life." "The general reader and the educator should read the book for its main doctrines, a doctrine correlated with the main advance in psychology." "The bold title of the book is justified by its contents . . . the author has simply systematized common sense."

**THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS:** "The book is full of interesting, fruitful and valuable ideas. . . . What it says about education of the young seems thoroughly rational. . . . What it has to say concerning the snares and pitfalls that we slip into because of our naive and foolish trust in sub-conscious adaptation is true and strikingly illustrated."  
The author, by the way, is a practitioner as well as a theorist."

**THE NEW YORK TIMES:** "Parents will be especially interested in the chapters on Race Culture and the Training of the Children . . . The athlete may learn not a little from this book of how to handle himself in his sport. The golfer will appreciate its pages and what they record regarding the position of mechanical advantage and the light they shed by indirect illumination upon the vexed problems of why he goes off his game, and why he does not improve his play. The plowman should be no less interested in the position of mechanical advantage than the golfer. As a brain worker, however, a man stands to gain most of all."

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