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# Fanaticism That May Lead to a Nuclear Holocaust: The Contributions of Scientific Counseling and Psychotherapy

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*The author considers some of the fanatical beliefs that may possibly lead to a nuclear holocaust in the not-too-distant future, shows how dangerous these ideas are, and suggests that one of the best ways to minimize this kind of absolutistic and dogmatic thinking is through the psycho-educational approach pioneered by scientific counseling and psychotherapy.*

I nnumerable social and political scientists, as well as untold millions of members of the public, now think that the United States and the Soviet Union are heading for a nuclear war and that we had better strive mightily to prevent this kind of disaster. Although I partially agree with this view and am one of the founding members of the Psychologists for Social Responsibility, I am more optimistic than most people about the possibility of our heading off a politically incited holocaust.

Why? Because although most members of the human race are irrational much of the time and although they probably have strong innate—as well as acquired—predispositions to frequently behave self-defeatingly, I do not believe that political leaders are foolish enough to ignore the immense dangers of nuclear reprisal. These leaders and their generals have frequently acted irresponsibly, as the entire history of Western and Eastern civilization has shown. But I still have trouble believing that almost any politicians or generals would initiate large-scale atomic destruction today when they all seem to recognize that doing so would almost certainly prove suicidal—and quite possibly genocidal—to their own compatriots.

At least for the next half century or so, then, I am not one to predict imminent nuclear warfare—although, of course, I could be wrong. But empirical observation shows that for over 40 years the principle of deterrence has kept the world free from even minor atomic wars and that in the view of many of the world's leading politicians, militarists, and scientists, this situation will (at least for a while) continue to prevail.

Why, then, should you or I worry about an impending nuclear holocaust that could—and quite probably would—wipe out most of the human race? Because although atomic arms are now so complicated, so expensive to manufacture, and so difficult to use against one's enemies that billions of dollars and millions of hours of planning and labor are required to launch a number of warheads at vulnerable targets, this is not likely to be true 50 or 100 years from now.

The technological advances of the last few decades are almost miraculous, as shown in the fields of medicine and computers.

Therefore, the day may not be too far off when a small number of determined persons with limited financial resources will be able to manufacture powerful atomic weapons in their own headquarters—and perhaps even in the homes of their members—and thereby be able to blow to smithereens great numbers of their opponents, and perhaps all of humanity.

## EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE AND NUCLEAR WARFARE

I am not particularly worried about our leaders or the Russian leaders, nor about the great mass of our people or the Russian people. Virtually all these leaders and citizens are sensible and sane enough about the possibility of atomic reprisal to strongly oppose starting almost any kind of nuclear conflagration. But I am quite concerned about the actions of a small group—in fact virtually any small group—of dedicated fanatics, of secular or religious dogmatists, of pious believers in Absolute Truth (capital A, capital T), who may deliberately resort to extreme violence, including worldwide genocide, to get their grandiose, monolithic way and to prove that they are 100% Right (with a capital R) and that the rest of us are 100% Wrong (with a capital W), no matter what the cost. Yes, no matter what the cost (Ellis, 1962a).

Are there truly people who, if they had the wherewithal to do so, would probably blow up the entire world, including themselves, to prove that their credos are right and that everyone else in the world is wrong? Would these people seriously consider annihilating *all* of us to show that their principles and practices absolutely *must* prevail and *have to triumph no matter how deadly the results*?

Of course these fanatics exist, have always existed, and may well continue to exist forever—or at least until they destroy the human race of which they are a part. We counselors and psychotherapists, being professionals in the field of mental health, deal with many of these extreme bigots, whom we sometimes label as psychotics. And we all know at least a few paranoids who think that almost everyone is plotting and scheming against them and who would, if they could, retaliate in kind. Most psychotics, of course, are exceptionally harmless—and, indeed, are unassertive, dependent, and mild-mannered.

But hardly all! Some rape, maim, bomb, kill, and even commit mass murder. Might a small group of psychotics, assuming that they had the ability to do so, become violently incensed and use nuclear weapons to snuff out millions of humans, including

themselves? Damned right, they might, and in the not-too-distant future such a psychotic minority may well decide to do so. A much greater danger presents itself today in the form of nonpsychotic people who tend to lead decent and productive lives but who are zealous and rabid in one particular respect, such as pious devotion to a one-sided political or religious cause. These fanatical followers of one peremptory creed often do not hesitate to behave antisocially and to flout the dictates of their community. Nonpsychotic and quite disciplined individuals, for example, like the early Christian Gnostics, the Catholic Inquisition, the Alchemists, the original American Mormons, the Oneida Perfectionists, the Amish, the Holy Rollers, the Satanists, the Dukhobors, the Christian Scientists, the Kabalists, and the followers of Rasputin, frequently have flouted the law of their land, have deliberately performed antisocial and violent acts, have recklessly sacrificed their own safety, have refused to follow scientific medical practices even when a child's life was at stake, and have otherwise devoutly warred against the established governments of their regions.

Many of these groups, to be sure, have fought for freedom, democracy, and humanistic ideals. But they have often been authoritarian, dictatorial, and repressive of human rights. Many of them have only used civil disobedience as they have fought against authority. But they have also resorted, on thousands of occasions, to extreme censorship, riots, violence, torture, and terrorism.

Have the trepidations of fanatical, power-bent groups been any better in recent years than in the past? Hardly! If anything, they may be more widespread and more intense. Let me cite from recent sources just a few of the attempts of fanatical groups to have their ways prevail at all costs—including the costs of callously persecuting, jailing, torturing, maiming, and killing people with whom they have ideological differences.

In recent years, and especially in recent months, fundamentalist Christian groups in the United States have beaten and sexually abused children, bombed many birth control clinics and threatened personnel in these clinics, and engaged in many acts of civil disobedience. Other American cults and sects have persecuted their own dissidents and tried to kill some of them for dissenting; have interfered with justice; have raided governmental offices; have induced their followers to engage in mass suicide; have carried out ritual killing of animals, children, and adults; and have perpetrated hundreds of terrorist threats and acts, especially the bombing of public buildings.

In other countries, especially those of the Near East and Asia, fanatical religious and political groups have set up extremely repressive state religions; have resorted to unusual degrees of censorship, torture, and killings against dissidents; have violently tried to politicize and religionize the people of other countries; have committed hundreds of terrorist acts, including the massacre of great numbers of innocent bystanders; have fomented scores of holy wars, have popularized kamikaze suicides by devout members who engage in terrorist attacks; and have made several parts of the world, such as Lebanon, unsafe for normal living (Ellis, 1985a).

To provide a couple of graphic examples of violence impelled by religious fanaticism, let me cite the *New York Times* (Smith, 1984) report that many fanatic followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, including 12- to 17-year-old boys, have been trained by their leaders to be martyrs in the "holy war" against Iraq. Whipped to a fanatical fervor by their religion-inspired teachers, they have often hurled themselves on barbed wire or marched into Iraqi mine fields in the face of withering gunfire to clear the way for Iranian tanks. Smith (1984), a *New York Times* reporter, wrote that "across the back of their khaki-colored shirts was stenciled the slogan, 'I have special permission of the Imam to enter heaven'" (Smith, 1984, p. 21).

Here is one more example of religious dogma: A member of the Northeast Kingdom Community Church in Vermont, when asked about the members of his cult beating their children and refusing to send them to school, passionately exclaimed, "We are doing this to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. All the rest of the World is the Kingdom of Satan" (Butterfield, 1984, p. 16).

### IS THERE ANY SOLUTION TO FANATICISM?

These are but a few of the recent incidents of fanatical secular and religious groups resorting to child abuse, war, terrorism, oppression of dissidents, kamikaze suicide, mass suicide, civil disobedience, satanism, and other instances of violence that show that zealots who believe in the Absolute Truth of their position will do anything—and I mean anything—to see that their sacred beliefs and sacrosanct customs prevail. I think that these flare-ups, in addition to the millions of incidents of violence that have occurred in thousands of communities for scores of centuries, provide considerable evidence that zealous advocates will do virtually anything, including resorting to rampant violence, to abet their chosen cause. And there is every reason to believe that if they have nuclear weapons available, they will resort to them, too.

This is especially true for individuals who dogmatically believe in an afterlife and in a deity who especially favors them for their earthly conduct. As soon as you are utterly convinced that you *must* have an afterlife existence and that this depends on your present devotion to a sect, you will almost certainly join that sect, obey its rules and regulations, and stop giving much of a damn about how long you or your loved ones live on earth. You will rather easily risk killing and being killed, and if you also devoutly believe that your afterlife will be joyous if you exterminate nonbelievers, you will have little compunction about killing them and presumably ensuring yourself, at least in the next world, of eternal bliss.

Even if you do not go quite this far but fanatically believe that your religious or social views absolutely must, under all conditions, prevail, you will hardly hesitate to murder nonbelievers who oppose your sacred views. The more holy and absolutistic your credos, the less you will be able to tolerate opposition to them—and the more extreme measures you will tend to take to exterminate infidels. Modern technology, alas, now makes it possible for fewer bigots to decimate much greater numbers of their victims than was true in the days of Nero, Genghis Khan, Ivan the Terrible, and Hitler. Fewer rabid partisans can now wreak immeasurably more violence and bloodshed than they could previously. And the amount of butchery a small number of True Believers can inflict on the rest of humanity is increasing by leaps and bounds with every passing decade. Eventually the day will come when a paltry few individuals can use nuclear (and other) weapons to wipe out billions of people and other living creatures. Billions? Yes, billions.

Is there, then, any feasible answer or solution to this grave, impending problem? I take the somewhat optimistic view that there is. The following is a psychotherapist's analysis of fanatical absolutism and a suggestion of how counselors and therapists may contribute to peaceful defusion in this highly dangerous nuclear age. I specifically outline how emotionally disturbed individuals and groups may be induced to give up their rigidity and grandiosity, to accept the differences between themselves and others, and to still try to promulgate their own views but do so in a more open-minded and democratic manner—and in a way that precludes violent outbursts, especially those leading to nuclear conflagration.

### A PROPOSED SOLUTION

First, my views on re-educating and therapizing people who think and act in irrational, antisocial ways follow the basic prin-



ciples of rational-emotive therapy (RET), which I originated 31 years ago (Ellis, 1957, 1962b). Rational-emotive therapy is the pioneering form of cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT). Proponents of RET maintain that people's anxiety, depression, and hostility do not stem mainly from their early or later experiences but more directly and importantly from their basic irrational Beliefs (iBs) or philosophies that they bring to these experiences.

According to RET, people upset themselves by taking their preferences and desires and strongly escalating them into absolutistic demands and commands. As Karen Horney (1950) pointed out, they disturb themselves by devoutly following "the tyranny of the shoulds" (p. 17). Following Horney, RET assumes that virtually all humans, because of their biological nature and their social learning, make a "magical jump" from "Because my goal is very important, I *absolutely must* achieve it" to "Because I strongly desire you to agree with me, you incontestably *must* follow my views!"

According to RET, as soon as people make this magical jump they create powerful feelings of anxiety, hostility, and low frustration tolerance—which then frequently drive them into fights, feuds, and wars. When you devoutly *must* achieve a goal and unquestionably *have* to make others see things your way, you will tend to feel horrified when anyone blocks you and will sometimes feel driven to use any means, including terrorist force, to ensure that you get what you fervently think you *need*.

If people's insistence that their views *must* under all conditions prevail sometimes leads them to wreak carnage on others, what can be done to help them give up their "musturbatory" thinking? According to RET and CBT, these people can be shown their absolutistic shoulds and musts and taught to attack them scientifically—with logical and empirical analysis—and thereby to renounce their crooked thinking.

Seriously disturbed thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can be changed by making psychotherapy largely synonymous with scientific method (Ellis, 1962b, 1973, 1985b; Mahoney & Freeman, 1985), because the essence of science is not only empiricism and logic but also open-mindedness, flexibility, and experimentation. Science abjures dogmas, certainties, ultimates, and absolutes. It only has tentative and revisable hypotheses. It never even views "facts" as incontrovertible, because they may later be found to require revision. Science, as Popper (1962) noted, strives to set up all its hypotheses so that they can be falsified, and it acknowledges that even its most plausible theories cannot be fully proven for eternity because there is always a possibility that later evidence may turn up to invalidate them.

Proponents of rational-emotive therapy first try to arrive at their formulations and practices scientifically and to revise them whenever they are found to be empirically or logically wanting. But RET is also unique in teaching people how to use the scientific method in their own lives, to rip up their categorical shoulds and musts and replace them with probabilistic preferences. The famous ABCs of RET are followed by its important disputing method D—which stands for actively and forcefully Disputing irrational Beliefs (iBs). Teaching people, through RET, to use D, or Disputing of iBs, is synonymous with teaching them the scientific method (Dryden, 1984; Ellis, 1962b, 1985b).

In fact, according to RET, if people rigorously use the scientific method and if they think only in terms of preferences and desires instead of consciously or unconsciously resorting to absolutistic, antiscientific thinking, they will forego their unconditional shoulds and musts and virtually never make themselves seriously neurotic. What? Never? Well, hardly ever!

#### CHANGING FANATICS' IRRATIONAL BELIEFS

Can RET, CBT, and other scientific forms of psychotherapy actually help dogmatists and absolutists surrender their certainties that may impel them to use nuclear fission to annihilate billions

of people unless we fully accept their monolithic credos? I am not sure that they can, because many bigots are so outrightly psychotic that no amount of education and persuasion may induce them to change. So they may be real diehards—and we may all, to coin a tragic pun, die hard with them!

I am not convinced, however, that all terrorists, fascists, and monomaniacal cultists are truly psychotic. At times, many of them seem so, because their behavior is truly bizarre (as in the case of the Skoptsi, a fanatical religious sect who had their male members castrate themselves to prevent "wicked" sex and procreation).

My hypothesis is, however, that the great majority of rabid cultists are unstable and neurotic but hardly psychotic. I think that they are highly suggestible individuals who easily adopt the extreme positions of the group they join (or are born into) but that they are still capable of some degree of critical and scientific thinking, and, if they can be therapeutically and educationally reached (as I suggest below), they can become much less dogmatic and inflexible. This is not to say that they can be reached easily and quickly. Definitely not! But they are hardly beyond hope, and if we work hard enough to reach them we may be able to do so—before they reach out themselves to manufacture and employ the nuclear weapons with which they will eventually be able to destroy all of us.

I am proposing, in other words, that there is hope for our present troubled and disordered world and that that hope lies mainly in scientific psychotherapy. If we, as counselors and therapists, understand clearly the core irrationalities that may lead to zealotry-incited nuclear warfare and if we can teach great masses of people how to surrender their dogmas, we may help stave off a worldwide holocaust.

What are some of the main absolutistic shoulds and musts that may lead some devout sects to favor mass human destruction? They include:

1. "Our views of people and the universe are Absolutely and Everlastingly True, and nobody deserves to live who opposes these supreme views."
2. "If our opponents prevail—as they unquestionably must not ever be allowed to do—they would ruin the entire human race. Therefore, they must be stopped and annihilated, no matter what the cost!"
3. "Our political or religious cause is the only worthy one that should exist. We alone can save humanity and prevent evil! We must do anything—yes, anything—to make sure that we extirpate everyone who prevents our noble cause from prevailing!"
4. "We are absolutely certain that an afterlife exists and that if we pulverize all our enemies, we will be rewarded and achieve eternal bliss in this afterlife while they will suffer eternally in hell!"

How would scientifically oriented counselors and educators try to discover, explore, and help the upholders of these fanatical beliefs change them for more rational views? In many ways, as RET and CBT practitioners have outlined in numerous books and articles (Beck, 1976; Dryden, 1980; Ellis, 1962b, 1985b; Mahoney & Freeman, 1985; Walen, DiGiuseppe, & Wessler, 1980; Wessler & Wessler, 1980). What are some of the main RET and CBT techniques of disputing irrationalities?

Cognitively, we would dispute fanatical beliefs by asking incisive questions, such as: "Where is the evidence that your views of people and the universe *are* Absolutely and Everlastingly True? If they are true, why do you *have* to make them prevail? Can you prove that people who do not hold them do not deserve to live and must be exterminated? Can you demonstrate that your political or religious cause, however good it may be, is the

only one that can benefit and save humanity? And how will annihilating everyone contribute to saving it?"

In these and other ways, scientific psychotherapy, such as RET, can help people examine and change their dogmatic thinking. Also, RET and CBT can show narrow-minded individuals how to use coping statements or rational self-statements that contradict their disturbance-creating bigotries. For example:

There are no rotten or evil people but only people who behave poorly and unethically under some conditions some of the time. Because the nature of humans is to be fallible, we can accept other people *with* their evil behavior, and thereby win their respect and give ourselves a much better chance of inducing them to change their behavior. If we label *them* rather than their *behavior* as wicked and if we kill them for their wickedness, that will hardly help them in any way to reform or to act less badly.

If there really is one true God who favors us and our group, He or She will also forgive our enemies, for any God worthy of the name will hardly be cruel and sadistic.

By using RET and CBT to scientifically dispute irrational beliefs and by employing rational self-statements, people can presumably be educated to subscribe to any kind of political or religious view they favor—but not to rabidly insist on death to all those who do not follow it. They can be shown how to keep their strong preferences for a particular point of view but not to grandiosely insist that this view must absolutely dominate, no matter what.

In addition, RET and CBT show people how to surrender their other irrationalities that often stem from their illogical and unrealistic musts. Take, for example, the self-defeating idea of worthlessness. RET disputes the idea that any humans, because of the wrong or evil ways they follow on earth, are rotten, worthless people who deserve to be wiped out entirely and perhaps to roast in hell for eternity. It demonstrates that humans, if they have any value or worth at all, have it because they are alive, not because they have special beliefs or perform notably well. It forcefully tries to encourage people to accept themselves as well as others unconditionally, just because people all are human. It especially shows people how to judge others' traits and deeds as, at times, being mistaken or unethical but to never damn others globally (Ellis, 1973, 1985b; Ellis & Harper, 1975). If the RET position on the illegitimacy of denigrating or damning humans for their undesirable acts were to prevail, murder, war, and genocide would very rarely occur, and the dangerous irrationalities about damnation that may one day lead us to nuclear holocaust would probably disappear.

In addition, proponents of RET and CBT espouse several other cognitive teachings that are designed to alleviate human disturbance and, particularly, to minimize hostility, rage, and vindictiveness (Ellis, 1962b, 1977a). Thus, they use humor to reduce irrational, anger-creating beliefs to absurdity and to enable people to reduce significantly their demands that others *have to* think and behave "properly" (Ellis, 1977b). They encourage disturbed individuals to reframe "upsetting" events so that they can see some "good" things in others' "bad" actions (Ellis, 1977a). They employ referenting and show people how to focus on the harmful results of making themselves enraged (Ellis & Bernard, 1985). They teach skill training in communication and interpersonal relations to show people how to enjoy each other more even when they have clear-cut differences with each other (Ellis, 1957, 1962b).

In addition to their cognitive methods, RET and CBT use a number of emotive and behavioral techniques for helping people overcome their feelings of emotional insecurity, rage, and depression—all of which lead them to behave bizarrely and destructively. Thus, RET teaches people how to do rational-

emotional imagery. It shows them how to achieve healthy assertion instead of unhealthy aggression. It teaches them how to forcefully tell themselves self-statements that will enable them to be determined rather than enraged and combative. Also, RET provides in vivo desensitization homework assignments so that people can do what they fear to overcome their irrational fears, can learn to act assertively but not hostilely, and can work to reduce their low frustration tolerance that frequently drives them to intolerance and antisocial acts (Ellis, 1962b, 1973, 1985b).

#### THE ROLE OF OTHER THERAPIES

Of course, RET is not the only form of psychotherapy and therapeutic teaching that can help people be less dogmatic and "musturbatory," more tolerant and flexible. In many ways, Rogerian therapy (Rogers, 1961) has the same philosophy as RET, that of unconditional acceptance of humans. Several other humanistic and existential therapies, such as those of Alfred Adler, Viktor Frankl, Eric Berne, Rollo May, and Irving Yalom, similarly favor choice, freedom, and self-actualization rather than conformity and dogma.

On the other hand, a great many modern and popular schools of therapy that ostensibly release people from their rigidities include considerable cultism, mysticism, and antiscientific thinking. Also, they promulgate almost exactly the kind of absolutistic ideology that is devoutly held by the religious and political sectarians who may someday atomically annihilate the whole human race.

Perhaps the worst of these psychotherapies is transpersonal therapy, which is usually claimed to be humanistic and humanitarian, but that has as its basis the same kind of devout, authoritarian, anti-empirical philosophy as that held by many of the orthodox terrorists (Ellis, 1985a).

Many transpersonal writers, duly concerned about nuclear dangers, have recently tried to show that their views can help prevent a holocaust. But although these writers are indeed nice people and tend to be humanistic, their mystical inclinations largely prevail and present distinct dangers.

Those who are somewhat ignorant about what transpersonal psychotherapy really is and who falsely see it as humanistic and democratic may be surprised to learn that its basic premises and ideologies include the following authoritarian suppositions:

1. Absolute reality exists, and when we find the true doctrine that reveals it, we reach absolute, invariant, unchangeable, ineffable truth.
2. Afterlife experiences, reincarnation, and immortality of our souls unquestionably exist and have been empirically proven.
3. All living and inanimate things merge into one fundamental unity. By understanding and blending with this undivided oneness, we can overcome our human limitations, get in direct touch with God, eradicate all our disturbances and handicaps, and achieve boundless bliss.
4. By following transcendental teaching and by ignoring the knowledge of our normal intellect and senses and abandoning the scientific method and the findings of science, we can achieve perfect knowledge, perfect peace, perfect unity with the universe, perfect joy, and perfect physical and mental well-being (Grof, 1984; Mann, 1984).

Many transpersonal therapists follow the teachings of extreme cults, such as those of Mahareshi Mahesh Yogi, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, and the Rosicrucians. Some of the antiscientific causes espoused by transpersonal leaders and used widely in their psychotherapeutic practices include astrology, fortune telling, sorcery, psychic healing, witchcraft, shamanism, exorcism, clairvoyance, telepathy, miracles, spiritualism, past lives therapy, out-of-the-body experiences, reincarnation therapy, magic, and cosmic consciousness.



A typical example of transpersonal therapy is presented in the work of the holistic therapist, Virgil Armstrong, an honorary shaman who gives workshops on American Indians and the native spirits to those who seek physical and mental relief from unseen helpers. According to Armstrong (1984, p. 11), "The Indian (inDios) is not only a race but a state of consciousness which embraces the concept of the life and interrelatedness of all things, including Native Spirits, elves, fairies, and overlighting beings."

Another holistic and transpersonal duo, Stephen Johnson and Alex Benedetti (1984), provide a 5-day training course in the philosophy and techniques of dry and wet rebirthing—which, they claim, "integrates body, mind, and spirit helping you to maintain a perpetual state of health, happiness and high energy" (p. 8). Their training also includes instruction and practice in "principles of spiritual purification, karma cleaning, natural healing, clearing and communication skills, abundance and prosperity, extrasensory perception, and universal relationships" (p. 8).

This is a small sample of the authoritarian, unrealistic, and dogmatic credos that are the philosophic—and antiscientific—sources of transcendental and transpersonal psychotherapy.

I am not saying that all believers in transpersonal psychotherapy endorse these antiscientific and asocial views and actions. But I am saying that to the extent that they religiously follow their own basic philosophies, they often do so. And I am particularly saying that their fundamentally irrational and antiscientific outlook can easily lead them into almost any kind of antisocial and asocial actions—and it frequently does. I hypothesize that the more transcendental or transpersonal any group becomes, the more likely it is to contribute to or fail to take effective action against nuclear destruction. And I am also saying that the extremists who may well blow us all to bits in the not-too-distant future will most probably hold and implement transpersonal attitudes.

How about the other major current therapies? Are they likely to abet the scientific attitude and help eliminate rabid bigotry? To some extent, yes—as indicated in the humanistic psychotherapies of Adler, Berne, Frankl, May, Rogers, and Yalom mentioned above.

Other therapeutic systems are not necessarily so benign. Gestalt therapy, neurolinguistic programming, primal therapy, Reichian methods, orthodox psychoanalysis, and several other therapies have dogmas and semimystical outlooks of their own and are not always rigorously scientific. Thus, these therapeutic approaches had better be applied cautiously to the problems of individual or collective peace making; however, some useful pacification techniques may be derived from them.

Practically all modern psychotherapy aims at helping people live more peacefully with themselves and with other humans, and psychotherapists presumably are social scientists who are particularly devoted to discovering techniques of quieting hysteria, solving interpersonal problems, abetting both individual and social interest, and helping people live without needless strife and turmoil. Therefore, although political and economic solutions to the menace of nuclear warfare are indeed required, psychotherapeutic and educational solutions are equally important.

I see psychotherapy and education as complementary ways of preventing nuclear annihilation, because effective therapy can obviously be used with relatively few of today's 3 billion earthians. Therefore, we had better adapt it to educational applications so that virtually all humans, from kindergarten onward, can be shown what they are doing to needlessly upset and infuriate themselves and are presented with cognitive, emotive, and behavioral techniques they can use to calm themselves and to think and act more rationally. Individual

therapy can do this for very difficult individuals. But large-scale education—in the schools, in community groups, in religious institutions, and in every mass media format—had better incorporate therapeutic teachings and bring them to the masses. Yes, *all* the masses.

It is important in this regard that RET and CBT already include psychoeducational techniques—especially bibliotherapy and audiovisual therapy—and that they therefore are ideally suited for incorporation into mass educational procedures. Thus, in addition to their emphasis on the scientific outlook, they are effective mass media for teaching this outlook. If this were not so, I would have serious doubts about their making effective inroads against human dogma and rigidity.

## CONCLUSION

My conclusion, then, seems to follow logically all that I have just said—and I hope it will be empirically tested and ultimately sustained. Humans, I hypothesize, are born with self-sustaining and self-changing tendencies to learn, to reason, to predict, to test their predictions, and to actualize themselves (Ellis, 1957, 1962b, 1973; Ellis & Harper, 1975; Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1961). As George Kelly aptly stated, they are natural scientists. But they are also born—as well as reared—with powerful tendencies to be irrational, dogmatic, and fanatical. Their irrational thoughts and acts have harmed them immensely but have not yet brought them to the brink of doom. This, alas, is no longer true. Nuclear technology has now made it possible, and indeed very likely, that a relatively small group of partisans can wipe out perhaps the whole human race. If not now, then at least a number of years hence.

The modern technology of violence indicates that if our species is to survive, we cannot any longer afford rampant rabidity and monomania. Humans must either become much less dogmatic and absolutistic or suffer the holocaustal consequences. How they are to forego their monolithic and grandiose thinking and thereby obviate the dangers of nuclear fission is as yet unresolved.

My answer, which I hardly state with complete confidence, is that counselors and psychologists had better fully recognize the enormous dangers of irrationality, bigotry, and dogmatism and devise means of minimizing these dangers. Not merely, of course, through individual and group psychotherapy, which can only reach a small percentage of the world's population, but through teaching anti-absolutistic philosophies and actions that solidly reach the heads and hearts of practically all people, particularly through the use of mass educational techniques.

I hardly think that science has all the answers to important human issues. It has its own limitations and drawbacks and is far from being a panacea for all ills. But the scientific method is probably the best antidote to absolutism that has ever been invented. And if counselors and therapists truly adopt its flexible, change-seeking attitudes, if they use science to create scientific psychotherapies that are empirically tested and modified, and if they incorporate the teaching of scientific thinking into therapy itself, they will then help to develop many fewer people who are likely to resort to atomic destruction.

Is science, therefore, our only hope to ward off a nuclear holocaust during the next century or so? Perhaps not, but I cannot think of a better candidate for this extremely important endeavor.

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