

may be falsified". Dr Robin Skynner, who had access to a group of my patients, found a close relationship between their habitual postural attitudes and their predominant psychological conflicts: "It also seemed clear that the release of specific tensions went parallel with the release and acceptance of attitudes and emotions of which they were not fully aware."

Behaviourally, it is clear that there can be no form of movement, posture or communication which will not rely upon muscle for its manifestation. The hysteric in fig. 4a has a repeated extension movement which Cameron (1947) described as "acting through or reliving a special circumscribed rôle with a constant theme . . . with repetition it may become the preferred habitual mode of escape from conflict". Such "depersonalization" occurs as a result of muscular hypertension, in which postural awareness is diminished; the physiotherapist in fig. 4b, who is doing a postural exercise, seems unlikely to improve her muscular awareness by behaving in this manner.

In time muscle is not only itself modified into recurrent patterns of misuse, but it modifies the bones and joints on which it works and the circulatory system which traverses it. As an anthropologist, Hooton (1936) put it: "The bony framework has been warped and cramped and stretched in one part or another in accordance with variations in the stresses and strains put upon it by different postures." It has sometimes been suggested by orthopaedic surgeons that repetitive movements do not produce lasting deformity, but this is clearly not the case. Fig. 5, for example, shows a young javelin thrower whose repeated movements have led to a sideways curvature; fig. 6 shows a physical-training student who specialized in right-handed throwing activities. Her rotary twist at rest is apparent from the breast and arm position.

Alexander's concept of misuse is, however, more especially concerned with smaller, persistent postures and gestures which gradually leave their mark on the organism until the resting state becomes deformed. "Man is not bent because he is old, but because his unconscious defences have bent him," was a view of Booth (1937) in a study of personality and chronic arthritis. Many people, indeed, will persist in a misuse even when it is producing pain. I have found it interesting in my outpatient clinics to ask patients

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who complain, say, of buttockpain to describe to me the quality of their pain whilst they lie relaxed, face downward on the bed. As they describe the quality of their pain, they almost always set up a state of muscular contraction in the painful buttock, and even when



Fig. 5. Left-handed javelin-thrower, showing development of lateral curvature during movement

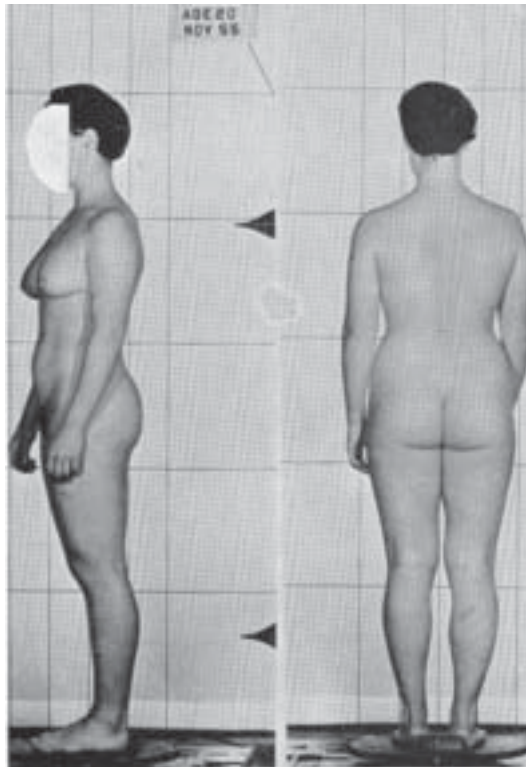


Fig. 6. Rotation of right shoulder and breast