



## JOSEPH BERKE, M.D.

I found medical school to be a strange and unnerving experience. Strange because I often felt lost amid the heavy load of academic and clinical work. Unnerving because I hated the way that the patients tended to be treated as objects, bloods to be taken, stomachs to be prodded, diagnoses to be made, rather than as human beings whose lives and suffering needed to be respected. The same applied to the students to whom some senior staff related with contempt and disdain. But not everyone was like that. I have fond memories of Ernest Scharrer, Alfred Angrist, Lewis Fraad and especially the psychiatrist, John Thompson. He was my mentor and, dare I say friend, who nourished me with his unusual and creative perspectives on working with very disturbed individuals.

Along the way I stumbled on *The Divided Self*, by the Scottish psychoanalyst, R.D. Laing. The book sang to me and I decided to go to London and work with him. How I did so is a story and a half. In 1964 I arranged for Laing to lecture in New York and introduced him to John Thompson. Laing told me that John was the only person whom he ever met who knew more about schizophrenia than he did.

I moved to London in 1965 when I was invited to join Laing's Kingsley Hall community. Later I was joined by Leon Redler '62, Morton Schatzman, '62 and Jerome Liss, '64. When Kingsley Hall closed in 1970, Schatzman, I, and our wives established the Arbours Association to provide shelter and support for people in emotional distress and as an alternative to hospital. "Arbours" is the English equivalent of Sukkah, a place of respite from spiritual and emotional wandering. Over the years the Arbours established three long-stay therapeutic communities, a Crisis Centre, a training program and psychotherapy clinic. I retired from the Crisis Centre, of which I was the founder and director, in 2010.

Since the 1960's I have written many papers and books on politics, religion, culture and particularly, psychology. *Mary Barnes: Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness* (by Barnes and Berke) describes the voyage of a 41 year old nurse who felt that the only way she could become whole was to regress to a fetal state. She did this at Kingsley Hall where I fed her with a baby bottle, cleaned her when she smeared her faeces and encouraged her to swap faeces for crayons and paint. Eventually Mary became a noted artist, writer and mystic. The book was adopted as a stage and radio play and has been optioned as a feature film. I have also written on "Psychoanalysis and Kabbalah" and have just completed a study of Freud's Jewish identity which will be published as, *Freud and the Rebbe*, in the fall.

While I was at AECM, I enjoyed the kosher food and opportunity to take off Jewish holidays. In retrospect I would have appreciated learning about the Jewish perspective on medicine such as in the writings of Maimonides (the Rambam). I myself have been very moved by The Lubavitcher Rebbe, whom I met in 1992.

My former wife, Roberta, is a poet and writer. We have two children, Joshua, who is now Professor of Neurophysiology at the University of Michigan and Debbie, who is a performance artist and organizer of the Glastonbury Festival. From them I have five grandsons. My present wife, Shree, is a psychotherapist and healer. The picture includes my golden retriever, Teva, who often serves as my co-therapist. Much more information is on my website: [www.jhberke.com](http://www.jhberke.com).