

ADLER'S PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

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Michael R. Mac Millan
Saint Mary's University
School of Education.
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INTRODUCTION

Modern theories concerning the deep sources of human motivation and the unconscious mind derive in the main from the work of three men: Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, and Alfred Adler. By general consent the originating genius was Freud, and psycho-analytic theory as developed by him, provided a basis for the theories of Jung and Adler. Nevertheless, the doctrines of Jung and Adler are each of distinctive interest and importance. Teachers, physicians and social workers have often said that Adler's Psychology can be more readily turned to practical account in their work than can the principles of Freud or the principles of Jung. It is with this thought in mind that I selected Adler for this study.

Adler is best known for his discovery and description of the "inferiority complex," and for his analysis of compensatory processes. The systematic and ingenious development of the theory of inferiority, and of compensation provides a major thesis of the Adlerian system. Individual Psychology, as the Adlerian system is described, is essentially an expression of the in-

dividuality of its creator. In Adler's own life story we can see his own "style of life."

Alfred Adler was born in 1870 in a suburb of Vienna called Penzing. His father was a corn merchant and this fact is significant because it created a situation which put Alfred in touch with both country and city life as well as people of all walks of life. In spite of a sickly childhood he possessed great physical and mental powers. With this strength was associated a love of beauty and a protective tenderness toward all weaker things. He took great pleasure in nature, in towns and people. "There is no music I prefer to the traffic of a great street full of human beings moving about their daily business."¹ His emphasis with his patients was always focused on getting them to join their group.

It is certain that he came very early to his decision to be a physician and that he experienced none of those changes of mind through which the ordinary child attains to a final choice of profession.

¹Phyllis Bottome, Alfred Adler Apostle of Freedom, 2nd ed., (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1957), p. 27.

His own sickly childhood, coupled with certain experiences of the fact of death, were undoubtedly contributing factors to his decision. As a medical man, Adler swiftly gained a reputation as a diagnostician. His extreme sensitivity to the sufferings of others was a contributory factor in urging him on to the plane of psychiatry. This sensitivity brought him his psychological insight and his power of identification with others.

It is the purpose of this paper to show what there is in the theory of Adler for educational uses and how this applies in home and school and finally what this theory offers the teacher for more efficient classroom operation.

CHAPTER 1

ADLER'S INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR EDUCATIONAL USES

Individual Psychology begins with the assumption of the unity of the individual. With this approach an attempt is made to obtain a picture of this unified personality regarded as a variant of life-manifestations and forms of expression. This method of looking upon man's psychic life is by no means new or unique, however, it can be especially useful particularly in the study of child psychology.

The actions of an individual are directly a result of preconceived goals. If this were not so, all activity would consist of uncontrolled gropings and we would be unintegrated in every aspect of our motion. This is suggested by the attempts at walking made by a small child. It seems certain that before the first step has been taken the objective of the child's movement has already been determined. In the same way, all psychic activities are given a direction by means of previously determined goals. The conclusion to be drawn from the study of any personality viewed from the standpoint of Individual Psychology leads us to this proposition: "Every psychic

phenomenon, if it is to give us any understanding of a person, can only be grasped and understood if regarded as a preparation for some goal."¹ This goal may be real or imagined depending on the needs of the individual concerned. Adler speaks of this goal again.

Since life in any given society, life without any of the preconceptions of science, has always been under the ban of the question "whither", we are warranted in definitely stating that, scientific views to the contrary notwithstanding, no man has ever made a judgment about an event without endeavouring to strain towards the point which seems to bind together all the psychic manifestations of an individual; even to an imagined goal if necessary.²

The discovery of the goals of an individual leads us to an intimate knowledge of him. It is only then that the parts may be understood.

Adler states that he does not wish to approach the psychic life of the individual with a dry formula, as the Freudian school attempts to do. His most general presupposition is that the psyche has as its objective the goal of superiority, to gain control over an object or a person becomes the prime goal of life. To gain control, a person may proceed directly by being obstinate or cruel or perhaps, the individual has learned by

¹Alfred Adler, The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology, trans. P. Radin Ph.D. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1923), p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 2.

experience to resort to by-paths and circuitous routes to gain victory by obedience, submission, mildness, and modesty. Traits of character are adjusted to whichever of the life plans the person chooses. This superiority goal arises not from reality but rather is fictitious. It introduces into our life a fighting and hostile tendency and robs us of simplicity of feelings. Many psychologists have attributed the cause of this tendency to heredity or environment or both.

Heredity and environment are the twin pillars of every psychology but they are not the causes of behavior, but mere data. It is on the development of the psyche and on the manner in which its activity interacts with these data that our attention must be focused in order to explain human behavior. A child cannot lie passively until understanding and judgment become ripe. He must and does venture forth and selects from impressions a course of behavior. Most marked attitudes of man can be traced back to an origin in childhood.

Towards the end of the nursing period, when the child acquires the ability to carry out independent purposeful actions which are not merely directed towards the gratification of appetite, when he takes his place in the family and begins to adapt himself to his environment, he already possesses abilities, psychic gestures and preparations. Besides this, his conduct has acquired

Whether he struggles actively or remains passive, whether he rules or serves, whether he is sociable or egotistical, brave or cowardly, whatever be the variations in rhythm or temperament, whether he is easily moved or apathetic, the child makes his decision for the whole of his life and develops his law of movement in harmony, as he supposes, with his environment. He conceives of this environment and reacts to it in his manner. The course towards the goal differs in every individual, varying in countless details.¹

In his study of the question of perception, Adler is brought face to face with one of the main problems of philosophy, that of appearance and reality. From time immemorial philosophers have been asking themselves: What can we know? How far is human perception capable of apprehending the truth of things? How greatly is truth falsified by our senses? The answer which Adler gives to the appearance-reality question is in the tradition of the neo-Kantian school. The existence of a reality external to ourselves is accepted but this reality is too vast and too complicated to be grasped as a whole and our adaptation to it can at best be an approximation. "Human beings," said Adler, "live in the realm of meanings.

¹Alfred Adler, Social Interest, A Challenge To Mankind, trans. J. Linton and R. Vaughn, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1938), p. 75.

We experience reality through the meaning we give to it; not as itself, but as something interpreted."¹ The transforming power of the human psyche is so great that it must be considered to play the predominant role in the shaping of our lives. The man who suffers from hydrophobia behaves in just the same manner as if there was truly a cause for his fear. A suicide finds death preferable to a life which he assumes to be hopeless; he would act in the same fashion if his life were really hopeless. Thus we reach the conclusion that everyone possesses an idea about himself and his problems, a life pattern that keeps hold of him without his necessarily understanding it. "This law of movement arises within the narrow compass of childhood."²

A person's law of movement is manifested in what Adler called his "style of life".

If we look at a pine tree growing in the valley, we will notice that it grows differently from one on top of a mountain. It is the same kind of tree but it has two different styles of life. The style of life of a tree is the individuality of the tree expressing itself and moulding itself in an environment."³

¹Alfred Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, ed. A. Porter, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1932), p. 3.

²Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, pp. 26-27.

³Alfred Adler, The Science of Living, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1930), p. 98.

In somewhat the same manner, each person expresses himself in a purely individual fashion. What he observes and fails to observe, how he interprets events, his slightest gestures and mannerisms are all uniquely his own and are expressions of his style of life. There may occur on the surface contradictions in a person's behavior but this could be accounted for by our failure to understand or grasp the unique life-style. I believe Adler chose the name Individual Psychology for his science in order to emphasize the fact that each person is unique and that we can only understand him if we approach him as such.

In examining the therapeutic and educational aspects of Individual Psychology we find that it is fruitless to treat a symptom as a single expression, we must discover the mistake made in the whole style of life, in the way the mind has interpreted its experiences, in the meaning it has given to life. Styles of life are thus the proper subject-matter of psychology and the material for investigation are to be found there.

In Individual Psychology we are considering the psyche itself, the unified mind; we are examining the meaning which individuals give to the world and to themselves, the goals, the directions of their strivings, and the approaches they make to the problems of life.¹

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, pp. 47-48.

Adler reduces all the questions of life to three major problems: the problems of communal life, work and love. These three problems might be compared with what other psychologists have termed the three principal instincts: the herd, nutrition, and sex instincts. For Adler, these are not instincts from within but are problems with which our existence on earth confronts us. "They arise from the inseparable bond that of necessity links men together for association, for the provision of livelihood and for the care of offspring."¹

These three problems are closely related so that a solution to one helps the other. Conversely, a failure in one can result in a loss to the others. "When an individual fails to square himself with one or more of these inexorable demands of life, beware of feelings of abasement, beware of the consequent neurosis."²

The first five years of a child's life are extremely important in shaping his unique personality and in determining in what fashion he will handle life's problems.

During the scientific era of psychology, personality has been variously defined: in terms of several typal-systems; e.g., introverts, ambiverts, and extoverts (Jung); asthenic, pynic, athletic, and

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, pp. 7-8.

²Alfred Adler, Problems of Neurosis, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1929), p. 20.

dysplastic types (Kretschmer); normal, hysteroid, cycloid, schizoid, and epileptoid types (Rosanoff); cerebronic, somatogenic, and viscerogenic types (Sheldon); in terms of developmental-descriptive concepts (Gesell); in terms of psychological traits or telonomic trends (Allport, Cattell and others); in terms of various resolutions of a dominating purpose in life, e.g. trying to overcome a feeling of inferiority (Adler); in terms of a consistent complex of self regarding attitudes, or ego structures (Lecky, Sherif, and Cantril, Snygg and Combs,); and in terms of a dynamic complex of psychological needs, motor perceptual systems, and characteristic modes of conflict resolution, (Freud, Lewin, Murray).¹

In examining these representative interpretations of personality it is easy to appreciate the variety of types of the personality construct. Adler's approach to personality is through compensation for weaknesses organic, physical, or intellectual.

Janet was perhaps the first to recognize this weakness. In his "sentiment d'incompletude" (a sense of insufficiency-my own brackets) we may recognize the origin of Adler's famous "inferiority feeling", the basic factor, in his view, in every neurosis. A neurosis may be defined as a failure in compensation and a retreat from the problems of life. As long as a child is training himself towards socially useful forms of compensation for his weaknesses, he is fitting himself to cope with the demands of life and he is on the road to correct adaptation.

¹George Thompson, Child Psychology, ed. L. Carmichael, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952), p. 594.

"The efforts and training of the first four or five years of life are decisive for the child's main sphere of action in adult life."¹

Every neurosis can be understood as an attempt to free oneself from a feeling of inferiority in order to gain a feeling of superiority. The path of the neurosis usually leads to the isolation of the patient where he lives a life of imaginations and phantasies which free him from all responsibilities. These illnesses give him a substitute for his original hazardous goal of superiority. This escape is really a counter-compulsion, a revolt, which serves the purpose of directing the patient's attention away from his life problems. In this manner, he provides anxiety and compulsion situations, sleeplessness, swooning, perversions, hallucinations, various complexes, etc. all of which are to serve him as excuses. Logic, the will to live, love, human sympathy, co-operation and language all arise out of needs of human communal life. The neurotic individual striving for isolation and lusting for power is automatically against communal life or social feeling in any shape or form. Human relations in all circumstances represent a struggle. The method of comparison (our own attitude in their place, attitudes

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, p. 242.

of other neurotics, the patient's attitude and behavior especially in what he is side-stepping in life) allow us to arrive at some conception of the power lines along which an individual strives to attain superiority.¹

To cure a neurosis and a psychosis it is necessary to change completely the whole up-bringing of the patient and turn him definitely and unconditionally back upon human society with a view to a better handling and adjustment of the three great problems.

Neurosis, in Adler's view, is a style of behavior which can arise out of an uncompensated feeling of inferiority. The neurotic may have been pampered, neglected or suffered physical handicap when he was a child. These might only be contributing factors in the formation of a neurosis. The origin of the neurosis lies not in objective circumstances but in the person's own subjective evaluation of his circumstances. That is, every neurotic has an inferiority feeling in common, where they differ is in the kind of situation in which they feel themselves unable to continue on the useful side of life.

The neurotic carries his feelings of inferiority constantly with him. He has been constantly drawing comparisons between himself and others, at first perhaps with his father, as the strongest of the family, sometimes with his mother, his brothers and sisters, later with every person with whom he

¹Adler, Individual Psychology, pp. 23-24.

comes in contact. In this way one finds that the neurotic always aperceives after the manner of a contrast.¹

Feelings of superiority, unrelated as they are to any actual achievements, may reach heights which Adler described as godlike. The loftiest goals are to be found in the most severe cases, that is, the psychoses.

Unlike psychoses, neurosis is only a partial failure in adaptation. The neurotic has not failed in all three problems of life. A person is not a failure because he chooses to disregard one of life's problems; he is a failure only if he experiences himself as a failure. It is only when a person feels that he is inept to cope with one of the major problems that his personality is thrown into disharmony.

The goal of personal superiority is such that it invariably magnifies one of the three problems of life out of all proportion. We find that a person's ideal of success becomes unnaturally limited to social notoriety, to business success or sexual conquests. Thus we see the social careerist, fighting and jealous, the business magnate, extending his interest at the expense of others, and the amorous intriguer, the would be Don Juan. Each disturbs the harmony of his life by thus leaving many necessary demands unsatisfied, and then tries to compensate by still more frantic strivings in his narrowed sphere of action.²

¹Adler, The Neurotic Constitution, pp. 7-9.

²Adler, Problems of Neurosis, p. 130.

A person may be neurotic only in certain aspects or before certain situations but wherever the neurosis is in question, we will find all traits and aspects of personality geared to forward the neurotic goal.

When a person's circumstances change we see tested his real power to co-operate with life. Adler called this the "test situation." An example to illustrate this would be the case of a man who falls into neurosis after the death of his wife, perhaps he had been interested only in his wife, not in human beings in general. He may even have been interested in his work primarily in relation to her and not for the work itself or what good it brought to others. All of this would reveal how narrow had been the limits within which he was prepared to co-operate with life. Life without her would be useless, apart from her he had no other social interest. Test situations confront the human being all through life; in childhood with loss of attention, in school with examinations and necessary allowance for the feelings of others, at puberty with the three great problems of adult life, a loss or a change in jobs, in marriage, in middle age and old age. Adler says that ours is an age where "present performance" is of utmost importance. Even in old age the test situation is severe.¹

¹Alfred Adler, Understanding Human Nature, trans. W. B. Wolfe, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1928), pp. 144-145.

The grandparents are always in the position of having to prove - what they should not have to prove - that they are still alive and count in the world. In trying to prove this they are always interfering with the education of their grandchildren. They pamper the children terribly, for it is only the children who will take notice of them.¹

¹Alfred Adler, The Education of Children, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1930), p. 202.

CHAPTER 11

APPLICATIONS OF ADLERIAN THEORY TO FAMILY AND SCHOOL LIFE

The child.----- Preparation for life, whether it is right or wrong, starts from the beginning of the child's life with his mother. The child works continually. Daily he becomes stronger at acquiring dexterity in handling objects, learning first to crawl, then to stand, then to walk.

Each point successfully reached is for him an achievement which brings with it the courage to make a further advance. In most cases the expanding mental world proceeds pretty much at the same rate as his other capacities, and his goal of compensation marches an even pace or two ahead of him.¹

Success, in compensation for inferiority, breaths more success but failure deepens the inferiority and lessens the chance for compensating in the future. The gap between the goal and the level of attainment grows with a feeling of helplessness.

Adler distinguished three types of children in whom this failure in adaptive training may occur: those with defective organs, those who are pampered, and those who are neglected. Children with imperfect

¹Lewis Way, Alfred Adler. An Introduction To His Psychology, (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1956) p. 99.

organs have difficulty in fulfilling the demands of the environment and the shock of all this is usually felt by the mind. These children are often avoided or ridiculed by others. "These are all circumstances in which they may turn in upon themselves, lose hope of playing a useful part in our common life, and consider themselves personally humiliated by the world."¹

The second type, the pampered child, is granted prominence without working to secure it. He has been trained to expect and not to give. "When he has difficulties before him, he has only one method of meeting them -- to make demands on other people."²

The third situation, the neglected child, is one who never found another trustworthy person. Such a child has never known what love and co-operation can be. He makes an interpretation of life which does not include these friendly forces. It will be understood that when he faces the problems of life he will over-rate their difficulty and under-rate his own capacity to meet them with the aid and goodwill of others. He has found society cold towards him and he will expect it always to be cold. Especially, he will not see that he can win affection

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, pp. 14-15.

²Ibid., pp. 15-18.

and esteem by actions which are useful to others. He will thus be suspicious of others and unable to trust himself. There is really no experience which can take the place of disinterested affection. The first task of the mother is to give the child the experience of another trustworthy person.¹

While the child needs all the support and encouragement which love can bring him, Adler has pointed out that it must be a love which does not interfere with his own self-training. Children at a very early age can acquire the habit of relying on another instead of relying on their own efforts. Often a mother seeing a child attempting to button a garment, for instance, will intervene to spare him. This practice, if repeated often, could promote an attitude of too much reliance on others.

Adler felt that one of the worst injustices committed against a child was to pamper him. It means primarily, to do for the child what the child could and should do for himself. Once pampered, the child will use his weakness to wield control over adults instead of control over things. This pampering may continue up to the age of puberty, but at some time or other, it is almost inevitable that the child will lose his over-protected position and be forced to face the world alone

¹Ibid., pp. 17-18. ibid. p. 105.

and unprepared. Actually it is at this point that the child becomes neglected. The neglected child will perhaps show more actively aggressive traits than the pampered child, who has learned to rely upon expressions of inability and weakness to gain its ends. From here on, the behavior of the pampered child can only continue in a vicious circle. He has failed to adjust and this leaves him with a sense of inferiority uncompensated. Comparison of his lack of achievement with the achievement of other children in the family and lack of attention from his parents help to kindle the fires of inferiority. He has failed at self development and will continue to exploit his weakness for all it is worth.

The goal of emphasizing weakness is logically incompatible with the goal of self-training. He must therefore turn aside more and more from the road to adaptation, becoming always more weak, more anxious and timid, and more dominating. His is now a road which, unless or until he himself understands and corrects the mistake he has made, must lead him towards illness as a refuge from the problems set by life.¹

Family influences.----- From the moment of birth and for many months to follow the mother plays an overwhelmingly important role in a baby's life. She is his first bridge to social life and in every incident she is providing an opportunity for the child to like her or dislike her, to co-operate or reject co-operation.

¹Way, Alfred Adler, p. 106.

It may appear here that the experiences of a child are most important and possibly dictate his actions. We are back to a fundamental view of Individual Psychology (part 1-p. 8. my brackets) that is, it is not the child's experiences that are most important but rather, the conclusions which he draws from his experiences. This is the data which will directly affect his development. The relationships of a mother to her family are not simple. A mother is intricately related to her children, to her husband, and to the whole social life around her. After securing the co-operation of the child with herself, her next task is to spread his interest towards his father and finally to the social life around him.

If the mother becomes occupied only with interesting the child in herself, later he will resist attempts to interest himself in others. Any interest shown by the mother to the husband or others will be felt by the child as a deprivation.

In the Freudian theory of the Oedipus Complex, it is supposed that children have a tendency to fall in love with their mothers and to wish to marry them and hate their fathers and wish to kill them. Such a mistake could never arise if we understood children.¹

The so called Oedipus Complex could appear only in a child who wished to occupy his mother's whole attention

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, p. 126.

and to get rid of every one else. This is most certainly not a sexual desire but rather is a desire to subjugate the mother, to control her as a servant. This situation could only develop if the mother lacked the skill required to interest the child in the father, the other members of the family and people in general.

When a child, whose mother has bound him only to herself, is placed in a situation where he is no longer connected with her, trouble always begins. When he goes to school, for example, or plays with other children his goal will always be to remain with her and he will resist attempts to be separated from her. A child quickly becomes experienced in finding out the means by which he can best attract attention. He may weep or fall sick or have outbursts of temper, or fight with anyone in sight just to be noticed.

Where the marriage is unhappy, the situation for the child is dangerous.

The first co-operation among other people which the child experiences is the co-operation of his parents; and if their co-operation is poor, they cannot hope to teach him to be co-operative himself. Moreover, it is from the marriage of their parents that children gain their first idea of marriage and the partnership of the sexes.¹

¹Ibid., p. 133.

If co-operation between father and mother is attained the co-operation of children among themselves is almost assured. It is particularly in this relationship that the mother and father's parental skills are put to the test. In personality, basically, their children will all be different. If one child is a thinker and is frequently introspective it will be up to the parents to provide opportunities for him to think as well as guide him to play. A second child may be brave and daring and like to handle material things and experiment with them. The skillful parent will recognize this difference while the child is very young and make allowance for his human resources.

Adler likened a family to a constellation. The father and mother being the sun and moon and the children smaller and larger, brilliant and less brilliant bodies grouped about them as stars. From each star the constellation will have a different perspective. The eldest child was at one time a single star and he must reconcile himself to sharing his position with other stars. All the stars will choose the mother first and their first evidences of superiority will be recognized by her. It will be up to the mother to guide these strivings and channel them.

It is the striving for superiority which is behind every human creation and it is the source of all contributions which are made to our culture. The whole of human life proceeds along this great line of action from below to above, from minus to plus, from defeat to victory. The only individuals who can really meet and master the problems of life, however, are those who show in their striving a tendency to enrich all others, who go ahead in such a way that others benefit also.¹

Adler has advanced the theory that children's behavior and development are highly influenced by their feelings of inferiority. The struggle and the course of action of every child to reach a vantage position is the key to his personality. In order to master the great problems of life, human co-operation is a necessity. Parents have the responsibility and the privilege of guiding the conduct, ideals, goals, actions and personalities of their children towards human co-operation.

School influences.----- When a child first goes to school, he is facing a new test in social life; and this test will reveal any mistakes in his development so far. Now he must co-operate in a wider field than before. Adler says, it is the task of school teachers to notice the difficulties of children and to correct the mistakes of parents where possible. Teachers are the natural intermediaries between Individual Psychology and the lay

¹Ibid., p. 69

public because they have a trained understanding of the problems which concern it.

Just as Individual Psychology does not offer the mother any rigid prescriptions for upbringing, so it does not offer the teacher any one thorough method to solve its pedagogical problems. It suggests only an attitude to the problems which face the teacher. The suggestions made may be used in high schools, colleges, or kindergartens.

The teacher's sphere of activity is the classroom and the attitude that he adopts toward his class is most significant. Individual Psychology would say that over and above its purpose of imparting instruction, the classroom can have the purpose of educating the child in the art of living with his fellows.

We no longer wish to train children only to make money or to take a position in the industrial system. We want fellow-men. We want equal independent and responsible collaboration in the common work of culture.¹

Interest is the handiest tool of the skillful teacher. In order to attract the interest of a child, the teacher will try to understand what the child's interests have been and convince him that he can be successful at this new interest. This can only be done

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, p. 157.

if the teacher is truly interested in his students. Without this interest there could only be rare successes. In order to enlist interest and co-operation, the teacher must use all the arts of his profession and in many instances let his imagination run to the fullest.

It will also become apparent to a teacher, if it is not already known, that order in a group situation is a prerequisite to learning. Adler did not consider it realistic to eliminate punishment entirely in order to set a desirable tone in a classroom. However, there is evidence that the need for punishment diminishes as the co-operative spirit develops. Where a teacher wields only personal authority over the class any child who can win a minor point against the teacher would be a hero in the eyes of his fellow classmates. The strategy of the teacher could be to turn mischievous offences against his personal authority into offences against the class as a whole. If he has succeeded in getting their interest aroused, this interrupter will be looked down upon. The class will become impatient with anyone who threatens to hold up the progress of the group. This disciplinary method could prove especially effective at the high-school level where children are of adolescent age and acceptance by their peers is of such great importance.

There can be found in all school classes children who - to use current terminology - have no "aptitude" for arithmetic, and who constantly interfere with the other pupils owing to their own defective accomplishments. We are all familiar with the peace disturber who derives pleasure from disturbing and hindering the work of the class, with the buffoon who is ready to play a silly trick at the decisive moment and in this way to paralyze the energy of the other members of the class, with the bully and similar types. It is these intractable children that render the solution of the problem of social education so uncommonly difficult.¹

To change these intractable children, to incorporate them into society and make them useful must be the aim of all teachers.

If a child fails to adjust to school life and lacks co-operation with teachers and classmates the worst approach for a teacher would be to criticize and scold. This method would certainly show him that he was right in disliking school. It is precisely at this point that a teacher should make use of his psychological training and create for the child object lessons which teach the child that this kind of behavior is injurious to the whole class. This whole approach to discipline hinges on the capability of the teacher in bringing about interest in learning. If the child suffers a defeat the good teacher will bring him back. "One who knows the part played in the life of a child by the experience of a defeat in

¹Alfred Adler, Guiding The Child, trans. B. Ginzburg, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1930), p. 68.

the tasks will apply all his efforts to make such defeats impossible."¹

For Adler, the greatest factor in the development of mental faculties is interest. In order to create interest and keep it, teachers should get to know their pupils and discuss with them their own matters as well as academic matters.

No one can know the minds of children so well as a teacher who lives with them and works with them. He sees so many types of children and, if he is skillful, establishes a connection with each of them. It rests with him whether the mistakes a child has made in family life shall continue or be corrected. Like the mother, he is the guardian of the future of mankind and the service he can render is incalculable.²

¹Adler and associates, Guiding The Child, p. 70.

²Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, p. 181.

CHAPTER 111

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF ADLERIAN THEORY FOR BETTER CLASSROOM OPERATION

Adler's theory for living hinges on social feeling and co-operation among all human beings. The roots of social feeling spring from the mother, the father, the immediate family, and relatives and friends, in that order. As the child moves from one social realm to another, the demands for co-operation grow into a wider field than ever before.

Under our present educational system we generally find that when children first come to school they are more prepared for competition than for co-operation; and the training in competition continues throughout their schooldays. This is a disaster for the child; whether he goes ahead and strains to beat the other children or falls behind and gives up the struggle he will be primarily interested in himself.

As the family should be a unit, with each member an equal part of the whole, so too, should the class. When they are trained in this way, children are really interested in one another and enjoy co-operation. I have seen many "difficult" children whose attitude was entirely changed through the interest and co-operation of their fellow-children.¹

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, p. 163.

If the teacher is to enlist this co-operation he must use great finesse and strategy. He is the leader who sets the tone for learning. If the class is to be co-operative, it must see a goal that interests it. A goal cannot be imposed simply by the will of the teacher, it can be attained if some measure of self-direction and class participation in planning is permitted.

At one time the normal method by which a teacher imparted information was by directly lecturing and demonstrating his subject matter and then questioning the pupils about it. A modern method and the present trend, is to set the pupils a problem the answer to which they must puzzle out in discussion either amongst themselves or with their teacher. This method may be characterized as the active approach to teaching, since it requires the pupils to arrive at results by their own efforts, in contrast to the passive method, whereby the answers are given to them by the teacher to be studied. The teacher's role, in the active method, is one of guiding the discussion and encouraging the pupils to produce from their store of knowledge whatever material contributes to the solution of the problem. (This Adlerian influence on teaching was experimented with

successfully in the Vienna State Schools under the leadership of Professors Oscar Spiel and Ferdinand Birnbaum).¹

Adler's view of the active teaching method was one which was absolutely teacher-centered. There are indications in this age, that soon much information on problems will be supplied to the pupil by the assistance of computers. Teaching machines are already available which present material to students, ask questions about the material, and check the answers. Some machines do not even present the information in the same order to every student, the order depends upon the answers of the individual student.

Now think of a computer connected with twenty or thirty such machines, each working a different student. It can monitor the entire situation. It can receive information about the progress of all the students, analyze and compare records, and evaluate the effectiveness of different ways of presenting information. It can bring learning problems to the attention of the teacher, who will have time for individuals requiring special help. Routines are as much of a burden to teachers as to other workers, and machines will play a major role in classrooms of the future.²

It is difficult to conceive of Adler's reaction to such a mechanistic view of learning. I suspect that his

¹Ibid., pp. 163-164.

²John Pfeiffer, The Thinking Machine, (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1962), p. 234.

attitude would be one of acceptance of these aids insofar as these machines would handle routine chores and leave the teacher free to do more important work.

It has already been suggested that Adler considered interest to be the handiest tool of the teaching profession. (Chapter 11, p. 27.) In this light, I feel that the active method of teaching, described above, is superior as a means of creating a learning situation for pupils as well as training them to think for themselves. It relates book knowledge to practical values and gives all pupils an opportunity to share intellectually in the solution of various problems at their own level.

The major difficulties in the active method are involved with teaching the pupils to speak their own minds and to listen when another is speaking.

Your children must realize that there are two helpful ways they may participate in a group discussion; either by speaking or listening. By far the greater part of discussion is giving attention to whomever is speaking. To the less aggressive child this comes naturally and he may never speak unless you make a special note of the fact that he needs guidance in expressing himself as a member of the group.¹

¹Edith M. Leonard, Dorothy D. VanDeman, Lillian E. Miles, Foundations of Learning in Childhood Education, (Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1963), p. 287.

Adler speaks of this problem where he says:

The same results will be found if we investigate in regard to listening, and you can understand the little progress made by a child or a grown-up if he does not listen interestedly, if he is not attentive, and does not connect himself in hearing sounds and words and so on, and we know how important it is for the development of one of the most important functions of the human mind -- that of speaking.¹

The passive method of teaching avoids, of course, all of these difficulties. Nevertheless, it is in the process of overcoming the difficulties raised by the active method that the Adlerian ideal of the class as an object lesson in co-operation can be realized and the children taught self-control, tolerance for each other's views and opinions, readiness to accept proper criticism and equality of contribution. It seems to me that if education is to be something more than mere instruction, the difficulties of the active method must not only be faced but welcomed.

There are many types of discussion that draw upon the resources of the individuals within the groups. Some examples of such discussion topics are:

1. Setting up a scientific experiment and following it through.
2. Solving a problem in Mathematics.

¹Alfred Adler and associates, Individual Psychology and Social Problems, (London: C.W. Daniel Co., 1932), p. 13.

And on this point we say that it can only be done by education: education in the broadest sense. Therefore such an explanation as this today means putting back education on its right throne again, against all other views, against the views of heredity and environment. We are all responsible, we educators. And we say that ability to co-operate can be and must be trained. It is as with a subject like history or geography, if a person is not trained in geography, and would solve a geographical question, you will see that he fails.¹

Adler did not consider it realistic to suppose that there would not be disciplinary problems in the active teaching approach. Rather than taking the school child's problems in isolation, he would rest his belief on the totality of the human being. In all cases he would advise teachers to examine the hidden motives which have been influencing the child, either consciously or unconsciously. After these had been sought out and brought to light, a way out of the difficulty would be pointed out to the child, once this was made clear and comprehensible the child would cease to cause trouble to his surroundings.

Individual Psychology offers a teacher a better understanding of the behavior of children and human nature in general. A child must feel that he is important and necessary and that he belongs as every adult does. The

¹Adler and associates, Individual Psychology and Social Problems, p. 21.

problem child is simply taking the wrong approach to compensation for his feelings of inferiority and he must be taught that there are socially acceptable means of reaching the same goals. The basis of his educability lies in the striving to compensate for his weakness.

The psychologically trained teacher will recognize movements and gestures as evidence of general attitudes. An understanding of inferiority and superiority feelings and compensations can be of great assistance to a teacher who is attempting to lead a class through the paths of learning. With students who suffer from shyness, embarrassment and feelings of guilt, the teacher can find the inferiority complex on the surface; these children readily admit their weakness and their inability to look after themselves. What they hide from view, of course, is their heightened goal of supremacy, their desire to be first at all costs. The loud child, who boasts continuously, on the other hand, displays its superiority complex at first view. If we examined its behavior rather than its words, we would soon recognize the unadmitted feelings of inferiority.¹

¹Adler, What Life Should Mean To You, p. 54.

Teachers can train themselves to recognize the symptoms and danger signals displayed by a child with a warped style of life. The successful teacher will attack the root of the problem and not the symptom.

When a child is backward in arithmetic, or has had bad school reports, it is useless to concentrate our attention on these points and try to improve him in these special expressions. Perhaps he wants to bother the teacher; or even to escape from school altogether by getting himself expelled. If we check him at one point, he will find a new way to reach his goal.¹

The root of such a problem often lies in the attitude to life, and if this is discovered by a teacher the opportunity to correct and improve the life-style of a child presents itself.

The gist of Adler's theory of organ inferiority, from the purely educational side, is that the weakness of the organs will be reflected in their functioning. It may well be that one of the sense organs is particularly developed. Some people take in impressions chiefly by means of the ears, others by means of the eyes. The present extensive use of audio-visual aids in our school systems is possibly an extension of Adler's view on the use of the sensitive faculties. There has even been a classification of people into

¹Ibid., p. 63.

visual, auditive, olfactory, and other types according to whether they make predominant use of one organ or another. On this point Adler had this to say.

We must find out which sense organ is the most used and what type of sensations fascinate the child most. There are many children who are better trained in seeing and looking, others in listening, still others in moving, etc. If a teacher finds a child of the visual type, he should understand that he will have things easier in subjects in which he has to use his eyes—as, for example, geography. It will be better for him to see than to listen to a lecture.¹

The importance of organ inferiorities transcends their merely medical significance. Historical examples are numerous of outstanding men who persisted in their lifetime to overcome a serious bodily deficiency. The classical example was Beethoven. Mozart had a malformation of the ear. Michelangelo and Leonardo were left-handed. Napoleon, Nelson, Wellington, Lloyd George were all short men. The short man, in many instances, desires to be greater than all the others. The short student often develops a high degree of combativeness and ends up as a leader, or an orator, or at least in a heightened position. Alexander Pope had much of the spiteful character of a person who is weak and deformed but at the same

¹Adler, The Education of Children, p. 185.

time an exquisite aesthetic sensibility. Socrates' excessive ugliness is well known, nevertheless he combined the deepest social feeling with the purest sense of ethical beauty.

In all cases noted here, we see that the inferiorities initiated strivings which carried the person from weakness to success to over-compensation. From the psychological point of view, it is important for the teacher to recognize that the significance of an inferiority, physical or psychical, is in the manner in which a child experiences it. What the child with weak sight often experiences is that, sitting at the back of the class, he cannot see the demonstrations which the teacher is making on the blackboard and he may therefore feel himself to be more stupid than the other children. The psychologically trained teacher can recognize these organ deficiencies and their effects, and help the child regain his confidence.

I have tried, in this paper, to show some of the Adlerian psychological insights and understandings that may be helpful to teachers. Adler

realized that there was no hope of reaching all parents and helping them to avoid mistakes in educating their children. He did hope, however, to reach all teachers and through them all the children.

Individual Psychology has as its subjects the whole of mankind-- not only families, school classes, but nations. War, punishment, prejudice, hatred, neurosis, suicide are all to be looked upon as the results of inferiority complexes. Adler had a dynamic belief in human responsibility and he developed the view that the meaning of life is to be found in contribution and co-operation.

There are no simple answers to the many questions facing educationalists any more than there are simple answers to the questions confronting the modern medical physician or the atomic scientist. Teachers must bring psychological insight to their classrooms, and in a sense, be scientists, ever in search of better solutions to old problems.

Teachers have a grave responsibility to mankind, not only to lead children along the avenues

of knowledge, but to release them from the compulsion of their own desires and bring them to that trust and love of other men which I believe to be the goal of Adler's Psychology.

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