

Sicher wrote, "The need for it is the greater because so many adherents of Adler's school are scattered throughout the world, and the 'News' might become their means of still feeling united--tied together by a common idea."

Detroit, Michigan

Through his lectures and writings dynamic Dr. Dreikurs encouraged the growth of study groups in Detroit. Commenting on the active organization in Detroit, where he had addressed an audience of over one thousand teachers, he ascribed this acceptance of Individual Psychology in Detroit to the fact that the Couzen's Fund had employed Adler for a month of intensive lecturing and teaching. He complimented Miss Marie Rasey as the leading exponent of Individual Psychology in Detroit.

Ogden, Utah

Judge Paul Thatcher of the Juvenile Court credited Dr. Lydia Sicher with organizing an Adlerian study group in Ogden. It was Dr. Sicher who had previously formed one in Salt Lake City.

Groups like those in Detroit and Ogden were formed chiefly by teachers, social workers and parents, who though not necessarily Adlerian, were eager to discuss and study Individual Psychology. Nor were they established in the United States only, for there were groups formed in Canada and even in Costa Rica as well.

In no other five-year period since the tragic loss of Alfred Adler has so much responsibility been placed on so few Adlerians. Above all, perhaps, we cannot forget the selfless devotion of Raissa Adler and the dedicated Sydney Roth.

THE TASKS OF LIFE II. THE FOURTH LIFE TASK

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Adlerians have dealt extensively with attitudes which enhance or diminish a person's ability to meet the life tasks of work, social relationships, and sex. Now we propose to concern ourselves with the ways in which individuals deal with themselves. The requirements for success and the reasons for failure are fundamentally the same with regard to living in peace with others or in peace with oneself. The lack of social interest, of a feeling of belonging, reduces our tolerance level in dealing with the problems around us; its counterpart, a feeling of inferiority and inadequacy, prevents us from accepting ourselves as we are. To get along with oneself is thus the fourth life task.

One cannot attribute a person's failure to fulfill the tasks of life merely to individual maladjustment. We are faced with a cultural setting which makes the fulfillment of the life tasks difficult. We

live in a neurotic society where nobody can be sure of his place and of his value. In an atmosphere of intense competition which violates the equality principle inherent in "The Ironclad Logic of Social Living" (2), man becomes man's worst enemy, and the more so the closer their relationships. Everyone tries madly--and in vain--to find a place for himself. If one does not realize that he has a place by the very reason of his existence, no success, power, education or wealth can provide a sense of security. Either one does not have place enough, or he can lose what he has. Only on the basis of equality, of mutual respect, can we live in peace with others and with ourselves. Our failure lies in our inability to recognize our equality and to deal with each other as equals. Thus, we are culturally deprived of the realization that we are good enough as we are, and we instill this doubt in our children out of fear that satisfaction with what one is may prevent growth, effort and achievement. The opposite is true. The more certain we are of our place, the stronger is our social interest, our feeling of belonging, the greater our ability to make useful contributions and to participate fully in the give-and-take which social living implies.

Getting along with oneself means nothing more nor less than to stop fighting with oneself. That may seem almost impossible to our contemporaries; but this is what we have to learn in order to adjust ourselves to a democratic society.

At the roots of all inner conflict lies a dualism, the assumption that there are two "I's," two opposing forces within us. Tradition and contemporary science have fortified such dualistic beliefs. There is God versus the Devil, good versus evil, the willing spirit and the weak flesh, sin versus virtue, the rational versus the irrational, reason versus emotion, objectivity versus subjectivity, consciousness versus the unconscious. Those who believe in such pairs of inner contradiction within themselves can never achieve peace of mind. Traditionally, the good in us fights against the base, or in psychoanalytic terms, the superego is in conflict with the id, and the irrational forces in us oppose our reason.

Most of us are caught in this inner struggle. There is, as it were, an "I" which observes the "Me"; we watch ourselves whether we do right or wrong, blaming ourselves for our shortcomings and mistakes and taking pride in our victories, mainly over ourselves. We are made to believe in will-power, in the need of "controlling ourselves," siding with one part of ourselves against the other.

The assumption of will-power is one of the most characteristic and, simultaneously, one of the most devastating fallacies in our general conception of human nature. We draw the analogy from our efforts to deal with objects outside of ourselves. Our ability to lift something with our hands depends on two factors: the weight of the object and our muscular strength. If I succeed in lifting it, I am strong; if I can't, I am weak. Thus, the concept of strength is appropriate enough when we deal with objects outside of ourselves. But is it equally applicable when we deal with ourselves? This is the crucial question.

If we fight with ourselves, we must be at the same time the one who wins and the one who loses. We constantly watch to see who

will be stronger, "I" or "me." As a consequence, we only defeat ourselves, discourage ourselves, lose faith in ourselves, because we see the enemy within us. We treat ourselves as a bad teacher treats poor students—and with the same disastrous effects. We are conditioned to assume that if we do not fight with ourselves, we cannot control ourselves; and if we don't control ourselves, we will misbehave. In our slave mentality, we intimidate ourselves with the threat of failure, of humiliation. We cannot conceive that people would behave properly without such threats.

Before we can utilize all of our inner resources for the benefit of others and of ourselves, we need to reconsider the prevalent conceptions of human nature. Then, instead of seeing the good and bad at odds within ourselves, we may discover that we are one whole being with the ability to do anything we decide to do, be it good or evil. We can use the left and the right hand. A creature from another planet might assume that both hands constantly fight and oppose each other when we try to grasp something, because he may not realize that this opposition is part of a controlled function. In order to lift our arms we have to use the abductors as well as the adductors to maintain our balance. Equally, we use our reasoning and our emotional power, complementing one with the other according to our intentions. We become aware or remain unaware of whatever it is we want or need to know or not know. All seemingly contradictory functions are only self-deceptions. We have become free politically and socially—but we have not learned to recognize and embrace our freedom to decide for ourselves whatever we intend to do. We are one whole and indivisible human being who can use all faculties and abilities, be they physical or mental, reason or emotion, intelligence or ignorance, for our own self-determined purposes. This is a revolutionary conception of man, indeed. This conception, promoted by Adler, is in many regards in line with some aspects of religious thinking.

Subjectively, we may feel driven by emotions, by circumstances, and may respond with ambivalence. Scientific assumptions support such occurrences of ambivalence. However, ambivalence is always a self-deception, but self-deception with a purpose. It is an arrangement calculated to avoid responsibility, to demand service or to excuse inactivity. To the extent that ambivalence is perceived by us as "reality," so we find ourselves driven and torn by emotions and contradictions. Since we always move in one direction, one which we have chosen, ambivalence cannot in fact exist in reality because we cannot move in two directions at one time, regardless of how hard we may try. Even hesitation is a way of proceeding. And we use our emotions to fortify our intentions. They are not our masters but our servants (5). But we are only too willing to accept the assumption that man is driven by his emotions. For then we are not really responsible for our behavior—we can blame our emotions for it.

Of course, it is not easy to adopt the new conception of man, because we are so heavily trained to view ourselves as the victims of forces: victims of our hereditary endowment, of our upbringing, of our environment, of our society, of our emotions. We have yet to

discover that man is a decision-making organism, that we decide every step we take, although not necessarily on the conscious level. What forces converge on us, what situations we find ourselves in, are less important than what we decide to do under the given circumstances. We decide upon the role we intend to play and often contribute significantly to the experience which we "make." We are not merely passive victims of circumstances. There is hardly any situation which does not offer us a better or poorer way to react.

In order, then, to get along with ourselves, we must first learn to recognize that we do only what we decide and what we prefer to do. There is a logic behind all our actions. However, we are not usually aware of our "private logic" or "hidden reason" (6). Here are some of the steps necessary to enable us to experience and utilize our freedom and our potentialities.

We must free ourselves from the prejudice which we have about ourselves. We must accept what we are instead of fighting it. Only then can we grow without the inner friction which drives and impedes us at the same time. It is sad that the only people who believe they are good enough as they are, are the mentally ill (9). The insane and the criminal are convinced that they are right--all the others are wrong. Naturally, we cannot be satisfied with everything we do. We all make mistakes. To make mistakes is human--the point is that we have to learn to live with ourselves with all our imperfections. We need the courage to be imperfect, to make and accept our mistakes graciously. It is less important what mistakes we make than what we do afterwards. Unfortunately, most people become discouraged by their mistakes and thus are prone to make more mistakes.

Many of our contemporaries see only one purpose in living--to prove how good they are. In our competitive setting this seems to be most important. Therefore, they do not see any other meaning in their lives, except perhaps "to be happy." But neither worth nor happiness is obtainable by the direct striving for it. It is a by-product of fulfilling one's life. We are here to be useful, to contribute, not to prove our value. Only if we realize that we have a place in life, can we forget about finding one and become responsive to the needs of the situation and not to the needs of our prestige or our desires (8).

In line with traditional conceptions of man as being small, weak, and limited in time and space, we fail to realize our strength, impressed as we are with our weaknesses. We focus our attention out of all reasonable proportion on what we cannot do, and fail to give ourselves credit for what we are or what we can do, except perhaps in rare moments of special achievement. But they do not prevent our fears or silence our doubts. We are constantly afraid of being failures or of being humiliated. Actually, humiliation exists only in the mind of a person who feels humiliated. A person whose self-evaluation is well entrenched cannot be humiliated by others. It is the opinion of ourselves which counts, and we must learn to respect ourselves. Only then can we influence ourselves constructively and utilize our inner resources.

Our present method of influencing ourselves is to fight ourselves. In this fashion we soon reach a deadlock and become powerless to accomplish the very thing we are striving for. And if we try harder and exert more pressure, we only increase the deadlock. While we torture ourselves in our attempt to control ourselves and force ourselves, we fail to observe that we act only as we decide, either "winning" or "losing" the battle with ourselves. We are always accuser, accused, state's attorney, defense lawyer, and judge at the same time--quite an assignment! If we decide to do something wrong, then no "control" and no anger nor fear will deter us. While such insight opens the door to freedom, many of us do not want it because then we would have to accept full responsibility for our behavior. We prefer a "good excuse" and are willing to suffer the pangs of guilt feelings. But they, too, are only a pretense (3). Guilt feelings are the expression of good intentions which we do not really have. They always indicate an unwillingness to face up to a situation, using the excuse of past transgression.

Only when we admit to ourselves that whatever we do is based on our decision, thereby discounting all excuses and alibis, only then are we free to see alternatives and to change our decision and direction. We have the power to do so--without knowing it. We have freedom--without knowing how to use it properly. As a result, we all are afraid. We are a frightened generation, conditioned in the past to fear by centuries of autocratic control and now by fear of failure and humiliation. In the past, fear was instilled in the attempt to avoid sin; today, fear is the sin that keeps man from being truly free. As free men, we cannot afford it.

To free ourselves from fear, we have to recognize its fallacy. Far from preventing danger, fear increases it. Actually, it has no relationship to danger. Fear is present only when one thinks about danger, before or after its occurrence. An exception is the sensation of panic, which arises only if one feels lost, and it can bring about destruction.

One of the strongest motivations is anticipation. We all act in line with what we anticipate. We make a secret plan in our mind and move according to it. This is why fear is so dangerous, why the very fear of failure may bring failure about.

Inferiority feelings undermine and limit the all-important feeling of belonging, what Adler called social interest (1). In any given situation we must observe whether we increase our feelings of inadequacy or overcome it. This is the crucial factor in dealing with ourselves, as in all corrective efforts. Encouragement is a keynote, whether we wish to overcome deficiencies in others or in ourselves (4). If we want to get along with ourselves, we must not drive, criticize, frighten, or fight ourselves. Then all that is in us--which is so tremendous if one could only see it--would guide us. The strength and power that is within us and at our disposal is as great as the strength and power only recently discovered in the infinitely tiny and heretofore insignificant little atom.

We can discover our strength by opening the door to it. We have tremendous inner resources if we would only believe in them and thereby believe in ourselves as we are. When we stop trying to "control ourselves," we will soon discover that our actions will in

no way be different, for we always do what we decide to do anyhow. After this discovery, we shall be ready for the next step: to change our decisions. Then we will be more likely and able to decide what is good for both ourselves and others, and be less afraid of the wrong things we may do.

It is this that will give us a new freedom to grow, to learn, to change our minds, to fulfill ourselves without struggle. This alone is peace of mind.

Footnote

1. The concept of equality is difficult to grasp for most people. It has two aspects, equality of rights and equality of worth (7).

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GROUP THERAPY WITH MARRIED COUPLES

THE BIRTH PANGS OF A NEW FAMILY LIFE STYLE IN MARRIAGE

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Historically the treatment of married couples in groups has developed from therapy with individuals and with families. Some partners apply directly for the solution of their marriage problems. Others come with different complaints, and only after a while does it become evident that their main difficulties are to be found in the marital relationship.

Marriage partners may be seen either individually, or as a couple alone, or together in a couples' group in which there are divorced and widowed people as well, or in a therapy group composed exclusively of married couples. This last approach has proven especially advantageous in that one's own problems are more easily recognized when one sees them mirrored in the interaction of the other married partners in the group.

As I pointed out in an earlier paper, "A Step Toward Successful Marriage," if a married couple has a need for conflict, there is no area of life together so insignificant that it cannot be exploited as a reason for discord. In exploring the basis for conflict, we find that each partner has come to the marriage with specific habits and expectations acquired in his own family--derived from his own family