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In 1929 or 1930, on a sunny winter Sunday, Doctor Adler invited me to lunch in his uptown New York hotel, near West End Avenue. After the meal, he took me up to his rooms, and, in his inimitable way of teaching while apparently intent upon amusing his visitors, he analyzed for me a number of themes written by primary school children in New York City, from a typewritten copy of several hundred themes.

I still distinctly remember the theme of a boy under the title of "A CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTION," in which this youngster described how a BIG coach stopped before the door of their house and then took him and his mother to a BIG railroad station, when he was a SMALL boy. In his theme on "A DREAM I HAVE HAD," the boy said that in his dream he went out to the back yard and saw a BIG bird come down from above and carry away a robin. I no longer remember what the boy said in the theme "WHAT I WANT TO BE WHEN GROWN UP," nor what position within the family constellation he stated for himself in the theme called "MY FAMILY," but I remember having been profoundly impressed by the unity of the personality manifest in the four themes.

Saying that the contrast between BIG (the others) and SMALL (the boy in his own eyes) must also manifest itself in the boy's handwriting, Doctor Adler went up to a drawer which contained the original handwritten themes, and, with the help of the number given in the typewritten copy, found the themes written by the boy. Indeed, the boy had made his capitals almost four times as big as his small letters.

This experience fell into the fourth or fifth year of my early childhood as a psychologist and made such a profound impression that I have trained myself for the interpretation of themes written by the pupils of primary and secondary schools. Following the method of Doctor Adler, I make my commentaries while reading, checking up on their veracity as I read further.

My collection now contains thousands of themes written by children in Egypt, Spain, and Costa Rica, constituting most valuable material for character studies. One of my aims, in connection with this material, is to demonstrate that a person trained to read such themes with an Adlerian viewpoint can learn from them more about the writer than by means of the usual rigid test questions. I trust that this material also will contribute to the spreading of the still very limited understanding of the concept, "STYLE OF LIFE."

I am presenting here the themes written by two Costa Rican boys, classmates in the sixth (the last) grade of primary school, both still below the age of twelve. Both boys declare their inten-

tion to study medicine, but for what different reasons!

JUAN.

Theme I. What I Want to be When Grown Up.

"WHEN GROWN UP, I SHALL BECOME A DOCTOR." We find that the word "doctor" is spelled with a capital "D" and we may interpret this to mean that the profession of a physician must loom large in the mind of the boy. We must not, however, jump to the conclusion that the boy is social minded because he thinks so well of the medical profession. There are many reasons for the desire to become a doctor, especially in these countries, where the physician is the most respected of all professional men, and where he has great political, social, and marital advantages.

"I SHALL GO TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO STUDY, AND I SHALL MAKE MANY TRIPS, A THING I LIKE VERY MUCH TO DO, AND, BESIDES, THIS PROFESSION SATISFIES ME VERY MUCH." We can see that we were right in making mental reservations regarding the social mindedness of Juan, because we find here that he lays more stress on the pleasures of trips abroad than on his studies. We may say that he is more interested in pleasure-life than in work-life.

"AND I SHALL CURE PEOPLE." Let us keep this "and" in mind. It seems that this aspect of the exercise of his profession is of very little importance to him.

"I SHALL MAKE A LOT OF DOUGH." This is a very materialistic attitude toward the profession. Also, the boy uses the vulgar slang word "plata" (dough) instead of "dinero."

"AND I LIKE ALL THAT HAS TO DO WITH SURGERY." There are very humane surgeons, disinterested and eager to help those in need. But there are also very egocentric surgeons, interested more in money-making than in the social function of their specialty. We cannot, on the basis of what we have read up to now, expect that Juan will belong to the former group of surgeons.

"I SHALL GO TO THE DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES WITH MY FAMILY." At first sight, we are surprised to see that Juan speaks about going to foreign universities accompanied by his family. Even to a boy of eleven it must be clear that it is not usual for the family to go abroad when a son (and brother) goes there to study. But, on second thought, it might be easy for us to interpret this "WITH MY FAMILY" as a manifestation of a pampered child, who does not want to leave his pamperers behind, and to whom it may even have been promised that his parents, as well as his brothers and sisters (there probably are not many, since he has been very much pampered) will follow him to whatever university town he might go.

"I SHALL BUY MYSELF A HOUSE FROM WHAT I WILL EARN." Once more we see that Juan is most interested in the material consequences of his becoming a "Doctor."

"AND I SHALL GO TO CLINICS, AND VISIT MY PATIENTS" This is the third time that references to the profession he is to study appear following an "and." First come the pleasures and material benefits that can be derived from it.

"AND I SHOULD LIKE THAT NONE OF MY PATIENTS SHOULD DIE." Another "and"; a very causal one. The boy does not say: "I shall do all that is humanly possible that none of my patients should die," as a different type of boy, one for whom medicine would be a battlefield on behalf of humanity, might well say. Juan sort of asks "la suerte" (fate) to help him not, due to a mishap, to lose his professional significance and the high income he expects to have

Adler taught that we must always check our interpretation of one manifestation of an individual against as many other manifestations as we can find. Let us then see, in the other themes of Juan, if we have not been too hostile in our interpretation of his personality, due to a feeling that medicine is a distinctly social profession, to the study of which only definitely social minded persons should be admitted.

Theme II. Childhood Recollections.

"ONE DAY, WHEN I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD, IN THE ABSENCE OF MY PARENTS, MY SISTER BEGAN TO TEASE ME." A "counter-person" has appeared on the horizon. The boy does not tell us if it was a younger or an older sister, but he seems to us so pampered and inclined to "auto-pamper" himself, that we suppose he must be the younger brother.

"I THREW A STONE AT HER AND I BROKE HER HEAD. ON ANOTHER OCCASION I THREW A KNIFE AT HER, BUT IT DID NOT HURT HER. WHEN MY PARENTS CAME HOME, THEY BEAT ME SO THAT I NEVER AGAIN DID IT." We may imagine the situation in Juan's family like this: As so often happens, especially when the elder child is a girl, Juan's sister will have been "good" and thus she has probably been held up as an example to Juan. Pampered as he was, Juan must have been jealous of any credit given to his sister, while she was doubtless jealous of the pampering accorded him. Thus, in the absence of the parents, she started to abuse him, while he reacted with the usual violence of the tyrannical pampered child.

"I ALSO REMEMBER THAT, WHEN I ENTERED THE FIRST GRADE, I DID NOT WANT MY MOTHER TO LEAVE THE SCHOOL, BECAUSE I DID NOT FEEL AT HOME THERE WITHOUT HER PRESENCE, AND I CRIED." Once more we see that Juan has been a pampered child.

Theme III. A Dream I Have Had.

"ONE NIGHT I DREAMED THAT I HAD THE WINNING NUMBER IN THE LOTTERY" The Costa Rican lottery distributes over 2,000 prizes twice a month, averaging from some 8,000 dollars, the first prize, down to fifty cents. Juan is not the only one who dreams about this prize, which he calls "THE WINNING NUMBER"; practically every-

body buys lottery tickets thinking about the first prize only. Nevertheless, we may say that this desire to get rich quickly and without effort is a typical reaction of the pampered child, accustomed not to make efforts and guided by his style of life to avoid them.

Now we may say to ourselves: "If Juan really wants to be a physician because he is interested in medicine or surgery in more than a superficial way, he will say that he used the money for his studies. "Now, what does Juan really say? Let us see.

"AND I WENT TO EUROPE AND I WAS VERY HAPPY BECAUSE I ENJOYED MYSELF VERY MUCH ALL THE TIME." Once more we think: "He must be a pampered youngest child." We may suppose that there are only two children in the family: the sister he mentioned and he, since up to now we have heard of no other brother or sister.

"I WENT TO THEATERS, TO DANCES, AND OTHER PLACES. I WAS VERY HAPPY TO FIND MYSELF AMONG SO MANY AMUSEMENTS." We see that he has quite forgotten his intention to study abroad.

"BUT THEN MY MOTHER AWAKENED ME AND I HAD TO GO TO SCHOOL. SO IT WAS ALL OVER WITH EUROPE AND THE AMUSEMENTS, AND I HAD TO STUDY IN ORDER TO GET GOOD MARKS." We get a glimpse of the family philosophy: the boy has to bring home "good marks," not knowledge. Doubtless the parents of Juan have a rather materialistic outlook upon life, just as their son has.

Theme IV. My Family.

"MY FATHER IS IN BUSINESS AND MY MOTHER TAKES CARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD. I HAVE A SISTER, FOURTEEN YEARS OLD." We see that our assumptions that Juan was the younger child and that there were no other children besides him and the sister have been correct.

"IN OUR HOUSE WE LIVE ALONE, MY FATHER, MOTHER, SISTER, AND I." In a country where almost always we find ascendants or relatives living in the house, this "parents and children" unit may be taken to denote egocentric tendencies in the parents as well.

"SOMETIMES I FIGHT WITH MY SISTER, BUT THIS IS NOT CUSTOMARY." Perhaps not, but we must not forget the intensity of the fights in the past.

After having dictated this analysis, I looked for the opinion of the class teacher, which I had asked her to give me on a separate sheet. It read:

"Nonreflective, Strong-willed. A jester. A sports enthusiast. Careless about his studies. Undisciplined and lacking orderly habits. Not frank. Not brilliant in his studies. Slow in understanding abstract ideas or in developing them. Under pressure and handled with energy, he has somewhat improved in his studies."

JOSE.

Theme I. What I Want to do When Grown Up.

"IT IS MY DESIRE TO BECOME A GREAT PHYSICIAN; TO OPERATE AND SAVE MANY PEOPLE FROM DEATH. TO HEAL PEOPLE IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THINGS, TO MY MIND. TO ATTRACT THE AFFECTION OF MANY, MANY PEOPLE, AND TO BE LOVED BY ALL, IS THE THING WHICH MAKES ME DESIRE TO BECOME A DOCTOR. THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PROFESSIONS, NOT ON ACCOUNT OF THE MONEY ONE MAKES, NOR DUE TO THE HONORS ONE OBTAINS IN THIS WAY, BUT FOR THE PLEASURE OF SAVING PEOPLE FROM DISEASES WHICH WOULD MAKE THEM SUFFER ALL THEIR LIVES. I SHOULD DISINTERESTEDLY HELP VERY POOR PEOPLE UNABLE TO PAY A PHYSICIAN, AND I AM SURE THEY WOULD LOOK UPON ME WITH GRATITUDE ALL THEIR LIVES." No detailed analysis of this theme will be needed. There is, however, so strong an accent on the benefits in affection, love, and gratitude a physician may derive from his profession that it seemed to me to require a psychological explanation. Jose's class teacher informed me that the boy had been suffering for years under a certain ostracism on the part of his classmates, who disliked his brilliancy in all the school subjects and his extraordinary reasoning power, which made him far superior to them. They did not consider the fact that he constantly strove to be of assistance to them.

Some people might object to this "egocentric profit-seeking" of Jose, but I believe that no such objection must be raised as long as a person seeks psychic profit so very definitely on the social side of life. We may also consider that the very suffering of Jose has been a useful element in his psychic development, because it has deepened his personality, and we must find it admirable that he could keep his social attitude in face of the ostracism he has suffered despite his attempts to help his classmates.

Theme II. Childhood Recollections.

I have sometimes found myself obliged, in the light of other manifestations of the individual, to give childhood recollections, which apparently spoke against their owner, the interpretation: "I am no longer like that." The recollections of Jose clearly have this character. He himself starts by saying:

"BEFORE BEGINNING TO TELL MY CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTIONS, IT SEEMS TO ME RIGHT TO SAY THAT I WAS A PEET, A TRUE TROUBLE-MAKER. WHEN I WAS TWO OR THREE YEARS OLD, I WAS TERRIBLY NAUGHTY. I HAD FEW NURSES, BUT THOSE I HAD MUST HAVE TAKEN ALONG A VERY BAD IMPRESSION OF ME." The boy then goes on to tell how he stole up to one of these nurses in the park and ran away with one of her shoes, making her hop after him on one leg.

"WHEN I WAS A SMALL BOY, I CAUSED MANY DISASTERS. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THEM WAS THAT ONCE, WHEN I WAS ABOUT FOUR YEARS OLD, I TOOK THE PUPPETS OF MY BROTHER AND HIT THEM AGAINST EVERYTHING THERE WAS ON THE DININGROOM TABLE: GLASSES, PLATES, ETC." Not yet twelve, this boy is a very mature little man, who looks back upon his naughtiness as an antisocial behavior, which he is

surprised to have displayed.

Theme III. A Dream I have Had Several Times.

"IN MY DREAM I SEE MYSELF WALKING BETWEEN MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER, ON AN UNPAVED STREET. THEN MY PARENTS DISAPPEAR AND THE STREET BEGINS TO BECOME DARKER, THE HOUSES LOSE THEIR FAMILIAR ASPECT AND BECOME STRANGE LOOKING. I GO ON AND HAVE NOW TO ASCEND A STEEP SLOPE. I DO SO, BUT I FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT, AND, THOUGH THE WAY IS BY NO MEANS SLIPPERY, AS WAYS ARE WHEN MANY PEOPLE HAVE USED THEM, I SLIP BACK. I MAKE GREAT EFFORTS TO GET AHEAD; I DO SO TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, BUT I SLIP BACK AGAIN. I GO ON DESPERATELY FIGHTING IN ORDER TO GET TO THE TOP, UNTIL I WAKE UP." It is not difficult to recognize in this dream a variant of the frequent Costa Rican fear-dream: "If I lose my parents, I shall not be able to study for a profession." Most families are living here on the little income they have, children cannot count upon inheriting anything, and parents frequently tell their children: "If I can no longer work for you, you will have to interrupt your studies." There is, however, an unusual element in the dream of Jose: the desperate fight to get to the top anyway. This resolute facing of the difficulties is quite unusual in this country, where the general atmosphere discourages practically everybody from striving toward any higher goal.

Theme IV. My Family.

A brother, five and one-half years older than Jose, appears on the scene. He is said to be "VERY ANNOYING" for "HE QUARRELS WITH ME ALL THE TIME." This brother has come to see me since, in order to discuss some personal problems, and we have found together that he has always looked upon his younger brother as on a disagreeable competitor. On the other hand, much of the naughtiness of Jose as a small child may have been due to the preference his mother showed for the older brother. He seems to have taken pleasure in annoying her and her female counterparts. Later on, when Jose entered school and was duly admired for his brilliant progress by his mother, he gave up naughtiness.

Other Manifestations of Jose.

During the class conferences which I organized in Jose's class, I was often surprised by statements the boy made. Even if some of them were only deductions from what we had discussed in the class, their lapidary form was entirely the boy's own. Here are some of his ideas:

"IT IS NECESSARY TO KNOW HOW TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD."

"IN ORDER TO BE HAPPY, IT IS NECESSARY TO BE USEFUL."

"ONE OF THE MOST USEFUL THINGS IN THIS WORLD IS TO CONSTRUCT."

"I SHALL PLACE MY DISCOVERIES AT THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY."

His most admirable statement was, perhaps, made in the

seventh-class conversation. I was discussing with the boys the fact that one can seek significance on the useful and on the useless side of life, and made the following division on the blackboard, already well known to the boys:

USELESS

USEFUL

and, moving the teacher's pointer over the two sides, with a point on the vertical dividing line as a pivot, I asked: "On which side is it better to be on the top?" I expected one or the other of the boys to answer: "On the useful side," but Jose suddenly came out with the following statement:

"IT IS BETTER TO BE AT THE BOTTOM ON THE USEFUL SIDE, THAN TO BE AT THE TOP ON THE USELESS ONE." I must confess that I still find this statement, made by a boy who had just reached the age of twelve, frankly admirable.

Three Years Later.

Three years after having dictated the above study of Juan and Jose, I can state the following about them:

Juan has gone to a private secondary school, where good marks are easier to get. He has failed in mathematics in the third year and has passed, practically always at the lowest limit at which a boy passes here, in all other subjects, during his three secondary school years.

Jose is in the Government High School in which I am working as a consulting psychologist employed by the Costa Rican Government. He has been an "honor student" all these years, paying no tuition fees due to the fact that he had, with two exceptions in three years, the best marks obtainable. He will pay no tuition in the fourth school year either, which starts on March 1.

From the point of view of society, it would be better, since there is no medical school in this country, if it were Jose and not Juan who would go abroad in 1945, in order to study medicine. As so often happens, however, Juan's father has the money to send him abroad, but Jose's father will be unable to do the same for his son. If medical scholarships could be had on the basis of what I would call "psychic merit," Jose ought to get one.