

The Sexual Function

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Because of the confusing, uncontrollable and misleading interpretations of the sexual function, we have to return to the fundamental physiological and psychological facts. There is no reason to accept views such as the far-fetched one of the omnipotent sexual libido. The real reasons for such a distorted theory as that which makes sexual libido the ruling power of human mind and psyche, as it appears in the ideas of Freud and in some variations of Jung, are the following:

1. The novelty.
2. The great number of troubles of the great number of persons with neurotic trends.
3. The open or obscure feeling of the unsatisfied wishes that are in the main structure of the mind and psyche of persons for whom wish fulfillment is the main problem of life.

Indeed, it is the great desire of mankind to find a unique ruling power behind all appearances and experiences of life. This desire affects individuals and masses. Individual Psychology in a much broader and deeper sense accepts, instead, the fact of *life* in its solvable and insolvable aspects. One of the first is the fact that all strivings, thoughts, feelings, characteristics, expressions and symptoms aim toward a successful solution of social tasks.

The great number of failures in regard to sexuality, love, and marriage can be traced back, as can all other failures, to a lack of preparation. Individual Psychology does not give credit to a perception of the *sexual object*. Sexuality, love and marriage are tasks of two equal persons, tasks of forming a unit, and can be rightly solved if persons are trained for a sufficient social interest.

Individual Psychology objects to the idea held by other schools of thought that individual wishes or the bad results of their suppression can be regarded as the main problem of life. Such a concept betrays the self-centered or narcissistic nature of a person, as it is often seen in pampered children. It is not much more constructive to stick to the heritage of our ancestors, who in some ways had not reached the present, and still not sufficient, degree of social interest. I wonder if scholars easily can overlook the fact that these authors turn their glances back to ancestors, satisfied in indulging in some inherited possessions without making efforts to use these possessions for new contributions for the welfare of mankind, for an increase of social interest.

So far as we can see, a human being is human and rightly called so because he possesses by inheritance all the possibilities needed for coping

*(Deceased)

with social problems. For this purpose he has to develop himself bodily and mentally as far as possible. But the main question which arises now is: For what? For what goal has the individual to strive and to develop his inherited human possibilities? Individuals and mankind use these possibilities, gifts of our ancestors, for increasing these gifts in a world changed by human beings for the benefit of the whole human family. This has been done, of course, only so far as the level of social interest allowed. In addition, we have to understand that all problems of life can be solved adequately only by a sufficient degree of social interest.

So all the functions of human beings — possibilities of development in a social environment, reflexes, functions, speech, thinking, feelings — brought into his world by the newborn child, have to be adapted in relation to the demands of the outside world. Eating, looking, hearing, making sounds and moving become more and more adapted to the achievement of this goal.

In regard to human functions, we can say they all are, in the beginning of life, in a state of confusion, automatic, and only slowly directed toward interplay with others and with the environment. After some time the creative power of the child accepts the challenge of the outside world, takes up experiences and works them out in a way which seems to be, for him, *successful* for taking part in the surrounding social life. His eating becomes proper, his looking, hearing, touching and moving prove his willingness to co-operate more or less. His thinking and talking contain more and more *common value and common sense*. His functions of excretion are, or should be, in agreement with the social form of his environment. Thumb sucking, nail biting, etc., as unsocial actions and sources of infections, stop if the child accepts the social play-rules of his environment. If the child will not conform, it is always because he has not found the way toward social culture and is striving for a *personal* goal of superiority.

There is no question, also, that the sexual function is derived by inheritance and shows itself, in the beginning, in a higher degree of the tickling sensation. Expanding itself, along with all the others, this function leads to turgescence, erections and concomitant feelings through automatic impulses. Touching and the resulting pleasurable tickling feeling lead to early repetition of the act, the more so if the child, as a whole, likes to go his own way and is more inclined toward *wish fulfillments*, than toward co-operating, as it characterizes the pampered type.

In that way the right co-operation is deferred until a much later time. The child, therefore is compelled to stick to the primary phase of the sexual function. Till he is at the right age to make the sexual function a task for two persons of different sexes — in the secondary, social phase of the sexual function — nothing is left but self-satisfaction in its many different forms.

In the primary phase, the usual course is masturbation. The social spirit of mankind had been and always will be opposed to masturbation — opposed because mankind, in its hidden sphere of thinking and knowing, wants the second phase of sexuality to be developed. The discrepancy between the slow development of the complete sexual function, the thorough opposition toward permitting children to perform the secondary phase, the dangers in an early complete function and the need to defer this second phase to bodily and mentally developed boys and girls bring children of younger age into a situation that is unsolvable. Not only parents and teachers and dangerous, stupid books and remarks increase the conflicts in the mind of the child, but his social interest gained in the first three years also counteracts self-satisfaction. Physicians and clergymen agree more and more that the primary phase cannot be avoided entirely, that it is a natural development and should not be treated harshly and that it does not harm the child bodily or mentally.

During this primary phase one can see the power of the social interest. Remorse and diversions are frequent and willingly accepted. There is also a diminution of the frequency. But the pampered and greedy child, not able to resist any temptation, is in a worse state and often uses self-satisfaction for other purposes — to abuse the attention of the parents, to entice other children or as an alibi for defeats in school or later life.

In their distress, children often turn to other varieties of masturbation, such as indulging in erotic fantasies, using erotic pictures, and other means of incitation, sometimes another child. In the latter case the way opens for the so-called homosexuality, which is only one of the many varieties of masturbation, often found among egocentric, vain persons who stick to the primary phase of the sexual function of self satisfaction.

Certain types, who show sexual stimulation when irritated or fearful (as others respond with heart palpitations or intestinal or bladder troubles to such irritations), indulge in sadistic or masochistic day and night dreams. This type may later become a complete failure in his sexual function by developing the perversion of sadism or masochism.

All the other perversions, fetishism, sodomy, necrophilia, etc., are varieties of the primary phase of the sexual function. They probably always betray the misconception and the style of life of a pampered or neglected child who has not grown up to the sufficient degree of social interest, which would enable him to co-operate fully with others. This is also true for persons who are promiscuous, masturbators or exclusive frequenters of prostitutes.

The neurotic symptoms of sexual deficiency betray also the primary phase of sexuality; such symptoms include neurotic impotence, neurotic frigidity or vaginismus and ejaculatio praecox. These neurotic symptoms are always found in persons who have not overcome the primary phase of the sexual function because of a lack of social interest.

Love, as a task of two equal persons of different sexes, calls for bodily and mental attraction, exclusiveness, and a total and final surrender. The right solution of this task of two persons is the blessing of socially adjusted persons who have proved their right attitude in having friends, being prepared for a useful job and showing mutual devotion.

Memorial Meeting for Alfred Adler*

A memorial meeting for Alfred Adler was held May 25 at A.F.H.Q. Educational Center, Caserta, Italy. At the meeting, D. Grossman, of the British Army, and Paul Plottke, of the Alien Pioneers, represented Individual Psychology, and Lillian Morrison, of the U. S. Army, read quotations, which included data on Adler's life, characterizing anecdotes and readings from his books.

In this month of May, 1945, it is eight years since Alfred Adler died. He was the founder of Individual Psychology. This new psychology is a scientific instrument whose usefulness is invaluable in leading humanity towards peace of mind. Adler was born in Vienna in 1871; after World War I he lectured as a guest in Universities and scientific societies of most of the European capitals; in 1929 he became professor at Long Island Medical College, New York; he spoke for the last time at the "Cercle Laennec" eight years ago, and ten days afterwards died suddenly in Aberdeen, Scotland, where he was to start a new lecturing tour through Great Britain. He is buried in Edinburg near the great Adam Smith, the author of the "Enquiry into the Origin and Nature of the Wealth of Nations."

Adler, who spoke a very charming Viennese German, had not cared in his youth to learn foreign languages. In Paris, he depended on his wife and friends for interpretation, but later he learned English, in about a year—well enough to take his place as professor in the U. S. A.

He rarely spoke about himself, but in one case he used his own life to demonstrate the dynamics for the mechanism of compensation that leads a person to become a physician. These facts, published in one of his books, show how he selected his profession in order to conquer death, this guiding fiction being derived from experiencing several dangerous situations and critical illnesses in his early years. As an infant he taught himself to stop crying, because this brought on a discomforting spasm of the vocal chords. He saw his prevention of crying not only as a method of preventing suffering, but also something to oppose the fear of death. At 3 years of age he saw a younger brother die; at 4 he twice fell unconscious under a wagon, and at 5 he almost died with pneumonia. From these events, Adler posited a goal that might put an end to infantile worry and the fear of death, and he began to picture his future profession as that of medicine. The choice was actually a courageous compensation for a feeling of inferiority inspired by the phenomenon of death.

*From a report by Paul Plottke.