

IN MEMORIAM

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After ten years we still feel deeply the tragedy of Alfred Adler's death when we consider his great contribution to modern psychology and his immense devotion to the welfare of human beings. When he put at our disposal the knowledge of Individual Psychology, he gave us a powerful force: to combat psychoneurotic disorders, which are more common in this country today; to contend with problems of child education; and to help solve the numerous problems of criminal psychology.

Dr. Adler's world fame was attained through his psychological theories which were known chiefly through the term "Inferiority Complex." But, as is often the case with revolutionary and serviceable ideas, the term "Inferiority Complex" was taken up and used by myriads of people without understanding of its full meaning. The fate of Adler's concept can be fittingly expressed in the words of Confucius: "In the beginning they knew me not nor did they talk of me. Now they talk of me but they know me not."

Many people are under the erroneous impression that Dr. Adler's main work consisted of his theory of the "Inferiority Complex." His great distinction, however, lies in the fact that he conceived a completely new interpretation of psychology, which I consider a psychology of the individual in his manifold relationships. Concentrating his studies on the problem of neuroses, on child problems and their like, he arrived at the conclusion of the impracticability of the then current philosophical and experimental psychology.

What is most needed in our present day situation is a psychology of man in relationship to his fellowmen on this planet as seen with human understanding and from a universal viewpoint.

Dr. Adler formulated a system of psychology which enables us to understand better the expression of the personality, the laws of the functioning of the inner life, in both "normal" and "pathological" mental states. He held it to be a fruitless endeavor to try to define what "mind" or "personality" is, but he believed that we can learn something of the manner of its functioning. A human being is a product of a long evolutionary period. We can understand his character and psyche only if we are aware of this evolution. What is more, we have to consider that a human being of today is not necessarily the final expression of the evolutionary process. He develops, improves, and constantly strives toward his ultimate goal - Eternity and the solution of the cosmic problem. This is the deeper meaning of mankind. This same cosmic problem is the meaning of every single individual existence, whose ultimate goal must be to help in solving the problems of an evolving mankind. On

this road he is compelled to face the principal problems of life: society, work, and love. These are the most far-reaching and are deeply related with the decisions of his destiny.

According to Dr. Adler, we human beings instinctively follow the upward trend of life in search of the solution of our problems but we are all endangered by mistaken personal attitudes and misconceptions derived from impressions attained in childhood. Each individual is an unique unit. Influenced by inherited abilities, environment, education, changes in current conditions, each creates his own specific style of life within the common striving for improvement, perfection, superiority, and security in the advancing stream of evolution. Thus we realize that there may be as many mistakes in the evaluation and conception of life as there are individuals. There can be no fixed rule by which to measure or to determine what constitutes one's success or one's failure. It is neither the suffering nor the inferiority of the individual as seen from the deeper meaning of mankind. It is a conflict between the individual and the cosmic demands, expressed very clearly in the words so often used by Dr. Adler: "There is only one yardstick with which to measure human beings - his attitude toward the inevitable problems of mankind: society, work, and love."

To those who understand Individual Psychology, it is a mistake to divide one's inner life and to concentrate on one instinct as has been done with the sexual instinct by psychoanalysis. The sexual instinct cannot be separated from other instincts nor from the whole personality. Dr. Adler disagreed with the pan-sexual attitude of psychoanalysis and considered sex as only a part of the love problem.

Dr. Adler has shown us that suppressed sexuality is not the basis of a neurosis. He has made it clear that neurosis is due chiefly to a lack of knowledge of how to deal with the problems of life in a common-sense way - that is, in a way which is productive for others as well as for oneself - plus a desire to solve them in a private way of one's own. Often there is a clear wish to escape a normal solution. As Dr. Adler has reminded us, the problem of love "is a task - not for one - but for two persons." The other life problems which must be faced by all human beings are those of social relations and occupation. Our goal must not be to treat the complex, but the whole individual.

Dr. Adler's philosophy is deeply human, his understanding of the emotions and of the inner life profound. His penetrating and comprehensive insight enabled him to found his well-known science of Individual Psychology. His teachings not only opened to us the possibility of studying general human emotions and reactions in a way not hitherto used, but they shed greater light upon the abnormal condition known as psychoneurosis. What is most important, we have from Adler a better approach and more useful methods in the treatment of suffering human beings. Particularly in the field of psychoneurotic disorders will his approach to psychology in years to come find increasing appreciation, for it is a method designed to help solve the problems of life in a proper way.

Let us not forget some of his outstanding discoveries in the field of psychology such as set forth in *Studies of Organ Inferiorities*,

The Nervous Character, Religion and Individual Psychology, Psychology of the Criminal, and other works.

In looking at him we see not only a great physician but a man who retained his simplicity, who was always an understanding human advisor and helper, a friend, a teacher, and a person with one set goal: to contribute to the evolution of mankind.

He is gone from our midst but his spirit and his ideals will continue to live with us.



Photo Schneider, Wien.

Hr. Alfred Döbler