

## PREVENTIVE PSYCHIATRY

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Preventive medicine has become an important part of medical science. If we look back three to four decades when tuberculosis, rickets, the avitaminoses, and the anemias were still considered first rate enemies of mankind, we realize how successful preventive medicine was in checking them among many other diseases. Although we were not always able to establish the etiological factors correctly, we became aware that they were preventable even before we knew the mechanism which caused them.

A similar situation is still prevailing in the field of psychiatry. Though we are not yet able to put our finger on all the factors involved, we have learned that mental conditions are frequently due to failures in the integrating mechanism of the personality. We know that in patients suffering from a nervous condition there is present a more or less pronounced lack of functional balance. It is one of the main tasks of preventive psychiatry to find the threshold of the individual's psycho-biological integration in order to develop his adequate adjustment coefficient.

Dynamic psychiatry has tried to interpret the drives and urges, the inhibitions and constraints, which prevent personality integration. Among those working in this field, Alfred Adler has contributed most to preventive psychiatry, being among the first contributors. It was he who originated child guidance clinics which became the starting point in the development of various other advisory agencies and most helpful clinics. Not even ardent opponents of Individual Psychology deny that its most significant contribution has been given to the educational field, overlooking, however, that the time of training and conditioning, which we call education, is the time when preventive psychiatry has to set in, if it is not to be too late for its cue.

In order to trace the close relationship of preventive psychiatry and Individual Psychology, it may be of interest to reveal the latter's basic fundamentals.

1. The personality structure is not something inflexible or unchangeable but is alterable as is the bodily structure. (We learn from anthropologists that even the bony framework, say e.g., the skull's index, adapts to changed environmental conditions.)

2. Every individual is a psychobiological entity. Changes in the one sphere will always bring about alterations in the other one and vice versa.

3. The child of three to five is already manifesting a tendency to psychical arrangement. It already makes use of psychic activity for its

own benefit to attain a certain goal. It is able to intensify certain moods and to exclude others when required.

4. Dysfunction in the one or the other organ system, which may even be regarded as potential and which may only appear under increased stress, will be compensated in the psychical sphere. Hypercompensation takes place as a securing factor just as nature provides in abundance where weakness and smallness is to be overcome.

5. Psychobiological dysfunction which Adler also called "insufficiency of effectiveness," be it due to morbid phenomena or the civilizatory conditioning process, determines the variability of individual reactions. Thus each personality will be different as the responses and symbolisms of each person fail as a means of classification and interpretation.

6. Whatever heredity, constitution and predisposition have endowed us with, what we do with it is essential. This alone will determine our contribution to society as constructive or destructive.

7. The well-integrated individual feels able to orient himself in the chaos of life, to find a certain security through efforts and socially useful activity. The weak and helpless individuals, such as children and maladjusted ones, are prone to develop inferiority feelings the more they fail in facing the demands of life.

8. According to Individual Psychology, three ways are open to any individual to deal with feelings of inferiority, genuinely present in every child:

- a. Overcoming them and contributing successfully to community life.
- b. Developing superiority feelings to overcome the deepened inferiority complex, resulting in aggression and disintegration.
- c. Neurosis and disease, psychosis, and degeneration.

9. Social interest and not our constitutional makeup is the yardstick of our personality integration. If community feelings, present in every young human being, are stunted, disintegration sets in.

10. Normal adaptation of any individual can be measured by his attitude toward the three demands of life.

- a. His attitude toward society
- b. His attitude toward his work.
- c. His attitude toward love and sexual adjustment.

These fundamental theorems of Individual Psychology already seem to outline the work of preventive psychiatry.

The fact that the personality structure is something alterable has been proved by the effectiveness of mental hygienic measures. It has been accepted largely that adaptation means quick adjustment to changing situations, which certainly cannot be achieved by an inflexible character or a fixed ideology. Maladjustment means social incapacity to provide useful contributions to society.

Without denying that many mental, emotional, and behavior problems cannot be corrected at the present time due to our limited knowledge or means, a great deal has been done to prevent maladjustment and disintegration in children and adolescents. The introduction of courses

in sexual and marital relationship in colleges and high schools, prenatal care, the training of mothers-to-be, child guidance clinics, parents' and teachers' associations, are a promising beginning. They have not been limited to one state or country but have spread all over the world. They prove that in spite of the pessimistic point of view that evolves from the study of analysis and heredity, the more optimistic outlook of Individual Psychology prevails.

By measuring the change in the I.Q. of the pre-school children some research workers have pointed to the stimulating effect of nursery-schools in mental development. Attendance at a nursery-school was responsible for an average increase of 15 I.Q. points. Barrett and Koch studied a group of twenty-seven children between the ages of thirty-five and sixty months, who entered the nursery-school of an orphanage. They gained in I.Q. from an average of 92 to an average of 113 over a period of nine months, whereas a control group which did not attend the nursery-school increased their average I.Q. from 93 to 98. Many a research work has been conducted in this field and has confirmed the beneficial effect of a superior environment upon the integration of personality in children of all ages. It goes without saying that the sooner these environmental changes take place the better will be the prospects. Yet the words posted at the entrance door of the Guidance Clinic for Juvenile Delinquency in Vienna, "IT IS NEVER TOO LATE," are also well fitted to direct preventive psychiatry.

It was psychosomatic medicine which took over the Individual Psychological point of view that every individual is to be considered a psychobiological entity. Even a simple cold will affect our mental effectiveness. We will feel unable to concentrate, to pay attention, to think. The impetuous mental discharges which accompany puberty are equivalent to the fluctuation of mood observed in periods of life when metabolic and circulatory changes shake the body. On the other hand, psychotic patients during periods of excitement may lose as much as fifteen to twenty pounds in weight and regain it when they again have attained a near normal emotional level. Hypertension, cardiac neurosis, migraine, bronchial asthma, peptic ulcer, mucous colitis, constipation, angioneurotic edema, and atopic dermatitis, are a few in the long list of psychosomatic conditions. It is as yet difficult to state if the metabolic and endocrine disturbances which accompany some of these conditions are of primary or secondary nature. If is, however, obvious that in any deviation from the norm the total personality is affected in his somatic as well as his psychic equilibrium.

Dysfunction in one or more organ systems, be it due to malformation of the anatomical or morphological structure or only to its functional effectiveness, leads to compensation and hypercompensation in the psychical sphere. Smallness, weakness, helplessness, and ignorance, whether the result of a natural situation such as in the case of a child or due to neglect, every inadaptability or "insufficiency of effectiveness," is felt by the individual as a disadvantage, as an inferior position in life. This leads to feelings of frustration and it is here that compensation sets in in the form of aggression or greater efforts to overcome the

real or imagined shortcomings. Aggression in any individual, old or young, reveals inner insecurity, a fear of falling short in the competitive struggle which surrounds us all.

In this connection the importance of preventing social neuroses and situational neuroses should be stressed. The personality pattern is formed, as mentioned above, in early life in a constant attempt to overcome real or imagined feelings of inadequacy. The development of community feelings, of social interest, is the best immunization against "neurotic infection." Social adjustment depends upon the solution of the threefold relation of the individual to society. If he is unable to solve these life problems, is unable to make friends, to pursue a useful occupation, to adjust to normal sexual life, he will set up a "fictitious goal" instead of a real one. The fictitious goal will most certainly be linked to the craving for superiority in order to overcome the lowered self-respect, the vanishing self-confidence. The escape into social neurosis manifested by signs of uneasiness - anxiety, phobias, hypochondriacal ideas and so on - will be the last escape in the lost battle of a hyper-compensated and overevaluated ego.

The situational neurosis, as it arises from a family situation into which the child was born, may become if not corrected, a constant source of inadequate family interrelationship. There is no need to mention the singular situation of an only child, for it is already too well known and at times even overstressed. It is not the same, however, if one has been born as the eldest of a family, the youngest one, the younger one of two brothers or two sisters, the only girl among boys, and the only boy among girls and so on. The feud between siblings which has torn many a family apart may be prevented by taking into consideration a child's start into life. Here is the occasion where a child's attitude toward others has to be widened, where his feelings have to be humanized and socialized so that he may be able to recognize his brother or sister, not as a competitor for family acceptance and family interest, but as a fellowman as well.

We all know of the heroic attitude of soldiers who went into the war as healthy young men, and came back handicapped by losing their limbs or their most important sense organs. There is nothing we admire so much as the constructive efforts so many of these handicapped men have tenaciously maintained to overcome their acquired inferiority. Their contribution to society is in many cases outstanding. Individual Psychology has shown that biological or acquired inferior organs reveal a tendency to equalize this ineffectiveness and even make it up through increased function. It is the mind, however, which tries to balance organic dysfunction if the organ or organ system is unable to do so. Discoveries of devices which help handicapped soldiers to overcome their inability are good examples. The ever growing brain capacity of man and its manifold functions as well as his civilizatory efforts are other examples. The discussion about heredity, constitution, and predisposition will go on and will give us some interesting ideas about genetics in general. It is up to preventive psychiatry to make true the words that effectiveness depends less upon what nature has provided us with than

what we are able to form of it; for hereditary or constitutional inferiorities are probably present in every human being whose functions already have been greatly altered by the process of civilization.

Feelings of uneasiness govern a child's first attempts to become independent. Were it not for the community feelings present in every young human being, the separation process which leads to maturation and independence never would occur. This is just what happens with children whose feelings of uncertainty and inferiority are deepened by methods of constant discouragement. If their community feelings are undermined step by step, if their social adjustment is blocked, they soon will become outsiders of life, shut-in personalities unable to meet the three demands of life. A tendency to devaluate, to find fault with everything and every one will develop, the only compensation for the loss of self-confidence. This is the way neurotics are brought up, maladjusted ones, psychopaths, and destitutes whose social interest has been replaced by suspicion, mistrust, and jealousy. To compensate for their degradation they set up an air of superiority, an ideation of smartness, which frequently reminds us of the psychotic's paranoid ideas that are nearly always linked to delusions of grandeur.

One of the dynamic factors in every individual's life is his social interest, his community feelings, his consideration for others and his interrelationship with others. Adler has called it the "benevolent comradeship." Children especially are craving for acceptance, for comradeship and warmth. Isolation always proves devastating for a child's personality development. Any educational method that does not include the proper cultivation of the socializing factor will fall short in its endeavors. Frustration, dissatisfaction, and disappointment will be the result. I have never found it expressed better than in the letter of a patient to me which reads as follows. "I know you will not dismiss me until I can take good care of myself without having to come back again with a fog in my head. The fog has not disappeared as yet. I know I still appeared depressed but this is exactly what causes it. The fog descends upon the brain, gradually narrowing a person's interest in life. It is caused by some frustration which is caused by some faulty upbringing. The idea is first to remove the frustration and lift the depression. The next thing is to correct the faulty upbringing."

It may not be without reason that a high percentage of neurotic and psychotic conditions start in the years of young adulthood when the separation process has just reached its climax. Maturation and social interest are correlative factors, depending upon each other. The young individual who is about to engage upon an independent life and who has not yet integrated himself into community life will look in vain for another substitution of the security provided by a strong family attachment. If he is unable to set roots into the community in which he has to live "the fog will descend upon his mind, which causes depression" and his tendency to withdraw may become imperative, and the impulse to avoid further efforts become so strong that he will be an easy prey to indulging in imaginary gratification.

We all have likewise to encounter the stress and strain of life, as

we all are likewise surrounded by infectious agents. Yet in spite of the existence of bacteria there does not exist an obligation to acquire a contagious disease; and in spite of difficulties we all have to meet, there does not exist an obligation to become a neurotic, maladjusted, an outsider of life. It was Alfred Adler who has formulated this fact by saying, "*Omnia ex opinione suspensa sunt*," which means, "Everything depends upon one's attitude." It outlines the program of preventive psychiatry. This program has to be communicated by organized efforts of parents, educators, psychiatrists, and psychologists. In fact it obviously needs the cooperation of the whole community in which the child will have to grow up.

There are at first the parents. The child will follow the parent-ideal, will imitate the parents' attitude, their way of life, because it does not know any other one. Parents involved in interpersonal strife will be poor examples. Their approach to others, their preconceived opinions, their prejudices, may hamper a child's growing into maturity more than mental and physical handicaps. Mothers have twofold duties. Through the mother the child experiences for the first time fellowship and love. On the other hand it is her function to interpret to him community feelings, to link him to society. Many great fellowmen have revealed how much they owe to their mothers who related them not only to themselves but helped them to transform their love for their mothers into human fellowship. A lack of sound training of mothers may bring about just the opposite effect. Among fifty mothers of psychotic adolescents picked up at random, 76 per cent considered themselves inadequate in their approach to others, characterized themselves as timid and shy, oversensitive and worrisome, were shut away from neighbours, had few friends, and were unhappy in their married life. 47 per cent were inadequate housewives whose children were ashamed to invite friends because embarrassed by poor home conditions and by a home atmosphere full of tension and strife. Many of those mothers were overstressing details in the training of their children, and were wholly ignorant of any educational or psychological approach to the complex problem of child-raising and child-training. Nearly all of them were nervous and unprepared for this most important task of their life.

We know that anyone who is not adequately prepared for a task he has to perform approaches it with feelings of tension and anxiety. We call him nervous and unfitted to achieve good results. We know that only adequate training and preparation will release his tense approach, will abolish his feelings of inadequacy in facing his work. It is of no use blaming the mothers for the maladjustment of their children if no one will help them to acquire the necessary training themselves. We cannot ask an individual to remain calm and composed when facing a lion without a gun. This is just what mothers are meeting when, ignorant, unprepared, and without help, they have to face the enormous task of bringing up children.

Abraham Meyerson writes, "The ability to stand social scrutiny, to enter into easy and communicative relationship, the feeling of being secure in that one does not reveal too much and conceals successfully, is

greatly impaired in those unfortunate people who suffer from what has been called a social neurosis." He then continues, "The social neurosis finally evolves into inferiority feelings, but this is a latter evolution of psychopathology. At first there is the inferior reaction, then there is anticipatory anxiety or dread; this evolves into situational reactions of a fixed type, frequently psychosomatic development - in some cases, as I think is true, into actual psychosis; and the feeling of inferiority arises as the individual feels himself incapable of coping with situations involving the personalities and confrontations of others."

This description applies to anyone who has already accepted the morbid mechanism of escaping into neurosis or maladjustment. The cultural education of the family is no more adequate. The new additions to our knowledge and methods in the field of education, psychiatry, and psychology need the interpretation of the experts. Nurseries, schools, child guidance clinics, advisory agencies, are no rivals of the family but are supposed to supplant it with their various coordinating and indispensable services. Parents are as badly in need of encouragement and support as are their children. And since unbalanced people tend to unbalance others, we achieve nothing by blaming the parents and staying aloof from a task which is as well ours as theirs.

The mystery and prejudice connected previously with "mental conditions" are about to be lifted. Well organized attempts to prevent them have to avoid blaming any group engaged in this daring work. They all are essential in carrying it out. To temporize because we have not yet discovered the minute details of their etiology may gratify the pessimist and discouraged only. There is no room in preventive psychiatry for hopelessness and discouragement. It is the optimistic outlook that Adler has presented, by maintaining that our final achievements are not so much the effects of inheritance and disposition as the results of our own efforts which has made Individual Psychology the most important contributor to preventive psychiatry.

The terminology of Individual Psychology, such as inferiority feelings, superiority complex, compensation, hypercompensation, community feelings, social interest, and so on, has amazingly fast become a common good of the colloquial languages. In fifty articles picked out at random dealing with educational and psychological topics, there was only one which did not apply one or more Individual Psychological terms without mentioning their origin. When once, annoyed by this fact, we drew Alfred Adler's attention to it, he commented, "I was always striving to make my studies available to the whole of mankind. It became clear to me that it had to be presented in terms of common sense, comprehensible to everyone. There will be a time, not too far away, when these terms will become absorbed to such an extent that my name as their originator will not be mentioned any longer. It will not matter, because then Individual Psychology, theory and practice, will have become indispensable as an expression of the single individual's integrating process as well as that of mankind." It seems that this time has arrived.