

Epistolary Guidance: an Adlerian Contribution

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INTRODUCTION

Reading alone cannot provide the necessary guidance for individuals with emotional difficulties. In cases where a direct personal aid is not available, an epistolary guidance, in connection with reading, has sometimes been tried. Its possibilities, limits, and technique seem to be worthy of some interest.

Epistolary guidance in life difficulties is much older than scientific psychology. We are all familiar with the Epistles of Paul the Apostle; Robert Lazarsfeld has studied the letters written by Chrysostomus to Olympias(3) and students of modern German literature may think of the letters of Rainer Maria Rilke.(5) Up to now the only work we know of on this subject which has Individual Psychology for its scientific basis is Künkel's book, *Krisenbriefe*.(2) Künkel discusses twenty-four cases of epistolary therapy. The present writer, guided by this book in his own work, can confirm that

what moves—what is painful and helpful at the same time—is the dire necessity. The letters themselves do not heal; neither do they provoke an inner crisis; they content themselves with pointing out the real forces at work, with preventing them from being spoiled or misled and above all, with eliminating the obstacles in their way. It is not a question of cure by correspondence, but one of transformations of character which had anyway already begun and which can be accelerated, clarified and perhaps deepened. (2, p.5)

Comparative Individual Psychology as taught by Alfred Adler is in the first place a scientific method of *understanding human behavior*. (cf.4) It is furthermore an essential *basis for education*: by practising Individual Psychology we can give children efficient help in forming for themselves a life-style which makes for a happy social existence. Comparative Individual Psychology is therefore both: an excellent mental hygiene for everybody and a psychotherapy for cases of maladjustment. Our work will always consist in giving insight into behavior mechanisms, and encouragement for the training of a better social behavior.

CASE STUDY

Early in 1946, G.M.R., 25 years old, a British soldier serving abroad, attended a lecture on "Child Guidance Clinics" in an Army College, and then consulted the instructor about his depressions. He had recently married a girl who was in the armed forces and who had since been demobilized. The honeymoon was an utter failure. His wife found suddenly that he was "very young," and this made him feel miserable. There had been some talk about a divorce, and an army padre had been consulted. G.M.R. declared he must have an "Oedipus complex."

It was pointed out to him that perhaps he had erroneously applied to himself a doubtful hypothesis and that it might be better to try to understand things in a simpler and more realistic way.

His earliest childhood recollection is as follows: "Although I had a bad cold, I was allowed by my mother to go into the garden, as a neighbor had suggested it would do me good. I was there together with a girl from next door, and we found a dead rabbit."

Does not this pessimistic childhood memory tell in other words the same sad marriage story which has just been told? It reveals that the man was a pampered child, possibly an only child, and apparently not well prepared for social life in general, and for a harmonious marriage in particular. To make this interpretation clear, let us contrast this earliest recollection with that of another soldier who, before the war, had made a fine marriage of which he often talked enthusiastically: "I remember as the first happening in my life that I went with my twin sister hand in hand, each one having a penny, and we bought sweets for ourselves." Optimism, co-activity, sharing of pleasure, are clearly the guiding lines of this man's life-style, as revealed both by this recollection and by his present overt behavior.

G.M.R. confirmed the conjecture that his mother—a very nervous woman—pampered him and had no other children. His father died when the boy was still a baby; the mother married again later on. He hated himself for not being able to love his mother, and could not help comparing himself continuously with what others might think of him, being thus incapable of having real friends. He was preparing for an examination in order to have better opportunities when demobilized, but was unable to concentrate in his studies.

Time and circumstances did not permit conventional treatment. Therefore, it was explained to him: (1) that a pampered only child has,

as a matter of course, as an adult, the very difficulties he is meeting now. There would, however, be no point in feeling reproachful toward his mother, who meant well, and who had the excuse that *her* parents did not educate her better; (2) that there is no use in comparing oneself with others and with their opinions of us, but only in comparing oneself as one formerly was, with that which one has, and may still, become; (3) that there is no reason why he should not be able to improve his marriage relations as time goes on, since to be young is not a fault which grows daily and since he is, as a matter of fact, a personable young man who is physically well. He was also invited to attend the forthcoming lectures on Individual Psychology and urged to apply intelligently to himself what he could learn.

The following correspondence began some time after his interview:

March 14, 1946

Dear Sergeant:

You will probably remember me as the chap to whom you gave advice at the college some time ago. I'm in the hospital now with yellow jaundice and although I feel quite OK, expect to have to stay here another fortnight.

I've been thinking of writing to you for days now. Your words were so helpful and reassuring before, and I should like to have been able to say that I am carrying out your advice and feeling the benefits of it. What you told me of comparisons and courage was right. I know that when I think of everything from an observer's viewpoint and use such intelligence as I have; it seems more than ever that you gave me explanations of all my difficulties. But ever since leaving the college there has been something that has been holding me back, something which I don't understand. That is, I believe, temperament.

It seems as if my feelings constantly overcome intelligence and get the better of me. I seem to be constantly wrapped in thoughts and doubts about myself, and act irrationally. It has become worse since coming in hospital some three weeks ago. I suppose this is the environmental influence.

I've occupied my time as much as possible with various things, making toys, etc., but it seems that this is the way I always go—employing myself in my own activities and considering that I'm wasting time in developing friendships around me. For example when I arrived, I was the first two days on very good terms with the chap in the next bed. He is a light-hearted sort who doesn't worry. Well then my feelings began to creep in as usual. What a waste of time it seemed talking to him. He wouldn't know anything about education or politics or psychology. It just seemed

aimless prattle that wasn't getting us anywhere. And so I became more and more moody. I realized the other day that the outward appearance of this was that I presented an air of general indifference that seems to comply with the chart you developed in a lecture. In fact I feel now very much as I did when I came into the army—moody and indifferent. But it also seems that for the first time in ages I am being myself. I've tried so much to improve myself and be something I'm not, and now it seems that although I am pretty useless like this I am being more sincere about everything. What's going to happen I don't know. I'm expecting to be out of the army in another month, and know that if I go home like this my wife won't stay with me long. My Mother and Father will probably not want me. And yet still I have a horrible feeling of indifference about the whole thing. A feeling which says, then in that case I can start things afresh and away from everyone. My intelligence tells me that is wrong, but I can't see that I can rid myself of the feeling of being able to dodge difficulties in such a way.

My wife wrote and said the other day that she was so pleased with my recent letters, and was convinced that she would see no more of the indifferent individual she knew before—yet what am I to say? I haven't changed. If I tried to tell her this she would only write me a long lecturing letter—that is what she did when I told her I'd spoken to you before and when I said that you had told me it might take years to change myself. She said she thought that was stupid and that I only had to forget myself and "go ahead." That makes things sound almost impossible for the future. Our letters are smoothed over now, but far from looking forward to being with her again I'm almost scared of the outcome. She is a fine girl in many ways but must be constantly entertained, otherwise she is bad-tempered and impatient, and indifferent herself. How I'm to keep up an "act" of entertaining for any length of time I don't know.

I hope you don't mind my writing all this to you. It feels good somehow to get it all out. I just can't understand somehow the dividing line between temperament and intelligence, and how I can hope to learn to subjugate the former. Last night my bedmate said, "You're the most selfish chap I've known." Since then I've been worrying about the remark and of how I have given that impression. I must have somehow, but I haven't meant to.

Well, I won't worry you any longer. I am going to try and buy the book* you advised when I get home, but if you could find time for a few lines I should appreciate them.

**Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind*, by Alfred Adler, Faber & Faber, London.

Again I wish I could say I'm trying my best, but somehow my feelings come into play; it seems almost impossible to "try," which is more discouraging than anything else.

Yours sincerely,

G.M.B.

Army College X, March 27, 1946

Dear G.M.

Thank you very much for your letter d/d 14th inst. which has just reached me. I am pleased to see that you are *on the way*. Let me not start by saying nice things to sweeten a bitter pill, but let me shock you at once (this is a compliment: I consider you are courageous enough to stand it and to make something good out of it): The fact that you spelt my name in a rather funny way—which caused the letter to take a long way to different places here and which has caused some unnecessary trouble to some people,—the graphological interpretation of your handwriting, and the statement of your room-mate, all point to the fact that you *are*, so far and for the time being, a rather *selfish* chap. It can hardly be otherwise: you are still (and *still* means for a good time to come—the optimism of your dear wife is sheer ignorance which she shares, of course, with most people) in such a trouble with yourself, that you cannot yet find the time and the interest necessary for the showing of one's social interest, one's "love of neighbor"—as religious people would say. You still consider it a waste of time to talk with a light-hearted fellow who does not worry. Try to understand that this is an error which leads you still more into isolation. Probably the harmless and superficial talk of this fellow can teach you a lot. Probably in caring sincerely for him, you might improve your knowledge of human nature. Perhaps, having observed, listened, having tried to find out sympathetic traits in him (and there does not exist a single person or a single behavior which is so ugly that you cannot discover *something* attractive, charming, perhaps even beautiful in it)—well, perhaps after all these endeavors are patiently carried out for quite a while, you may be in a position to help him in some way to further his own development, to march a bit farther on the way from the "I" to the "We." This kind of training is necessary as a preparation for the great job before you: the building of a decent marriage with your wife. You hardly know each other as yet; there are always difficulties of adaptation in the beginning. The more there are difficulties to be overcome, the more you get valuable experience, the more you train your courage for tackling still greater difficulties later on. Well, after this long sermon, let me read your letter again and add a few points.

I am pleased to hear you have been sitting for your examination and hope that you will soon be able to report the good result as well as your being all right again in health.

You will learn to understand yourself better, when you ask yourself when faced with particular ways of behavior of which you become aware: "What am I driving at? Which movement towards which aim is contained in this particular act, mood, thought?" Often you will find that it is a hindrance to be a useless being; then try to drop it, because there can be happiness and mental health only in cooperation, in usefulness. I do not preach this and it is not a question of morals; it has been the experience of ever so many people. You probably produce sometimes moods that you call "temperament," which have however no independent existence, no driving force in themselves. Your aim, as a child who had the experience which became clear in our talk, was not to be useful, but to cultivate your own little self. A change of your *aim* will transform all your particular oddities. This is no suggestion, but has, again, been the experience of so many people.

So cheerio, and let me hear from you.

Sincerely,

P.

Hospital, March 31, 1946

Dear P.—

I did have the courage to face up to your opening remarks. In trying to think out what "aim" I have in writing this letter (for you may think that what I have to say is a form of showing off how good I am getting) I think it is to give you the satisfaction of knowing that at least some of your advice is being put into effect. I hope that aim is a worthy one.

My birthday was about ten days ago, and with it I derived a certain amount of determination. Somehow I told myself that the last 25 years have been useless ones, and here marks the changing point. Since then I have stopped hiding myself in books, etc., and tried to follow life around me. I have also tried to admit ignorance to things I don't know (which is rather a change) and talk to people. I'm glad to say that before the chap in the next bed left here I had become friends with him and had been able to help him over a small problem.

On top of that your letter is very useful, and the part referring to "aims" I hope to be able to use to the best advantage. Above all I now feel more fit to cope with the future and stabilize my marriage into something worth while.

Am still in hospital. . . . I had to remain in bed for five weeks and

rest completely. Next time I write I hope to be able to report a successful start in civvy street. . . .

G.

Army College, April 4, 1946

Dear G.:

Thanks for your nice letter d/d 3/31/46. I am pleased to see that you are actively marching in a better direction; but are you seeing things in the right perspective when thinking the last twenty-five years have been *useless* for you? Not even this horrible war will have been useless when we learn from it how to act better in the future.

This may not yet have been the last war—and in your life too, new difficulties will turn up. I enclose a spare copy of a chapter on sex behavior; you might study it with your wife; and you can *both* write to me in case you do not find your way yourselves.

P.

Hospital, April 22, 1946

Dear P.:

I found your chapter on sex behavior very interesting. What interested me most was the mention of the man imagining what he looked like in a woman's eyes. It was that which was very true in my case, not only with my wife, but with other girls I have been out with, before her. I have constantly been trying to see myself in their eyes and felt the image becoming smaller and weaker as time went on.

I shall not expect a reply to this letter, much as I would like one. I will write you again when I am in England.

If I may, I would like to tell you something of what has happened since I last wrote. To do that may not be exactly useful, but it is nice to have someone to tell it to who will really understand, and it may help to clear my own mind on several things.

Firstly, since last writing, I spent about a fortnight during which I am confident that I was progressing in the right direction. I was concentrating entirely on changing my aim to one of usefulness at all times and I felt that I was growing stronger and more confident daily. It seemed as if I had at last found a moral code which ignored such things as good and bad, selfish and unselfish, etc., and concentrated on becoming socially efficient. I feel *almost* sure that it was a way of which you would approve. The results were that my kit was tidy daily and I gave all attention to complying with hospital rules and regulations. I was far more respectful

to the nurses, etc., my letters were written to my wife with a view to being as helpful as possible. I made her a pair of slippers; I was finding time to talk to anyone who wanted to talk to me (instead of pushing myself to show off) and was helpful when necessary around the ward. I seemed far more balanced; somehow it was not a case of "striving" the whole time to try and help everyone in general, and then being discouraged by those who did not need help. I just kept myself constantly prepared to do my best at whatever was demanded. During this time I acquired two friends, and with one in particular (incidentally, an RSM) was having a good deal of fun and a freedom of speech quite unstrained. Whenever in doubt, by asking myself "what action will produce the most useful result?" I usually found the answer. Yet during this time, it seemed that most actions did benefit me personally. When helping others I was gaining satisfaction myself, and at other times I was, for once, doing the things which I wanted to do, confidently, merely by knowing that those things were of some social value if only to myself. I think I was understanding my own worth and making the most of it.

Well, it lasted a fortnight roughly (which encouragingly is longer than I usually have my good moods of old—I know it was the "aim" which made the difference) and then, as you warned me in your latest letter, the rot set in.

For about four days now, no matter how I have tried to convince myself of my "aim," etc., I have gradually been becoming more and more neurotic—that is something which I find gets me down as much as possible, the idea of being "neurotic." When in company I sometimes think of the word and it seems to say, "that is why you are branded as being different to everyone else here, you're neurotic." Yet I hardly know the real meaning of the word. Reading in the paper some mornings ago that neurotics who had been discharged from the army some time ago were unhappy in England and were to be given treatment was probably the discouraging factor which started what I have termed the "rot." I can't be sure of this but I suppose my mind must have said: "You really are in trouble—you're in a similar state to these chaps."

From then onwards, despite the fact that I have tried to revert to my original aim time and time again, I seem temporarily to be slipping very badly. I think what it has amounted to is this,—whereas for the fortnight I was making the most use of myself and seeing people and problems objectively, what I am doing now, as in the past, is allowing my behavior to react in accordance with what I think other people are thinking of me (as when with my wife). It seems very silly my being able to tell this and not to do anything about it. Probably, tomorrow when I go back to my

unit and prepare for transit to go home I shall recapture my "aim." But then it seems that any future discouragement from my wife, if it is going to affect me in this way, will gradually bring about the gap between us again. I don't think she is very neurotic, but is rather different from me—her particular inferiority results in criticism of others—something which I am very afraid may in my present condition, completely discourage me. If she were tolerant, and one in whom I could confide my own troubles it would be different. It seems to me that she has a useless life-style herself—she has to be constantly entertained in one way or another. I know that encouraging her in her activities, praising good results, etc., is the right treatment for her, and that if I could constantly be as I was during that fortnight I could deal with her. But, I can see now, that it is going to take a long time for me to completely change my life-style. I have probably expected too much at once. Whether it is advisable for us both to be together I don't know. I sometimes think that it may ruin both our lives. Nevertheless it must be given a chance, I can see that. I will, should the worst happen, try and get her to write to you (I don't promise, for in our worst moments she treats me—naturally—with no respect, and may think little of my idea.) It is so good of you to offer to help us. You know me, and will probably be able to explain things to her far better than I could ever do.

There is something which I am not entirely clear on. During the fortnight despite the fact that my relationships around me were good, the results attained all benefitted myself personally. Then, as the "aim" lost its grip I became more and more concerned that all I had been doing was selfish and I began to wonder more and more what others thought of me. I began "trying not to be selfish," giving unnecessary thought to what others were doing and talking about and so bringing on my own inferiority feeling.

Three days ago one chap asked me to go to X. with him (we had had a most successful afternoon on pass together the day previous to that). I could not see any point in going to X., fancying more to lie in the sun here with another chap. Yet, I saw myself in my friend's eyes as being very selfish if I didn't go. I went. The afternoon was ruined. I felt myself becoming more and more indifferent and isolated. Another example is the RSM and his friend. Whereas a few days ago it was give and take between us, now I am doing whatever they want to do to prevent myself being "selfish" while I'm with them, and I somehow find that I can hardly speak a word. What I do say is unnatural and forced, and that by not looking after my own interests, I am far less useful than before. I am afraid what "selfishness" *is* has me confused. It seems that anyone, to do anything successfully, has to have a certain amount of selfishness. The only doubt that

I was quite on the right path during the fortnight is that what I was doing, whilst not interfering with others and being useful, was getting *me* somewhere. In other words, was it *selfish*?

(Later) Well, it seems that writing to you has done a certain amount of good: I had to break off then to go to supper. Walked back with the RSM and two others and was chatting quite normally with them. I wasn't particularly trying hard—it seems that no matter how hard I try, if my mind is working in the wrong direction, the results are negative.

I managed to borrow *Private Worlds* by Phyllis Bottome which you recommended, and it being a Penguin edition, have permission to take it away with me.

G.

Somewhere in UK—May 27, 1946

Dear P.

I have been demobilized a fortnight. Am still awaiting an interview for teaching and do not yet know the result of my examination.

My wife is staying with my people and myself here. We had a week's holiday alone in N. and returned to this house two days ago.

At the moment my parents are out for the day and my wife is shopping. I will try and tell you what has happened since I came home, as this morning things between my wife and I came to a critical point.

Firstly I arrived here alone and spent two days with my parents before Mary arrived from X. On the second evening, after feeling the strain of repressed emotions and isolation creeping in me I had a long talk (the first open one I've ever had) with my step-father. I told him everything, trying to explain psychologically the reason for my moods and anti-social behavior. I told him how I thought Mother's influence had created this, and that, in fact, I bore no ill will to either her or him. Well, that cleared the air between us. He proved to have a remarkable understanding for which I never before credited him, and my relationship with him has since been open and altogether different.

As to Mother, she is highly emotional, and I have tried to be as useful as possible without letting her feelings dominate my own. In all this I think I have been partially successful, although I don't think I could live with Mother for very long.

My wife arrived, and after a day I felt very much in love. I then saw that Mother's talk got on her nerves and completed arrangements for taking her to N. so as to be on our own.

The first evening in N. our troubles began. I suppose I began seeing myself in her eyes again. She began to take the initiative in love-making.

I tried to comply but could see that by doing so I was giving her a feeling of superiority over me, which was opposite to what it should have been. I rather stupidly told her so. After some bickering, during which she said she did not love me and that I should be a man, we went to sleep.

The next morning, whilst she was out of the room, I cried like a child. It seemed that all I had been working towards had fallen through. Then I remembered the *aim*, and during a morning stroll I had with Mary, told her all about you and what was wrong with me. (She admitted that she had been to a psychiatrist after the bombing over here, that he had told her it had caused neurotic symptoms in her, and that she considered herself to be quite normal again. Is this possible?) Anyway I think I did convince her that my aim was one of cooperation and not ascendancy over her. She said that was what she wanted.

For the next three or four days we were successful. I was being as useful and considerate as possible, and one evening she told me how pleased she was with the change in me, and said she appreciated my kindness and thoughtfulness and was beginning to respect my advice. Then about a day later the trouble began. She began criticising some of my actions. Small criticisms at first but gradually becoming more frequent. At first I tried to pass them off, but somehow a wall of defense began to be built around me and I got more and more into the habit of arguing and pig-headedly asserting that what I am doing is right. She, during the past few days became more and more moody, and has discouraged more and more any affectionate advances I have tried to make. I have found myself trying to force affection and trying to impress her.

This morning I decided we must have it out, and challenged her with not being affectionate. She says she doesn't love me. Many of my habits annoy her and so on.

I have just seen the position fairly clearly again and before she went out persuaded her to give me another chance. I am convinced that if only I can stick to the *aim*, the question of love will not worry us and that things will work out, but with her nature being very intolerant, whether I shall be able to keep going the right way seems doubtful. I am going to try my best again, but it is with the thought of possible failure in the back of my mind. The thought that "she wants me to be a man, therefore I must act like one," seems to steal thoughtfulness, kindness and love from me.

I should like to hear from you at this address, if you have time. I am uncertain as to how to proceed, really. The sexual side of things seems to have progressed very little.

G.

Army College, June 3, 1946

Dear G.

As you would not give me your home address in your letter d/d 4/22/46, I could not answer you that: in order to fulfill the *general* aim of social usefulness, we have to make some *special* contribution, for instance as a teacher, or in any other way according to the potentialities of our self. That may sometimes mean to appear unsocial; may mean loneliness, when we *prepare* ourselves in a period of isolation for a higher contribution to the future life of the community.

Without being a clear *self*, you cannot be of good use. You should find it all right, both to stay alone for a sun bath if you feel strongly like it, and to use the pronoun "I"—when it is necessary as the subject of a sentence. But dismiss a sterile philosophizing about abstract "selfishness," about egoism and altruism—senseless notions when taken in a static, in an absolutistic way.

This shocking word "neurotic," I could not tell you before, comes from the Greek "neuron" which means "nerve"; as "nervous" comes from the Latin word "nervus," also meaning "nerve."

There may be something wrong with our nerves as organs: then a neurologist, a medical specialist, must try to help. To be neurotic or nervous, however, means nowadays a particular way of behavior, of character. You know, don't you, that this sad word "neurotic" does not mean anything but "discouraged," "unsocial." For the latter word, rather say and think: not *yet social enough!* For we are all "on the way," as my teacher Adler used to say.

Now, I received your letter d/d 5/25/46 with your home address, and I confess I expected it to be as it is, for your marriage difficulties are surely no small ones.

Anyway, the open talk from man to man with your step-father shows that a maturation process is going on in you, and that certain points are gained, whatever temporary fallbacks may occur.

You handled the situation well in getting the nervous mother and the not less neurotic (read: discouraged, babylike) wife away from each other. But the remaining difficulties between you and your wife could not yet be mastered. You analyzed the domineering attitude of your wife probably correctly and admitted yourself, that it is no good to know better, and to exploit this knowledge in a neurotic manner. To give in smilingly, like in a play, when human dignity is not at stake, is not bad, provided that the roles are changed from time to time.

The fact that your wife has had to see a psychiatrist, that she is not

happy when things between you go nicely, that she declared she did not love you, seem to be such obstacles, that either you will both have to be treated personally, or you must give up. To get through a divorce in human dignity, as matter-of-factly as possible, is a great task, in the decent fulfillment of which you may gain enough power and understanding and ripeness to be more successful in a later new attempt to solve the love problem. But there, you have to make up your mind and take the responsibility for your decision yourself.

Let me hear from you again, old boy—and: courage!

P.

Somewhere in UK, June 17, 1946

Dear P.:

Since I last wrote I have been in numerous situations which have called for courage, and I believe I have stood up to them.

My parental situation has been settled in a friendly way. I have almost obtained employment as an insurance agent—the teaching I am unable to commence until about Xmas. Difficulties are appearing constantly, but I am learning to respect myself and realize that God gave me such abilities as I have to use and not destroy.

The situation between myself and my wife is still very precarious. I stayed at her relatives' house for a week with her and we got along famously together—during this time I believe we learned more about each other than ever before.

Then a letter from my mother caused her to worry and since then we have had several rows, but I can stand up to her now and say my piece.

I don't want to give up now we have gone so far. I believe that after some more quarrels we can be more strongly attached to one another. I wonder, though, whether we would be better apart. Her nerves are such that it takes little to annoy her, and she seems very hard to satisfy. Whatever happens I think that I am prepared to face up to the situation.

Since arriving here, I have found many old friends (I was born here) and it is grand to be back among them again.

G.

March 20, 1947

Dear P.

It is very good to hear from you again, and to know that you are released from the Forces.

I have been teaching in a Junior School now since last September, and find the work fascinating. I am quite confident, now, that you would

not recognize me as the person I was a year ago. I feel an absolute new man!

I separated from my wife just after last writing to you. She would not continue. It was then that I had nearly three months without work waiting to start on a teacher's course. It was during that time that I really took a firm hold on myself and gradually gained more and more confidence. I could *feel* my reasoning powers, judgment and courage increasing, and know that this last year I have matured enormously. My wife wanted to come back to me six months or so ago, and has since made many attempts at reconciliation. I have repelled them all, and have had to be cruel on one or two occasions. I am quite sure that I have adopted the only way, and that sooner or later my wife will appreciate the fact. Our case comes up in court any time now, and I am hoping the marriage will be annulled.

In my work I mix with men and women of all ages, and delight in making new contacts. I have been lucky in getting into a good school, and have had the opportunity of teaching children from five to fourteen years. Have also spent several days in the nursery studying younger children. The work is quite hard, but we have three months holiday a year to recover. I love it all.

The teacher's course I should have gone on last year was cancelled, but it has turned out for the best, as I have just been accepted for a two-year course starting in September next, which leads to a University diploma and which is a great opportunity for me.

The first two aims of your Psychology I believe I have achieved—work, and ability to make friends. The third—well perhaps in a few years I shall be writing to say I am marrying again. Just now though, such thoughts are far from my mind.

G.

January, 1949

Dear P.

. . . After leaving my ex-wife two and a half years ago (the marriage was annulled quite satisfactorily) I spent a year teaching in a primary school, and loved the work very much. I found the study of young children of very great interest, and believe the experience which I was undergoing when I met you has helped me in understanding them.

. . . I have just become engaged to be married. I have known my fiance just over six months, and as she is very young we shall not be married until 1950.

G.

CONCLUSION

We do not think that this case needs any commentary and should like to sum up our experience with a number of cases. In this, we are perfectly in line with Künkel.

1. A psychological correspondence which is mere intellectual teaching of a useful science of behavior, without touching the individual as a whole and his attitudes towards the others, is as inadequate as the mechanical learning of facts to serve in an examination, and which will be forgotten without having enriched the student's personal culture. Neither would simple consolations or general suggestions be worth while.

2. A scientific epistolary guidance has become possible on the basis of Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology and may be an efficient means to help a person in transforming his or her primitive life-style.

3. Its technique, in principle the same as that of personal guidance and counseling, must be closely adapted to the particular case and can be usefully handled only by one trained in such work.

4. It is applicable to persons of any degree of education, provided they want it and are able to express themselves easily in writing and to read replies with understanding.

5. It is especially efficient when followed or preceded by at least one or two personal interviews.

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