

MUTUAL ACHIEVEMENT STRIVING AND SOCIAL INTEREST

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This paper explores the suggestion that the thinking and results in various studies in which I have participated are in line with Adlerian psychology.¹ Presenting the tenor of my pursuit may establish the significant element that, more than any direct influence, accounts for the overlaps and disparities between Adlerian theory and the few ideas I have been exploring.

INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL REFORM

The consistent thread in this pursuit is the union of clinical and social perspective through the analysis of differing degrees of mental disturbance in the evolution of an explicit dimension of mental health-illness. Within the clinical setting I can hope to generate and check a scientific statement of what the good life will entail. It is apparently paradoxical, but not truly so, that a best place to discover the principles of the good life is among those who are oppressed.

The concepts coming from the study of mental illness in practical settings are therefore only partly meant as contributions to the diagnosis and treatment of persons commonly treated as emotionally disturbed. They are also directed toward integration within a broad social analysis. What is needed to establish a good society so that the good life is possible? What are the limits to social organization, to regularity and repetition and ceremony, for example, such that the society maintains itself but only through promoting the mental health of the individuals in that society? Can I develop suggestions for the post-industrial society in which social welfare replaces economic structure as the organizing principle of society? It must be admitted immediately, however, that until now I have drawn the

¹The ideas about which I will speak have developed in collective research activities and credit is due to the colleagues with whom I have been associated. Their contribution has been more directed toward the clinical than the social aspects of the theory, as the incompleteness of the social components will testify, and the social theory I hold is far from that which they profess. The work started in Henry A. Murray's laboratory, and was continued through intensive and rewarding collaboration with Morton Deutsch, Robert Kohrman, Helen MacGregor, Rhondda K. Cassetta and John C. Scanlon, social psychologist, psychoanalyst, psychiatric social worker, biostatistician and social scientist.

clinical implications more than the social implications although I am currently moving in the direction of clarifying the social issues and will suggest some elements of the social content in this essay.

Adler too had a personal commitment to the understanding and service of mentally disturbed persons and to social problems and social reform. The dual involvement is as essential to his ideas as it is to mine, and this combinative interest constitutes the base for the similarities that exist. But Adler's commitment was of another kind than is mine, partly for personal and partly for historical reasons, and therein rests the ground for the dissimilarities. Bottome's account confirms what can be inferred from the nature of his theoretical position.

When Adler returned to Vienna in 1916 and found himself once more with his old group in the Cafe Central, it was a strange and significant reunion. . . . 'Now, Adler,' a friend called out to him, 'what have you got that's new to bring to us?' . . . 'It seems to me,' Adler said in answer to his questioner, but looking seriously from one to the other around the long table, 'that what the world chiefly wants today is *Gemeinschaftsgefuehl*.' . . . '*Gemeinschaftsgefuehl*,' poor Neuer cried aloud, 'what a word to use—it does not even exist in philosophy!' 'It is what the world wants,' Adler repeated quietly" (pp. 120-121).

His goal of 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' was the same as the goal of all true religions has always been; but Adler was prepared to do what no man of science had as yet adventured — to harness his science to a religious goal, in order to train the human being in such a way that the goal could be reached. . . . From this moment, in the Cafe Central . . . Adler was prepared to alter the direction of mankind" (p. 122).

It should be clear from these passages that Adler pioneered in joining his social and scientific interests, and he united his interests in such a way that through his own efforts he could achieve important strides in resolving the social problems of his time. He hoped to implement the reforms he saw necessary. Given this activist conviction, he was inevitably drawn from the study and treatment of the more abnormal to the less abnormal, since he could be more effective with the latter than with the former; and for the same reason he was led to the generation of social reform rather than social revolutionary movements. Orgler (12) specifically informs us that Adler felt it was necessary to change people directly before one could expect adequate improvement in the social conditions of life. With this position he inclined toward the direct promotion of fellow human beings through education, psychotherapy and training parents to raise their children properly. The good life would come for Adler when there were good people to create it.

Several factors make me pessimistic about this approach and lead me to conclude that it is necessary to change social conditions first.

These factors come to my attention partly because Adler promulgated his view, had it put into effect, and the results are available. By now it is clear that those who need the most education do not value it and do not seek it, and those motivated for psychiatric treatment are systematically more healthy than those not motivated (9). Those who will listen to new ideas about raising children are already involved in just this matter and are likely to be better parents in the first place. Similarly, the society that is prepared to provide many good, trained educators and therapists is already a significantly different society from that which exists today. This is the frustration of public health workers who complain that existing knowledge is not being implemented. One cannot avoid first making marked changes in society even if one's goal is merely to make education and mental hygiene focal issues in our society.

My point is that Adler connected social reform and mental hygiene most adequately at the place of his effective commitment to action — at the level of treating and studying the mentally healthy. Disillusioned with such approaches to reforming the world, I have tried to unite the social and personal differently, hoping to become a pertinent contributor to the enterprise of those changing the social conditions directly. The result of our different orientations is that my ideas tend to concur with Adler's where history has shown him useful (primarily with respect to mental health), and they disagree with his theories when the center of attention is mental disorder. Thus, I will argue that Adler integrates *social interest* and *striving for perfection* in his theory of mental health, but segregates these factors in his views of mental illness, whereas they are better conceived as always united but having diverse forms in mental health and illness.

THEORY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS

The person who is mentally healthy is frequently engaged in events that belong on the highest level of what I call "mutual achievement striving," a notion which suggests a fundamental similarity to the most developed views of Adler in which social interest is defined in terms of striving for perfection.

The concept of mutual achievement striving pertains to the actions of a person in his social intercourse as he creates the events by which he lives his life. All people are constantly in social motion and are continually giving form to that social motion such that actions are unfolded. The events of life can be seen as units of action in that they

are the molds within which actions are solidified as actions and are distinguished from motion. These events are created by the person and by the others in his surroundings, and when taken in the aggregate they constitute the person's functioning. The events by which a person lives can be reconstructed by examining his intentions (what goals he has in mind) and the actions within which this consciousness exists. Events are personal and are discovered only upon inclusion of conscious intention.

These events can be classified according to the extent to which they reflect maximum mutual achievement striving. All events are characterized by some goal or purpose which gives expression to the achievement component of that event. (I refer here to the goal or outcome of the event, not the intention of the person, since it is common to see an intention in conflict with the social goal that evolves.) All events are characterized also by a sharing among the participants of the achievements gained, by the mutually inclusive division of satisfactions.²

It is central to my argument that the achievement and mutuality factors are always integrated in events so that one observes only mutual achievement strivings. The difference between healthy and unhealthy persons, thus, is the level of mutual achievement striving at which they function.

Mental health. The mentally healthy person tends to live at the highest level of mutual achievement striving. The goals toward which he strives are goals which encompass much cooperation in their attainment and which provide broad distribution of rewards. He moves toward collective action that brings maximum harmony among people during movement toward goals and upon attainment of them. He will not try to cooperate at the expense of achievement (i. e. conform), nor will he attempt to achieve at the expense of coordination with his fellow workers or companions. His exertion of power and effort is expended within a social constraint so that his locomotions toward goals do not alienate him from his fellow beings. His attainments are social attainments and tend to outlive his active pursuit.

²When I speak of the sharing of satisfactions, I refer both to interpersonal relations, in which there is more or less interlocking aggrandizement and sacrifice between persons, and to the distribution of satisfactions within a person's psychological economy, in which some needs contradict others. I have discussed elsewhere (9, pp. 22-23) the fact that these are but two perspectives on the same action.

He helps to create events in which continual redefinition and restructuring are expressed, in which all efforts are positive and yet tentative, discrete, yet developing. He tends to discover himself and his comrades in the development of these events. He does not aim for fellowship (i. e. for mutuality) by itself, but encompasses it within his striving and regularly comes upon it. There is expansiveness and inclusiveness in the actions of the mentally healthy person.

Mental illness. The mentally unhealthy person tends to live at lower levels of mutual achievement striving. The goals toward which he strives entail mutual exclusiveness during pursuit and upon attainment. Goals are valued which are perceived as closed to equal sharing by all, goals like fame or personal beauty which are presumed to lose their sense if all people are equally famous or beautiful. The unhealthy person may try to cooperate, but to do this he must subtract from his efforts at achievement; he will see this cooperation as accommodation by sacrifice for himself or for others. He may try to fulfill himself through achieving, but he will construct achievements at the expense of satisfying personal relationships. His attainments are personal ones and they do not persist beyond his current activities. He helps to create events which involve, at best, complementary demands and compliances between persons and, at worst, a string of frustrated efforts toward reciprocal aggrandizement or dependency. He relies upon social structure, tradition, rules, authority and stereotypical behavior. He may strive directly for communion but, because he makes it an end in itself he voids his own efforts. There is withdrawal and exclusiveness in the actions of the mentally unhealthy person, more or less in relation to the severity of his disorder.

OVERCOMING A CENTRAL DUALISM

In rejecting the analytic segregation of mutuality, on the one hand, and achievement interests, on the other, in favor of mutual achievements, I am trying to overcome a central dualism in social science that functions to accommodate current divisions of labor and of life in industrial societies. The dualism essentially separates production and consumption, achieving and sharing. It has many variants, including the following: power—relationship; work—love; power—love; work—play or leisure; need achievement—need affiliation; subjective probability of success or level of aspiration—value, desirability or utility of a goal; instrumental—expressive, or social—

emotional; and task involvement—ego involvement. Where social scientists have concentrated upon one side within one of these pairs, as in an emphasis on probability of success, they have sooner or later been forced to bring in some reference to the other side; but they continue to keep the sides segregated in their analysis and thereby miss a critical point. The nature of these concepts contains justification of the social status quo.

There are signs that the dualism will be discarded and a synthesis such as I am suggesting will be accepted. In psychology there are "convergences" in interpersonal theory (7) and the circumplex model of Schaefer (13) which represent movements toward the resolution of this dualism. Horowitz (8) in political-military analysis asserts: "Problems of attainability cannot be segregated from problems of desirability—yet this seems to be just what game theory must do to be operative." Ayers (3) in economics refers to the ceremonial and the technological functions of social structure as integral factors which are always to be examined together.

Morton Deutsch has conceptualized cooperation and competition in such a way that a synthesis of mutuality and achievement components is effected. Referring to "promotive interdependence" and "construent interdependence" (5, 6), he notes:

In a cooperative social situation, the goals for the individuals are *promotively interdependent*. 'Promotive interdependence' specifies a condition in which individuals are so linked together that there is a positive correlation between their goal attainments. The degree of promotive interdependence between two individuals refers to the amount of positive correlation; it can vary in value from 0 to +1." As may be expected, "Construent interdependence" is the condition in which individuals are so linked together that there is a negative correlation between their goal attainments. (6, p. 276).

Deutsch has been concerned to discover the conditions that facilitate the initiation of cooperation, the nature of social groups and of psychological groups, the effects of differing conditions upon group process, and a variety of other social psychological issues. The richness of hypotheses derived from his theory and the wide confirmation in experimental tests, emphasize the value of integrating mutuality and achievement factors.

In the historical development of personal and social theory up to the recent past, it is Adler who overcomes the dualism in his commentary on mental health in which he synthesizes social interest and striving for perfection. The following quotations from Adler (2) are pertinent:

The normal man is an individual who lives in society and whose mode of life is so adapted that, whether he wants it or not, society derives a certain advantage from his work (p. 154).— The goal of perfection must bear within it the goal of an ideal community, because all that we value in life, all that endures and continues to endure is eternally the product of social interest (p. 107).— By having established that the norm for perfection is social interest, we are in a position to understand approximately the direction towards ideal perfection (p. 108).— The neurotic strives toward personal superiority and, in doing so, expects a contribution from the group in which he lives, while the normal individual strives toward the perfection which benefits all (p. 114).

EQUALITY VERSUS AMOUNT OF SATISFACTION

If Adler unites mutuality and achievement in mental health, he segregates them in mental illness, and here is where we differ. Adler considers striving for superiority as the essence of the social motion of persons, as an ever-present quality of restlessness, and he treats social interest as an innate potential that must be developed. Adler sees "clearly in every psychological phenomenon the striving for superiority. It runs parallel to physical growth and is an intrinsic necessity of life itself . . . All our functions follow its directions" (2, p. 103). Social interest, in contrast, is a phenomenon of a different order, having an executive, directive, controlling character. The striving for superiority takes one form when canalized by social interest, and it takes another form when the innate potentiality of social interest remains unrealized.

In my view, the sharing propensities that Adler collects under the phrase "social interest" are necessary constituents of *all* actions. It is not that there are actions whose form is shaped by attitudes toward sharing; rather the transformation from social motion into action involves shaping for a goal and shaping for the distribution of satisfactions at the same time. No action exists without intrinsic mutuality components. A man cannot be a producer of goods without in the very process of production consuming satisfactions; and different modes of production represent different ways of distributing satisfactions both on the job and away from it. Conversely, the most gratifying forms of consumption involve productive effort.

Furthermore, the significant factor to be studied in all observation of action is not whether there is more or less *equality* of satisfaction between collaborators according to the social interest that is manifested, but *how much* satisfaction will accrue to the participants in the events. The masochistic wife who suffers her way through marriage exacts a toll upon the life of her husband. The result of the intertwining of sacrifice and aggrandizement is that many needs of both

wife and husband are in conflict with others of their needs and the total amount of effective satisfaction is diminished. The husband and wife nonetheless obtain about equal amounts of satisfaction from their marital relation or their marriage will disintegrate. In any social intercourse exists the fundamental fact of human relations, not something that ought to be, but something that simply is: human relations provide equality in living for persons bound to each other in action. What is determined in transactions is the actual amount of satisfaction achieved. People can equalize at a low level of satisfaction, or at a high level, but they cannot obtain unequal amounts for any sustained period of time. Stormy marriages that persist over the years usually exemplify equality of satisfaction at minimal levels.

If it is characteristic of mentally healthy persons to seek abundance of satisfaction, it is typical of mentally disturbed persons to seek an *insured given level* of satisfaction. The two primary directions in which mental disorder proceeds involve efforts toward assuring gain by means of the theoretical possibilities of achievement without mutuality, or mutuality without achievement. The lower levels of mutual achievement striving concern attempts³ to live by these false theoretical possibilities.

Achievement without mutuality. I can only suggest here some of the many themes found in the errors of trying to achieve without regard to sharing. The persons driven to fame, wealth, power or position constitute but the most obvious examples. The ironies that accompany such lives, from the barrenness of fame when reached to the extreme dependency upon others for the maintenance of that fame, testify to the error of such ambitions. I have watched depressed people in occupational therapy who must be encouraged into work in the most subtle manner because they want the product of their work to be strictly their own, accomplished without assistance, yet they hesitate to start because the product must be perfect so that they may measure their worth by it. In studying the significant events in the lives of recently admitted state hospital patients (11) we were impressed by the number of people whose entire pattern of symptoms gathered around their performance on the job. The association of work and worth comes from minds who live by this misunder-

³I use the word "attempts" to indicate that the person aims toward a form of human relation that cannot be actualized in fact as noted in the preceding paragraph.

standing of human relations. The life of the thief too is dominated by error in this direction.

Adler's writings are replete with examples from this direction of neurosis. Adler, however, in evaluating a striving for superiority unbounded by social interest, implies that such striving aims for personal abundance of satisfaction. Like the man in the street, he believes that the selfish person is trying to gather much for himself at the expense of others. I suggest that this implication is unwarranted, that these people are geared toward insurance of some satisfaction, not production of abundance. This is why the presence or promise of abundance is insufficient for changing them.

Mutuality without achievement. The other direction for mental disorder concerns efforts toward mutuality without regard to achievement. The religious plea to seek directly the brotherhood of man is paralleled as an accepted neurosis in our society by the social proprieties of being seen in the right circles or having many friends. Some individuals become preoccupied with determining who is to be trusted, apart from what the trust accomplishes. There are members of adolescent gangs who will do extreme things to maintain their relations within the group. Many suicidal attempts are pleas for human contact. One woman whose life we studied (11) was entangled in the following matters immediately prior to hospitalization: she wanted to adopt a baby; she was afraid of being alone when her husband was out of town; a friend of her husband made sexual advances toward her; her husband objected to her visits with her sister. These conflictful episodes in her life came about because she had the achievement of mutuality as her goal, but at a low level of mutual achievement striving.

It is noteworthy that Adler did not allow for social interest without striving for perfection and could not therefore describe the pathology inherent in trying to love all other people regardless of their contribution to one's well-being. Religious figures who preach the brotherhood of man and who also glorify poverty or ignore the matter, reflect such a psychological pathology because they propose a contradiction. The brotherhood of man can be achieved for more than short periods of time only when men are not in actual competition, that is, in the presence of abundance. Similarly, the defense of the existing pattern of social relationships, which is a sort of social interest or mutuality concern, is often found in the most exploited persons, much

to the chagrin and perplexity of the social reformer. That the slave should defend his master may show the slave's preference for a secure degree of satisfaction, but it reflects also his pathological acquiescence in a low level of satisfaction. Such behavior constitutes what might be called social interest apart from striving for perfection.

The speculation that it is profitable to see all striving as mutual achievement striving without a dualistic framework, was put to the test of distinguishing (*a*) the mentally ill and (*b*) their treatments in a clinical setting and was essentially confirmed there (10, 11). The value of this position is that it turns our social and scientific attention away from making people more social or more morally responsible, toward the practical issue of arranging increased amounts of satisfaction to each person on the grounds that this is necessary for the greatest good of all.

INTENDING EQUALITY AND INEQUALITY

Because I have stressed the *fact of equality* of satisfactions between companions, I may be misinterpreted to mean that the *intention to equality* of satisfactions is always more healthy than the *intention to inequality*, to aggrandize or to sacrifice. The more proper statement is: except where actions contradict the intention, the intention to equality is more healthy. The qualifier must be added because intentions are not interpreted apart from the transactions within which they appear. Thus, the meaning of the intention to equality depends upon the actions by which the intention is realized.

My colleagues and I gravitated toward this position more by intuition than by design and were gratified to find the inner logic.

Functional equivalence exists between posing an equalitarian intention in a transactional context of discord, and posing an aggrandizing intention that is supported by the other. On the one hand, the discord of the transaction limits the extent of satisfaction that is to be shared equally; on the other hand, the kind of aggrandizing supported by the other is restricted by his selectivity regarding which intentions he will sustain. The aggrandizing is restricted by the conditions of support in the transaction, and the intention toward equality is limited by the lack of communion in the transaction.

Similar equivalents are an equalitarian intention that follows the requirement of a new intention by the other, and an aggrandizing or sacrificing intention that is redefined by the other. We do not credit the person with the original, private development of the intention toward equality in the first instance; we do credit him for selecting a good redefining transaction in which to express aggrandizing intentions in the second instance (11, p. 623).

Thus it is, that what Adler would call social interest, can be developed within an action context containing inferiority feeling; not the highest level of social interest eventuates to be sure, but certainly

a higher form arises than that which existed prior to the moment of satisfaction. And if this is true, one can develop social interest indirectly by modifying the nature of the events in which one lives rather than by direct education for it. The difference is between political action and religious action.

CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

That each man is a central figure in the creation of his own life is a point of conjunction that places Adler's theories and mine in what Allport (1) calls the Leibnitzian tradition. The exact nature of the overlap in viewpoints in this area is difficult to determine for two reasons: (a) There is ambiguity in Adler's writing concerning whether the creativity is purely subjective (i.e. concerns the meaning of experiences only) or has a more objective nature in that the person promotes behaviors and activities which can conform to his understanding of the world. (b) It has been my concern to denote the variations in one's creation of his own life, how and how much the individual makes his life.

Sometimes Adler (2) takes the objective position as when he sees the neurotic creating experiences to confirm his neurosis:

To approach godlikeness the neurotic evaluates his individuality, his experiences, and his environment according to his slant. But this is far from sufficient to keep him on his life-line and bring him closer to his goal. Therefore he provokes further experiences and exploits them. He does this to facilitate his preconceived utilization of such experiences, namely to feel himself slighted, cheated, or a sufferer, in order to create for himself the familiar and desired basis for aggression. From this it follows that the neurotic creates from reality and his own potentialities the number and kind of character traits and emotional readinesses which are in accord with his personality ideal (pp. 284-285). — One is surprised at the accumulation of disparagements and humiliations to which such patients are exposed until one discovers that they run after their slaps in the face, so to speak (p. 290).

Similarly Adler seems oriented toward action when he lists the "typical occasions for the onset of a neurosis," for he goes on to say: "All these stages and experiences call forth intensifications or changes in the preparatory attitudes to life. The common bond which holds them together is the expectation of a new reality which is always of a social nature . . . and which therefore always means to him a new struggle, and a new danger of succumbing" (p. 297).

But Adler also implies that it is our subjectivity that is primary to the creativity in our lives. He says:

The cause of a neurosis is not that a person has experienced something, but that he cannot digest an experience due to the lack in his style of life of the ability to cooperate (p. 292). — All experience is for the neurotic merely the material or means to gain for his faulty perspective renewed inducements in the direction of

his neurotic guiding lines (p. 292). — The [German] language says with singular sensitivity that we make our experiences . . . , by which it indicates that everyone is master of the way in which he utilizes his experiences (pp. 211-212).

Adler is probably correct in all of these statements. What he leaves undeveloped is precisely my own concern in the matter: some attempt at a systematic account of the variations.

First, it can be agreed readily, I presume, that the person creates his own intentions. The situational forces may favor or induce or suggest particular intentions, but in this private domain, only the individual himself can produce that which he holds in mind while he is acting in the world.

It is pertinent to insist that an intention is a concurrent component of action within any event. Intentions do not precede events as causal agents; and intentions do not follow events as mechanisms for giving meaning to them. They are rather to be considered parts of the action in the same way that lifting one's foot is a part of walking. Since behavior without a kind of focal consciousness like intention is not generally presumed to be action, but rather motion, all people are creators of a significant part of their actions.

All individuals, also, create some parts of the social actions by which they develop their lives. Yet, in this regard, people can differ because actions are parts of transactions, and more or less of the event can be produced by other forces in the transactional arrangement. My colleagues and I have suggested (11) that variation in amount of contribution to the transaction coincides with variation in mental health.

A person is creating more of his life when he participates in the higher forms of mutual achievement strivings. This is noted by the following issues: there is greater mutual modification according to the demonstration of actual operative needs in the higher forms of such striving; more, and more complex, intentions are unfolded; there is less reliance upon hierarchy, tradition, outside authority or other preformed structures for action; there is more embeddedness, openness, and sense of development in such events. The reverse is true of the lower forms of mutual achievement striving. The difference is between an on-going creation of events and a circumstance in which merely entering the situation dictates what will eventuate.

If our analysis is correct, then Adler's increasing attention to the person's creation of his own life was a correlate of his turn toward the study of the normal person; and his apparent movement toward emphasis on the meaning of experience was similarly determined.

SUMMARY

I have tried to present six topics in which central concepts in Adler's theories and ideas which I have been formulating resemble each other. The issues concern integration of social and individual reform, theory of mental health and illness, overcoming a central dualism, equality versus amount of satisfaction, intention to equality, and creativity and mental health. That there are similarities seems undeniable, and to the extent that these exist, the empirical data generated by studies with which I have been connected can contribute to the verification and development of Individual Psychology.

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