

INTRODUCTION

LE ROY P. LEVITT, M.D.

Chicago Medical School

Dr. Taylor, Dr. Garner, Dr. Dreikurs, Dr. Cowen, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is again my honor and privilege as dean, on behalf of the student body and the faculty to open formally the annual Brief Psychotherapy Conference, the fourth, sponsored by our department of psychiatry. Following in this series of major psychiatric approaches, these two days will expound the Adlerian school of thought.

Adler's phenomenological explanation of personality development centers on the concept of life style. Life style is defined as the individual's active adaptation to the social milieu, which develops as a unique personal product of his need for integration into that social milieu and for differentiation from it. I bring this up at this point to illustrate my own life style. Little did I think that some day I would be standing here at such a symposium on Adlerian techniques and also honoring Professor Dreikurs. When I sat and participated in his classes and clinics in 1941, as a student at Chicago Medical School, most of us had little interest in psychiatric methods in general or in any technique in specific. But I clearly remember the energy and fervor with which Dr. Dreikurs worked at his task, and I was deeply impressed by this. My own life style led me in a circuitous route back to a psychiatric career, and as post-war circumstances had it, my training was immersed in the classical Freudian concept of psychoanalysis. But here I stand to honor, and give homage, to both the Adlerian method and to Dr. Dreikurs. Now there is adaptation for you.

As the years have gone by, I have become grateful for the fact that as Alfred North Whitehead has said, "Knowledge gets swallowed up by wisdom." I am not sure I have gotten any wiser, but certainly as for any psychotherapist, my feelings about the mystique and the original seductiveness of certain areas in psychoanalysis have indeed changed. Regarding Adler, I can only use as an analogy the socialist platform of the late and great Norman Thomas. Repudiated and vilified as it was in the 1920's and the 1930's, it was gradually absorbed by the major parties, and arouses very little antagonism today.

In these next two days others, better equipped than myself, will be discussing the Adler-Dreikurs-Ansbacher concepts as basic orientation and components of the theory. You will no doubt be hearing their views on the unity of the individual, the unified concept of

motivation, self-determination and the life goals, the significance of life style, and the development of social feeling. I can only hope and trust that in these expostulations of the particular appellations which Adlerians have used through the decades—whether it be common sense, private sense, private map; the ruling, the getting, the avoiding, and the healthy, socially useful person; masculine protest, god-likeness, the logic of man's communal life, and so forth—attention be given also to the similarities and the derivatives that these terms served for Harry Stack Sullivan, Erich Fromm, Erik Erikson, as well as their equivalencies in terms that belong to Freud and Jung, Rank and Horney, and all the others who struggled with their concepts.

There is a Latin saying, "The times change and we change with them." The original basic thinking of Freud and Adler differed profoundly, especially in areas of the concept of the unconscious and transference phenomena. Today we are far, far away from the original id psychology of 1900 to 1920. The magnificent contributions of Heinz Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein on ego psychology and adaptation, have linked up substantially with Adler's presentation of human nature as a continuous and interweaving process. In this Adler was prophetic as regards our current social problems which have to do with ecology, racism, and the liberation of women. One might say that Adler indeed was the original community psychiatrist, and Dr. Dreikurs' widespread activities in our city and elsewhere took him where no other psychiatrist had deigned to go at that time, in the 1940's and the 1950's, and that was to the people. The same ideas as Adler's were further expressed by distinguished scientists and philosophers such as Lewin, Gordon Allport, Goldstein, and Buber.

Adler and his proponents stressed constantly the methods and successes of short term psychotherapy. In actively confronting the patient with his self-deceptive and self-defeating attitudes that made him cling to his symptoms, Adler encountered and engaged the patient. He communicated to all patients a sense of hopefulness with the overriding conviction that we would all prefer to be socially useful and accepted people. Adler fought lifelong for this, and the present conference indicates that his light still burns brightly. His goal to be treasured and shared always by mental health professionals of all disciplines is to make treatment possible to all those in need and to make it telling, lasting, economical, efficient, and, above all, human.

It is a real pleasure for me to welcome you all to this significant symposium. Thank you very much.