

TOWARD A TECHNOLOGY OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP¹

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I am very grateful to you, Dr. Garner, for the kind remarks you made about me and for your willingness to sponsor a conference on Adlerian psychology. I was also deeply touched by Dean Levitt's courage to come out and say that he was fighting me before and now he can support me. And the same is true for you, Dr. Garner, and for the Chicago Medical School. I am grateful for this honor. It means more to me than any recognition by any other university would mean. In a certain sense the Chicago Medical School is an alma mater for me. We went together developing ideas in new directions, and this recognition on your part is for me exceedingly welcome.

I don't feel well, and so I suggested that I would write down my paper and one of my associates would read it. But I was told that the audience would prefer, even if it was difficult for me, if I could speak, because they felt they wanted not only to hear what I had to say, but they wanted to get acquainted with me. And I am grateful for the opportunity even if I should have to make some interruptions.

Another introductory remark is necessary, and if you don't mind, it is a comparison with the Israelis. The Jews in Israel object to the general notion that they are something special, and I always tell them, "You can object as much as you want, but you are special. You can't get out of it." By some quirk of fate, wherever I touch something, it turns out to be ahead of its time. How this is possible, I don't know. Out of this comes my paper today which may disappoint some of you.

Dr. Levitt correctly said that this two-day conference will elaborate Adlerian ideas and will make people familiar with them who have not known about them. My paper goes beyond merely describing what Adlerians are doing. It seems that I again have some new ideas, and as it happens to people with new ideas—both are always controversial. I will propose to you new ideas which I consider quite important, and I will find myself probably in a rather unaccustomed situation. Not only will I be controversial as far as the general science is concerned. I will probably be regarded as controversial also by my

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Adlerian friends. I hope that we will have time in the near future to discuss some of these aspects which I will present to you today.

The title of my paper is "Toward a Technology of Human Relationship." This statement by itself is already provocative. How can one take the term technology and apply it to human relations? As usual, I find myself in the *avant-garde* about this term. We are extending the term "technology of human relationship" to areas where it never was used before. When I first presented to my Adlerian colleagues the idea of a technology of human relations, they said, that is not technology. Technology is in industry, or art, and so on, but it has nothing to do with human relationships. Fortunately, I am supported in the use of this term by people whom I oppose as violently as I can. Skinner speaks about the technology of behavior and Kenneth Clark speaks about psychotechnology. Each is obviously using the term technology in the field of psychology. But they are developing a technique to control people, to devise means by which one can make people behave in a different way, which is the opposite of what I think about the technology of human relations.

I propose a new meaning of technology. And here we get into a big discussion of highly controversial issues. For me, as I discovered in my thinking, every group, every nation has a technology of relationships. It means the development of certain techniques of a systematic nature, so that one not only speaks about a technique of human relationship but of a technology. There is a basis for a sexual code and for behavior of every kind.

THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION—POWER OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Now why is it so important to introduce this term, technology of human relationships, at this time? In my mind, and you may not agree with me, the basic problem of our time, which is a cause for the present general upheaval, has to do with a technology of human relationships. People are attributing the rapid change which we are undergoing to a great variety of technical and economic factors. As I see it, the difficulty which we are facing is that the technology of relationships which existed for 8000 years in our civilization is coming to an end. We simply cannot expect any success and improvement unless we recognize first that the difficulty is one of a changing culture. In the civilization which is now coming to an end, we find a democratic revolution which changes human relationships. This is the basis of our problem. We need a new technology since we are becoming democratic.

It is a sad fact that the basic problem of this democratic revolution is not only being ignored but opposed. It is an almost impossible task in my experience, to help people to realize what democracy is, and what equality is. We have more equality than ever existed anywhere in the world, and we don't know what it is. The equality which we have is at the present time usually expressed in a negative sense. Equality and democracy, in the conviction of many, mean that everybody can do whatever he pleases. And this is the problem which concerns us.

Alfred Adler in this and other ways was ahead of his time. He developed a model of man which fits the necessity of democratic living. That is the reason why we have the rejuvenation of Adlerian psychology, culminating in something which we never could have expected, that a university would devote a workshop to the dissemination of Adlerian psychology. To arrive at a concept of man as a decision-making animal, one who decides his own fate without knowing it, helps people to realize the tremendous power they have.

I maintain that this democratic revolution which reached its peak in America in the last few decades brings us to the realization of the two most important discoveries which are bound to change society and man himself. One of these discoveries is recognized, the other, not. We all know what happened to our concept of the atom. The atom was the smallest most insignificant little particle. Suddenly we discovered the tremendous nuclear power within the little atom which was regarded as nothing. Everybody knows that. What hardly anybody knows, the second discovery, is that we find this tremendous power in every individual. People don't know it, because they are the victims of tradition. But Adler had proposed it 50 years ago, and my view is based on his assumption. Scientists tell us that man is a victim of heredity, of environment, of many forces. Adler dispelled this notion in his first book, on organ inferiority, published in 1907, where he showed that it is less important what a child is born with, than what he does with it.

This changes for instance our concept of talent. Most people think that if somebody has a special talent, that means he was endowed with special gifts. We know that many people have outstanding talents developed because they overcompensated for a weakness—of the eyes, ears, the body. But people don't know it. We are afraid of realizing the tremendous power that we have, because that gives us the responsibility for what we are doing—and we don't like it. We would rather blame others or society for our predicament. Our job

is to make people aware as far as possible of this tremendous power within them.

Adler not only developed a new concept of man for democratic living, he was also perhaps the first to discuss the principles of social living which some social behavioral therapists don't recognize at all. Adler spoke of the iron-clad logic of social living. And what is the basis of this logic? It is only found in a few parts of his books, and many representatives of Adlerian psychology make no reference to this fundamental statement of Adler. We can live in harmony with each other only on the basis of equality.

Now what shall we do, when few understand what equality is? My last book *Social Equality: The Challenge of Today* (4) deals with this issue. The problem of our time is the realization of equality, the need and the technique for living with each other as equals, in the family, the school, industry and everywhere else. We have to develop a new technology. So the title should actually read "Toward a *New Technology of Human Relationship*." There was always a technology. In an autocratic society it was dominance, superiority—every relationship was one of dominance over another who submits. The change is that we became equal, and no one is willing to submit anymore. So we have to look at society as such to understand the predicament of our nation. We shall discuss now the characteristics of a sick society which will not be changed by psychiatry and psychotherapy nor any individual treatment which requires much time and effort.

MISUNDERSTANDING OF DEMOCRACY—ANOMIC SOCIETY

Alfred Adler wrote a book, the German title of which was *Der nervöse Charakter* (translated incorrectly as *The Neurotic Constitution*). In this book he described the characteristic of neurotic behavior as the striving for superiority. Everybody wants to be more, better; everybody is deadly afraid to be a failure. Everything in the description of a neurotic person is actually a description of the normal person of our time. We all are caught in this distinctly neurotic striving for superiority and when I say all, this includes the therapist, the counselor, the psychiatrist and teachers just as well. They too are concerned with their own superiority and are deadly afraid of failure. So we have been living in a neurotic society for quite some time.

As the democratic revolution progressed, suddenly we found ourselves in a shattering experience of demoralization of our whole

society. What we are experiencing today in America is unlike anything that ever happened; it could only happen today, if you understand why. We are fast becoming a psychotic society, moving away from a neurotic society. Why do I say that? The psychotic is characterized by his denial of social demands and social values. He creates for himself, through his delusions and hallucinations, a world free from the demands of reality, from society.

We find to our great distress that psychotic behavior is by no means limited to people who really are psychotic. It is a general trend of people, particularly the young, that they feel they have the right to give in to all impulses. They can do whatever they want, and if society does not let them do whatever they want, then society is evil and they are against it. The interesting part is that this denial of social values is by no means limited to those who obviously defy society. We find among idealists, e.g. young people who strive for anti-pollution, that they use the idealist demand equally to defy society. All these idealists who want to show us that society is wrong do not look at what they are doing to their teachers and their parents, how they defy everybody who does not agree with them, which trait is part of the psychotic pattern.

How did we come to that? Through a misunderstanding of democracy, people think they can do anything they want, to satisfy themselves, to find themselves. It is a misunderstood democracy; it is the birth pains of a new society based on the assumption that everybody is free to do as he pleases regardless of the consequences.

This leads to a condition which was described a bit earlier when it began and was almost a prophetic statement. It is the concept of anomie which Durkheim originally described as normlessness. More recently McIver described it as lack of standards. Everybody does as he wants—anomie. Now I do not agree that anomie is a lack of standards. There may be wrong standards, but they are standards, and they may affect other people, especially at this time of transition from an autocratic to a democratic society. This right to do as one pleases is a standard, a mistaken standard. Ansbacher (2) correctly pointed out that anomie is a lack of social interest. Everybody is only concerned with what he wants, what he needs; the rest he doesn't care for. The definition of Ansbacher explains the danger of this trend which permits people to deteriorate, and lose social interest, which Adler called *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, a feeling of belonging. If our society undermines it, then it produces pathology.

Many have recognized that Adler's *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, social interest, is the only real basis for social living. That is normalcy. Only when a person feels belonging can he face reality, can he be willing to do what society requires to be done. Only then is he concerned with real values, that is, anything which underlies the development of social interest. At the present time we find very little evidence that anybody is concerned with developing social interest. So the question arises, "What now, where do we go?"

NEED FOR A NEW PSYCHIATRY—PARAPROFESSIONALS

Talking today as a psychiatrist, a professor of psychiatry, I must say that psychiatry is necessary, but, if you permit me to say something very controversial, psychiatry does not provide the help which the people need at the present time. We need a revolution in psychiatric procedures. We are much too slow; we need new methods for helping people, to get to people, *all* people—psychotics, the psychopathic personality. Actually we can reach everybody and we can reach everybody instantaneously. Many of my students have commented that I do everything so quickly, make a quick diagnosis, a quick therapeutic success.

To give you an example of what is in the future, when psychiatry and psychology will have developed new methods, let me point to what I call antisuggestion. Here we actually have the technique to stop every symptom of a patient. Viktor Frankl discovered this method independently; he calls it paradoxical intention (6). I heard yesterday from Dr. Pew an example of a man who was impotent throughout the years of his marriage, suffering from premature ejaculation. With one interview it stopped; all Dr. Pew had to do was to say, "Try as hard as you can to ejaculate." The man couldn't. Antisuggestion is so powerful. When you have a mother who does not want to do what you tell her, tell her "Of course you won't do it, you go ahead, you will not defeat your child, give him all the service he wants." Then she can't do it. Similarly, we can actually demonstrate how we get a psychotic to respond immediately when we recognize his "private logic," speak about it, and ask him to intensify it. He cannot do it.²

²This is what Jay Haley has so well described as "the basic rule of brief psychotherapy," namely "to *encourage the symptom* in such a way that the patient cannot continue to utilize it" (8, p. 55, italics added). Adler practiced this rule without naming it (1, pp. 346-347). Knight Dunlap described it in 1932 as "negative practice" (5), and it is found again in present-day behavior therapy as deconditioning or desensitization (9).—Ed. note.

These are only little indications of the short approach we are searching for, which works instantaneously. We are developing techniques so different from the past that all the traditional forms, whether psychoanalytic, those of Eric Berne, or Adlerian, with their many sessions and a minimum of learning, seem worn-out propositions. But this is only a personal view and I hope you will not hold it against me.

I feel so strongly that psychiatry under the present circumstances does not provide the necessary means to reach people that I drew a personal conclusion: I have concentrated for the last ten years, in my books and in my papers, on the problems of teachers, of parents, of industrial managers, because these are the people who are bound to change society. I don't think the psychiatrists are doing it, and I am very pleased that the Chicago Medical School recognizes this fact in beginning to train other paramedicals, psychologists and people who are not psychiatrists. This is what we need. Thousands and thousands of people who develop new ideas. I am very proud of the fact that by estimates of my Adlerian friends we are presently training in America 10-20 thousand parents in how to deal with their children. The family is the laboratory of human relationships where we can experiment with those methods which bring results, establishing a new technology of human relationships.

It sounds strange, perhaps it may sound arrogant, but I am personally convinced, if I had concentrated on training psychiatrists, I would have done very little with Adlerian psychology in either America, Germany, Switzerland, Greece, or Israel. And therefore I am so happy to see that the Chicago Medical School is joining this development of training people who work with masses and society.

If you ask me who can help the most in getting at the child, the answer is anybody who wins his confidence. As Adler says, we can reach every criminal, if we win his confidence; only a few people want to do it. I go one step further, and shock many of my beginning students until they understand what I mean. As Adler said, the crucial person to help children in the future will be the teacher. It is my experience that the teacher who knows how to influence children can correct all the damaging influences of the family. But people don't know it; they don't believe it, because the teachers don't know what to do. They don't realize that the new technology applies to everybody. I worked in Israel with high officials of the air force, and many of them were sent on missions to Africa. One of them wrote

back and said it is unbelievable the extent to which the message of Dreikurs can be applied to the Negroes there. They are all striving for status, for perfection. All human beings are fundamentally equal and similar. Only people don't know it because they see the differences and do not see the forest for the trees.

We have to help teachers to understand children, and I am afraid there are teacher training institutions that offer very little help in this regard. Most of my students are teachers and counselors, and it is always the same situation. When they come to the classroom, they don't know what to do. The amount of ignorance on the part of professionals about helping people is unbelievable.

So we have to train paraprofessionals.³ I have no objection if a psychiatrist wants to get this training too. But I can only tell you my prejudiced ideas. When I came to Israel I was invited to the department of psychiatry at the University of Jerusalem. They did not understand what I was saying. It took them 6 or 7 years—until some of the younger psychiatrists began to study with us. Psychiatrists are the most difficult to reach. That is one of the reasons why I am so proud and so glad we are having this conference sponsored by the department of psychiatry of the Chicago Medical School, because we can reach a few psychiatrists.

WORKING WITH GROUPS—BASIS OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

In a democratic development you need groups. They are the basis of democracy, the basis of a new technology. In a group we break through the neurotic assumption that if somebody does something wrong, he is worthless. In the group we experience a sense of equality as nowhere else. There you don't lose status through failure.

The kind of group does not make any difference. It may be a family group meeting in the family council where the members discuss what goes on, without criticizing and without punishing. The teacher who uses the group in a group discussion, sharing with the students the responsibility, is part of the new technology. We work with industrialists who learn to work with the workers in groups, and, learn to get out of the tremendous fight which goes on between management and labor, through the use of group problem-solving techniques.

³The pioneering work of Adler in the training and utilization of paraprofessionals has been reviewed by Guernsey (7).—Ed. note.

Interestingly enough, we are seeing now groups developing without any professional leaders, like Alcoholics Anonymous and Synanon, where individuals help each other. Our work with patients is not the traditional form; the patients help each other. And Adlerians are making quite important steps forward in this way. I will give you an example of this development and of professional resistance to it. At the University of Oregon in Eugene some of my Adlerian graduate students gave a class in counseling parents and found that some of the parents without any academic training were much more effective in influencing other parents than the professionals. So they made an experiment inviting 3 or 4 of the parents to participate in the class. This was not acceptable to the school psychologist. "You make up your mind: if you take lay people in this class, we step out." And the students had to decide what was more important. They let the psychologists go, because we need so badly people who can help through these new methods of encouragement, of understanding, and of logical consequences, and we have found only a few professional people to do the job. It is a difficult situation which confronts us.

Furthermore, highly trained people have the greatest difficulty to learn what we are doing. I will give you an example. I gave several classes at the University of Indiana, for teachers, for parents. My book, *Psychology in the Classroom* (3), describes what we did. In the last class there was a school psychologist, a Ph.D., the head of a school department. She did not need any credit points, she sincerely wanted to learn. Yet when I gave a test, she was the only one who failed. The higher trained a person is, the more resistant he is to our new methods. The more sophisticated he is, the more he ignores what we are doing. And you can't hold him responsible for that; it is part of the situation.

We are all in the same boat, professionals and lay people. We are experimenting with new methods—in the family, the family council; in the school, group discussion; in industry, shared responsibility—developing a new technology of human relations. Some people may say it is too slow and takes too long; but once changes take place, the changes are rapid. We are together in an experiment in human relationships where there is no punishment, no humiliation, where we can give everyone the feeling that he is worthwhile *as he is*, not as he should be. We have to get rid of the competition in which we find ourselves where there is no equality and no security because there is no pattern to get out of it. This is the task of our time.

A technology of human relations existed everywhere where people lived before. We have to recognize a change in transactions coming about by the democratization. What we really need is a new technology as we enter a new period of society, based on democracy and equality. We have to develop technical procedures by which we can learn to live with each other as equals, and only then will we be in a position to help people to develop their social interest which is the main requirement for living in peace with each other.

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⁴Supplied by the editors.