

Do Childhood Repressions Control Our Lives?

Three Great Problems Of Mankind Can Be Solved, Asserts Sage Of Vienna



Sigmund Freud (above) believed that the sex problem was the basis of all trouble. This theory is refuted by Dr. Adler who asserts that such problems are but artificial products.

By Louis DeJean

WHEN Albert Einstein, the discoverer of relativity, sought sanctuary in the United States for freedom from political persecution and interference with his teaching, it was front page news.

When Dr. Alfred Adler, world renowned psychiatrist and physician, for whose counsel thousands of Americans have journeyed to Vienna, decides to make his home in this country, for much the same reason as Einstein, that also is news of the very first importance. For Alfred Adler, who has been called the Confucius of the western world, has had, and is having, a tremendous influence upon the trends and methods of modern education.

Why has the influence of Dr. Adler steadily increased through the years, while the Freuds, the Junges, the Watsons, and other leaders of thought in the psychological world have held the spotlight of scientific esteem and popular acclaim for a period of months or years, only to fade, gradually or suddenly, into the shadows of backstage?

Why are the books written by Adler, "The Science of Living," "Understanding Human Nature," "What Life Should Mean to You," and his new volume, "My Challenge to You," in greater demand than the works of all other psychologists combined?

If you have read his books and his magazine articles, if you have consulted or conversed with the famous psychiatrist in person, you may have guessed the answer.

ALFRED ADLER is an optimist! An apostle of hope, of the happy ending! Not a sanguine, wishful utopian who is blind to the tragic ineptitudes and stubborn quirks of human behavior. But a calm, clear visioned scientist who knows, from many long years of salvaging and preventing, that the case is not hopeless; that mankind can, through process of a patient and persistent education, be taught to meet and solve the three great problems of human existence.

Only three? Yes, declares Dr. Adler. Every problem in life has to do with: one's work or occupation; one's relationship and responsibility to society, and one's attitude to, and solution of, love and marriage.

The behaviorist school of psychology has proclaimed: "We are the product of heredity and the victims of environment. There is nothing we can do about it."

And the psychoanalysts have wailed: "We are motivated and controlled throughout our adult lives by complexes resulting from repressions, usually of a sex nature, in infancy and early childhood! The only solution is to dig up our decayed and nauseous memories and expose them to the sunlight of attention and the X-ray of identification."

"No," says Dr. Adler, gently but with convincing assurance. "The past is gone. Let us start from now. Limitations are a myth. Intelligence quotients can be raised. Heredity is not nearly so important as environment and education. A handicap is often a blessing, for it is an incentive to achievement. The goal is everything."

DR. ADLER does not like to have his name and his work linked with Freud's. It causes confusion, he says, in the public's concept of his own work. During a recent lecture at Williams Institute in Berkeley, California, where he gives a seminar course every fall, Adler told of his association with Freud in Vienna, and their disagreement:

"I came in contact with Freud and worked with him for a time, and even defended him in public. Although I could not agree with him in all things, I stayed with him at his request. He was grateful because I was the only physician who had defended his theories."



Above is pictured Dr. Adler with a group of students at Williams Institute in Berkeley, Calif., where he recently propounded his new theories, declaring we are motivated and controlled throughout our adult lives by complexes resulting from repressions in infancy and childhood.



Dr. Alfred Adler (above) has frequently been referred to as the Confucius of the western world. His teachings are said to have had a pronounced influence upon the trends and methods of modern education.



Did Romeo and Juliet, the immortal lovers, represent the ideally mated pair? Dr. Adler contends that certain tests will reveal the suitability of couples contemplating marriage. The above picture is of Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard in the altar scene during the filming of "Romeo and Juliet".

At another lecture, Dr. Adler said: "Freud saw only the psychotic child—was himself one—and therefore developed such an attitude to life. He believed the sex problem the basis of all trouble. This is not natural. It is an artificial product."

In his book, "What Life Should Mean to You," Adler shows how the Freudian view of dreams is unscientific, because, if it were correct, dreams would be separated from the ordinary strivings and activities of life, and would have a meaning as an expression of only a part of the personality. The Freudians, themselves, he points out, found a sexual interpretation of dreams insufficient.

WHAT is "individual psychology," the technique of approach to human problems founded and developed by Dr. Adler? Does it claim that heredity can be ignored? That all children have an equal chance in life? That little Johnny Kitzpantz, whose father is a dope peddler and whose mother is a drunken slattern who dropped Johnny on his head three times during his first week in this earthly vale of tears, fears, and jeers, has the same chance to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as has John Marshall Hughes Randolph Quincy, whose mother was a Cabot and whose paternal ancestors have been playing marbles with the Constitution since 1778?

Yes and no. If you catch him early enough—and by that Dr. Adler means not later than three years of age—and train him right, you can do wonders, even for the undernourished child of the slums who has a poor heritage. On the other hand, Adler points out, a large percentage of children whose heritage and environment are the best that money can buy, may be ruined by pampering.

What of inherited physical handicaps? "Negligible," declares the great psychiatrist. "In fact, these often prove to be an incentive to achieve far beyond the normal. Eighty per cent of the great painters of history had eye defects; shortsightedness, astigmatism, even color blindness. I have talked with many champions in the

field of sports, such as boxers, runners, and swimmers. The majority of them told me that as young children they were physical weaklings, and in training constantly to overcome their handicaps, they went further than their normal playmates, who had not the same incentive to achieve.

WHO can tell what a child's potentialities are? Think of Beethoven, whose father said, before he was born: 'If this is a boy, he will be a second Mozart!' Suppose Beethoven, as a child, had fallen into the hands of certain of our present day vocational guidance experts. There would have been a medical examination. It would have been discovered that Beethoven had an hereditary ear disease which would leave him deaf at twenty.

"A composer? Impossible!" the expert would have decreed. "We shall make a shoe salesman of this boy! And, when Beethoven had grown up to become a successful shoe salesman, the expert would have boasted: 'You see, I was right. He was fitted to be a shoe salesman.'"

"The goal," repeats Dr. Adler, "is everything. It is good for the psychiatrist, for the teacher, to know the past, but there is nothing we can do about it. We can use our knowledge only to help us in understanding the problems to be solved, that the child, or the adult, may be directed into a useful life. Inherited ability? The hammer is made to drive nails. But it can be used to hit a person on the head! We must measure by results, the use made of ability."

We have heard much in recent years of the inferiority complex. The sense of inferiority, says Dr. Adler, is universal and normal. It is that feeling which makes us long for compensation and drives us toward our goal. Often we don't know why we feel inferior. For instance, left handed people have to adjust themselves to a right handed world. When not rightly oriented, this often causes a feeling of inferiority.

FORTY per cent of all people are naturally left handed. Many of us do not know it, because we have been trained or forced into righthandedness. There are eighty tests for left handedness. Is your left eyebrow high? Does

your nose slant slightly to the left? When you clasp your hands with fingers intertwined, is your left thumb on top? Well, then, you are probably left handed.

What of the superiority complex? This, says Adler, is the last resort of the person with a strong sense of inferiority. It is an over compensation. The person thus afflicted becomes arrogant, cruel, critical. He tries to rule others. An example is the mother who demands that the whole family must be kept quiet, because she has a nervous headache. And the child who always chooses weaker playmates, so that he can rule or feel superior.

The old Greeks called those interested in the civic welfare, "politicians." Those not interested in the welfare of the city were "idiots."

Without the need to work, says Dr. Adler, we would perish. Work is the salvation and the means of progress. Team work develops social interest. Poor sports and bad losers are not successful. Those who want to shine only by personal success make poor social relationships.

"Sometimes," comments the learned Doctor, "a high degree of vanity lives in a mousehole and just looks out."

SOCIAL interest, Dr. Adler believes, should be developed from babyhood. The baby should not be left alone for long periods, unless asleep. The character tends to become fixed at three years of age. He advises parents to adopt the simple slogan, "Make the child a help!"

Most of the adult neuroses, Adler asserts, begin with a pampered childhood. The pampered child is trained to expect that his wishes will be treated as laws. In consequence, when he comes into circumstances where he is not the center of attention and where other people do not make it their chief aim to consider his feelings, he will be very much at a loss, and will feel that the world has failed him.

"These grown up, pampered children," says Dr. Adler, "are perhaps the most dangerous class in our community. They are on strike against cooperating, as ordinary human beings, in our ordinary human tasks."

Two common symptoms of this attitude in children, says Dr. Adler, are untidiness and fussiness in eating. The untidy child is always followed by a shadow of one who will tidy up

after him, and will expect such support through life. The finicky child is followed in the same way by the shadow of the over anxious parent, who nervously forces food upon him for fear he will lose weight.

"Note," says the Doctor, "that these finicky children do not have to be persuaded to eat when they are in a different environment. It is usually a case of 'too much mother.'"

DR. ADLER believes children should be watched for indications of an occupational preference. For example, he says, a child wishes to be a teacher. We see him bringing other children together and playing school with them. A girl who looks forward to being a mother will play with dolls and train herself to a greater interest in babies. Many children show great mechanical and technical interest. All these are a promise of a fruitful occupation in later life, and should be encouraged, asserts the noted psychologist.

"In a certain district of Germany," writes Dr. Adler in his book, "What Life Should Mean to You," "there is an old custom for testing whether an engaged couple are suited for married life together. Before the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom are brought to a clearing where a tree trunk has been cut down. Here they are given a two handed saw and set to work to saw the trunk across. By this test it is found how far they are willing to cooperate. If there is no trust between them, they will tug against each other and accomplish nothing. If one of them wishes to take the lead and do everything by himself, then, even if the other gives way, the task will take twice as long. They must both have initiative, but their initiatives must combine together."

In one of his talks, Dr. Adler expressed impatience with the popular idea that marriage is comparable to a business partnership.

"A couple," he says, "which enters the marriage relationship with the attitude that it is a temporary contract or arrangement, cannot hope to make a success of the marriage. Love, with its fulfillment, marriage, is the most intimate devotion towards a partner of the other sex, expressed in physical attraction, in comradeship, and in the decision to have children. Love and marriage demand cooperation—not cooperation for the welfare of two persons only—but a cooperation for the welfare of mankind."

ALFRED ADLER is not a pretentious or an impressive person. He is mild and gentle and good humored.

There is a solution, declares Dr. Adler, to all our problems of human behavior. We can do it through the schools. The teachers have all the children at hand. They are the obvious instruments for saving the generations to come. The teachers must be trained to recognize the potentially delinquent child and give him a better conception of life. Such training will cost money. But it will cost far less, says the man who has trained one thousand teachers in child psychology, than the billions which the government now finds it necessary to appropriate to deal with crime.

Dr. Adler's own family is a splendid testimonial to his knowledge and skill in putting into practice what he teaches. During his recent trip to California, his son, Kurt, and his daughter, Alexandra, accompanied him and attended his course of lectures, from beginning to end. Both are doctors of psychology, and Alexandra is a lecturer at the Harvard School of Medicine.